

DALEA BEAN

**JAMAICAN WOMEN  
&  
THE WORLD WARS**

*On the Front Lines of Change*



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*To the foremothers who knew that the sky was no limit*

## FOREWORD

I am honoured to have been asked to contribute in this small way to Dr. Dalea Bean's first book. It is always pleasing when professors see their former students and research assistants progress in their discipline and make the transition from graduate students to published authors. Dr. Bean has made this transition. I watched her at every step of the way, especially as I eventually joined her (as her Director this time), in the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, where we continued a relationship that started in the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of the West Indies. She spent a considerable time furthering her original Ph.D. research, inspired by work done by her history teacher mother, until she was satisfied that she was ready to share with the academy the output of her research on a comparatively under-researched topic in Jamaican, wider Caribbean and above all, British history. The result is a fine exposition of the participation of Jamaican women in a near global struggle that some refer to as 'Civil Wars with the European community of nations', most as World Wars I and II. This is not just a history book though; it represents the intersection of military history, gender studies and feminist discourse, located within the broader discourses of colonialism and decoloniality.

The participation of Jamaicans, in particular African-Jamaicans, in armed conflicts as combatants or in non-combative war efforts is not new. The pages of Jamaica's history are dotted with accounts of the island's peoples participation in various wars, be they anti-conquest, anti-slavery, anti-colonial or pro-colonizer. It is no secret that anti-slavery

wars, for example, were the staple of the colonial experience from 1655 to 1832; and they were not exclusively male battles. Enslaved African women were a part of the eighteenth-century Maroon Wars as well as the 1831–1832 Emancipation War and were also a part of Paul Bogle’s army in the 1865 Morant Bay war. They were as exploited as men, although in different ways, and were as insistent that liberation and justice were their right. Some of these men and women even fought on the side of Britain during these conflicts, earning small rewards, signalling that loyalty to Britain was not confined to the post-slavery period.

Within the pages of Dalea Bean’s *Jamaican Women and the World Wars: On the Front Lines of Change*, is yet another account of how the island’s men and women were caught up in a war, this time a global struggle on the side of a country they regarded as the Mother Country, however uncaring and promiscuous she may have been, leaving her exploited ‘children’ all over the region and abandoning them once they had provided what was needed. One would have expected a people emerging out of slavery and still oppressed in the pre-independence period by the same enslaving nation to have been loath to get involved in a war on the side of that nation, especially as it the battles were far removed geographically from their own space. But it is a curious part of Caribbean history that there have always been, and no doubt still are, those who have loyalty to Britain. The author in fact addresses it this way: ‘Given the long history of British colonisation of the island and the conflict-ridden nature of the relationship with Jamaica up to independence, it is curious that Britain would expect loyalty from her colonial subjects’. But Britain not only expected but received such loyalty, much to the chagrin of others who thought it possible to exploit the colonial past to their advantage. Indeed, there appeared to be no need to enforce conscription. Those who were loyal were not only men; and Dr. Bean uses gendered lens to explore the differences and similarities in participation and the gendered rhetoric of loyalty.

The author examines the context of women’s participation, the ways in which Jamaican women helped to mobilise support for the wars, the nature of their support (cash and kind), their actual role on the side of Britain (combative and non-combative), and the inevitable fall-out that their experiences abroad created, described by the author as ‘a complex milieu of burgeoning nationalism, race consciousness and at times, out-right dissent against the British Empire.’

The book answers questions such as which women volunteered for action? In other words, how did class, race and gender intersect to determine who served? Chap. 4 is intriguing. It not only provides a chronology of recruitment events; it analyses the gendered rhetoric that became a very real part of the movement to motivate men to enlist, including feminizing them to shame them into enlisting. The book also looks at the impact of the war on Jamaica during the conflicts as well as in the post-war era. After 1938, the political landscape clearly changed, reflected most palpably in the franchise movement. If women could go to war they could surely vote; and universal adult suffrage did allow women excluded from the early twentieth-century vote on the right of elite women to participate fully in the political process. But as in the debate over whether or not women should go to war and whether, once they actually joined the war effort they should fight or be confined to domestic roles and provide ‘comforts’ for the men in combat, the local suffragette movement was affected by gender discourses about women’s ‘proper role’ in society. These debates did not end in 1945 but continued way after the conflicts ended. Indeed, the book provides the historical background and context for the contemporary discussions about gender equality/equity/parity, patriarchal ideology and the so-called ‘male marginalisation thesis.’ So, in the end, the big question posed by the author is ‘Did women’s experiences in the period 1914–1945 represent continuity or change, liberation or new constraints?’ The process of finding answers makes for a fascinating read in a work that is methodologically rigorous and grounded in sound archival and secondary sources.

I have no doubt that this will only be the first of several books to be written by the author. She is passionate about her discipline, has a veritable archive of works in progress and is determined to ensure that under-represented aspects of Caribbean history are excavated, exposed and, above all, subjected to clear gender analysis.

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## PREFACE

In 2002 as a new M.Phil student in the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Mona, with a passion for the past and no research topic to speak of, I went on a journey to ascertain what aspects of Jamaican history still lay buried in dusty archives and private recollections. After many weeks at libraries and reading countless volumes of history books, I found that the answer was sitting at home all along. Ten years prior, my mother, Gloria Bean, produced a masters thesis on the ways in which the *Daily Gleaner* shaped Jamaica's response to World War II. After reading the work it struck me that she mentioned women a total of five times throughout the work; all critical points, but made in passing. Was there more to the story of women making bandages, knitting socks and sending men off to serve in armies? Indeed there was and, as the saying goes, the rest is literally history. From those points a proposal emerged for a study, which was eventually upgraded to a PhD completed in 2007. A decade of gender and development experience later, that study, which built on my mother's arduous work has evolved into the book *Jamaican Women and the World Wars: On the Front Lines of Change*.

The process regarding the evolution of this area of study closely mirrors the way Jamaican women responded to the wars. Faced with new, frightening and exciting opportunities provided by 'white men's wars', many Jamaican women made deliberate decisions to prove their worth to a fledgling Empire and a burgeoning nation, building on the work of women before them to create an army of women who wittingly and (and

sometimes unwittingly) utilised the wars as their foundation for empowerment. Predicated on the notion that warfare has historically been an agent of change, I contend that traces of this truism were in Jamaica and illustrates that women have historically been part of the war project, both as soldiers and civilians. The book identifies the nature of involvement of Jamaican women in the conflicts and argues that the conflicts undoubtedly positively influenced the changing roles and status of Jamaican women as part of the wider processes of change that occurred in the twentieth century. By presenting a nuanced view of Jamaican women and their relationship to warfare, the work reveals that Jamaican women's involvement and experiences during World Wars I and II are crucial to any examination of the factors that influenced their status during the twentieth century. The work not only highlights the work of women in relation to the wars, but also assesses ways in which race, class and gender shaped Jamaica's place in the transatlantic prosecution of war.

Jamaican women's contribution to the war efforts and to their own empowerment was buried deep in the annals of history; in reels of old (and sometimes illegible) newspapers, private colonial correspondences, in personal accounts and in answers to questions no one thought of asking. The result of the years of excavation is an analysis of the response of Jamaican women to World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945) in eight chapters. These chapters assess the response of Jamaica to the conflicts, the organisation of women's war work during World War I, the importance of gender in the recruitment of men for the British West India Regiment and the rocky road to enfranchising women in the post World War I era. Specific to World War II, the work addresses continuity and change in women's roles between 1939 and 1945 and assesses the experiences of those who served in the British Army. The work closes with a conclusion, which pulls the main themes of the book together while making the claim that Jamaican women were not the same in 1945 as they were in 1914 and that wars contributed greatly to the substantial shifts. The original thesis also investigated the ways in which some women's bodies were policed and branded as dangerous to military efficacy because of the assumption that they spread venereal diseases to 'innocent' soldiers. However this has been omitted from this text to facilitate an independent yet parallel investigation into wartime sexual liaisons in the circum-Caribbean after suitable time has passed to ensure recovery from the assorted hazards of historical research and manuscript writing.

It is hoped that my humble attempt to unearth new information about Jamaican womanhood will enlighten, spark debate and rekindle interest in the experiences of those who served causes greater than themselves, whether we believe these causes were just or not. College level students should find it useful for history, women/gender and development studies, international relations, and social policy post-graduate and undergraduate degrees. It is also aimed at scholars and intellectuals who keep up to date with work that revises or seeks to destabilise previous notions about Jamaican history. Perhaps most importantly, it is my hope that the work will be of great interest to those thousands of Caribbean nationals who either served in the wars, or whose relatives were involved with the efforts at various levels.

As adage goes, 'no man is an island' and while women do sometimes exhibit superior qualities to men; indeed, no woman should stand-alone. I certainly have benefitted from a community of love and encouragement as well as moral and financial support, without which this work would not have seen the light of day. I owe a debt of gratitude to my parents, Errol and Gloria Bean whose unfailing love and earnest prayers are my main sources of strength and inspiration. Thanks also to Professor Verene Shepherd who not only agreed to supervise the PhD thesis when I met her in the Department of History at UWI Mona, but who has continued to be a chief mentor and supporter of my academic career as the University Director of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, where we serendipitously continued our journey. A special thanks to my many friends and family whose faith in me has been invaluable and who have offered useful opinions on the work. These include: Dr. Nicole Plummer, Joan Vaval, Dr. Chantal Dufreny, Jonathan Vaval, Diedre Callam, Debbie Harris, Diana Spencer, Kamoy Douglas-Clarke among many others. Special thanks to Dr. Andrew Spencer, whose encouragement pushed me to continue when quitting seemed like the most viable option. Special mention must also be made of Dr. Reena Goldthree with whom I often navigate the world of world war scholarship and who has afforded me many academic opportunities at various universities. I will be forever grateful to the six brave women who served in British and Canadian armies and graciously shared their stories of service with me: Ena Colllymore-Woodstock OD, Norma Wint, Doreen Rickards, Olga Shervington, Beverly Marsh and Kitty Cox.

I must thank the Department of History and Archaeology, UWI Mona who greatly supported the PhD from which this work emanated as

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ATS	Auxiliary Territorial Service
BBJ	Blue Books of Jamaica
BITU	Bustamante Industrial Trade Union
BWIR	British West Indies Regiment
CO	Colonial Office
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office Records
CWAC	Canadian Women's Army Corps
FANY	First Aid Nursing Yeomanry
HBJ	Hand Book of Jamaica
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JDP	Jamaica Democratic Party
JLP	Jamaica Labour Party
JPL	Jamaica Progressive League
KSAC	Kingston and St Andrew Corporation
LAB	Labour and Employment Records
MBE	Order of the British Empire
NAAFI	The Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OD	Order of Distinction (Jamaican National Honour)
PNP	People's National Party
RAF	Royal Air Force
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
USO	United Service Organisation
UWI	University of the West Indies
WAA	War Work Association
WAAF	Women's Auxiliary Air Force

WLC	Women's Liberal Club
WO	War Office
WRNS/WRENS	Women's Royal Navy Service
WSSC	Women's Social Service Club
WVS	Women's Voluntary Services

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## Introduction

The murder of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, in July 1914 in Bosnia, precipitated the sudden eruption of a conflict involving major European powers. The first total war of modern time, The Great War, or World War I as it eventually came to be known, was intensified by the international rivalries of Britain, France, Germany and Russia. After four years of battle on land, air and sea, it came to an end in November 1918 when the German Kaiser fled to Holland and an Armistice was signed. In the wake of this debilitating war, the League of Nations<sup>1</sup> was established prevent the occurrence of a similar conflict.

However, neither armistice nor the international peace-keeping body could keep the European nations out of an even more ferocious war 25 years later. The failure of the League of Nations to successfully arbitrate international conflicts among its signatories was starkly highlighted by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. The Italian–Abyssinian War of 1935–1936 was a precursor to the second global conflict and for some, this instance of Fascist Italian invasion was the first battle of what would come to be known as World War II. This conflict, which officially raged between 1939 and 1945, was probably inevitable after the rise to power of German dictator Adolf Hitler in 1933. His annexation of Austria and the Sudeten lands of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and his intrusion into Poland in 1939 signalled the start of the conflict. Britain and France declared war on Germany, and these hostilities would eventually encompass most of the European states, the United States and Japan,

and would be fought in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. The loss of military and civilian life in the Soviet Republics, Germany, Britain, France and the United States was in the tens of millions.

Some 5000 miles away from continental Europe was Jamaica, colonial territory of Britain since 1655, one of the early gems in her Imperial crown. While geographically removed from the main sites of battle, the colony, like so many others in the Atlantic World, was philosophically and ideologically entangled with the events in Europe though a colonial relationship built on complex juxtaposition of oppression, loyalty and patronage centuries in the making. By the time World War I was declared in 1914, the West Indian colonies were fading in imperial importance, but this was far from evident based on the immediate response of the islands, which spared no expense to assist the mother country in her time of greatest need. Indeed, Jamaica was among the forerunners offering overwhelming tangible and moral support to both war efforts. Britain's wars became Jamaica's wars and shifting European alliances were reflected in the Jamaican political space. Perhaps the most notable contribution of the island was in the area of human resources. Thousands of Jamaicans offered their bodies to the British Empire as soldiers and labourers, determined to do their part to participate in a just war, whether Britain required them or not. The contribution of African and West Indian service personnel, often shrouded in amnesia and misrepresentation (Smith 2017) was memorialised in June 2017 in London with the first-ever monument to men and women of African descent who served in World Wars I and II. The memorial, some 100 years overdue, is a worthy testament to the contribution of African and British West Indian service men and women, who voluntarily offered service to a colonial power out of loyalty to Empire, the need for adventure and escape and longing for empowering opportunities. While war memorials such as these have featured in the Caribbean space for years, there is very little regional public appreciation for the extent to which the wars shaped the former colonial spaces and the politics of service, which were raced, classed and gendered. While revisionist historians have undertaken the project of unpacking the effect of the wars on West Indian masculinity, less consideration has been given to the very real impact that the wars had on shaping women's lives in the colonial milieu, with the notable exception of Bousquet and Douglas (1991).

The complex nature of the consequences of warfare is explored in this work, specifically focusing on Jamaican women; seemingly unlikely candidates for small gems of social change from two distant European

wars. It gauges Jamaican women's responses to the wars and examines the effect of wars on the shaping of official policy in the country. More than this, it proves that analyses of the wars' impact on Jamaica cannot be gender-blind. By giving a nuanced view of Jamaican women and their relationship to warfare, this study reveals that Jamaican women's involvement and experiences during World Wars I and II are crucial factors the changes to their status during the twentieth century.

This work excavates the largely unknown contributions Jamaican women made to the wars and challenges the discursive inadequacies and historiographical apertures in traditional military histories and discourse. Undoubtedly, the study of warfare has revolved around male combatants or presented a gender-blind chronicle of battlefield tactics and military strategies. Warfare is anything but gender-blind. Masculinities and femininities are intrinsically linked to the project of war-making and nationalism (Yuval-Davis 1997; Enloe 2000; Macpherson 2007). The nation is both constructed as a hetero-male project and a brotherhood where the nation is an extension of their own bodies (Mayer 2012), and as a motherland to be protected from invasion. The latter allows women's national identities to be intertwined with the fighting spirit of male loved ones. Enloe (1990) argues that the nationalistic-militaristic myth perpetuates the construction of the aggressive male who fights for the sake of 'womenand-children' even in modern wars, where hyper-militarisation and rising terror threats are also understood through evolving concepts of masculinities and femininities. African scholars have produced volumes which interrogate the ways in which women's multiple roles have hidden the true impact of civil wars, genocides and other forms of conflict on the continent (Turshen 1998, 2001; Puechguirbal 2003; Sideris 2003; Burnet 2012).

Importantly, gendered imagery is also inherent in the war project. During World War I, the conceptualisation of Germany as the powerful male antagonist and Belgium, Britain and France as weak and vulnerable females in need of protection from a masculine rampage was often used to rally support from British allies worldwide (Kent 1993). In other instances, the nation may not be constructed as weak but may be highly valued as a strong female spirit. The female personification of Britain as 'Britannia' for Britons or the 'mother country' for colonial subjects conjure a similar image of a strong, brave woman who gave life to the nation and who is therefore worth fighting for. These conceptualisations justify the ultimate and oftentimes mandatory sacrifice of male bodies, which are at the disposal of nation; a form of gender-based violence against men in and of itself. Wars are therefore deeply intertwined with gendered depictions.

Studies that sidestep the issue of gender blindness often focus on men and organised violence. The boundaries of masculinity are often tested on the battlefield and the grandeur of organised violence is usually one waged by men. Though women have held various roles within the centuries-old military complex as combatants, prizes for conquest, spies, camp-followers and in staff in modern militaries, femininity simply does not resonate with wars and violence. Men remain ‘just warriors’ marching for war, and women are non-violent ‘beautiful souls’ (Elstain 1987). Since hegemonic masculinity (superior) is often defined in opposition to femininity (inferior), male spaces that foster group identity and bonding were deliberately fortified against female partition. Women’s social ties to the home and childrearing relegated them to a position of unfitness for dangerous situations. Who will tend to the children if women fight in wars? Women’s biological function as child-bearers/life-creators has put them in opposition to the concept of life-taking. Society has yet to accommodate the notion of women as killers and has ensured that even in modern armies, women are usually held back from front-combat duties (Noakes 2006).

These conceptualisations, though unstable at best, have influenced conventional military historiography. The leading writer on military history, John Keegan, takes this position in his work, *A History of Warfare*. He argues that women have been historically ambivalent about war-making and theorises that women have deliberately stood apart from warfare. He argues:

women look to men to protect them from danger and bitterly reproach them when they fail as defenders. Women have followed the drum ... Women however do not fight. They rarely fight among themselves and they never in any military sense, fight men... warfare is as old as history and as universal as mankind...it is an entirely masculine activity. (Keegan 1993, 76)

Certainly, women do not make up the majority of militaries, and many do look to their men to protect them from personal and geopolitical danger caused by other men. But warfare is decidedly not an entirely masculine activity. At the very least, women, as half of the world’s population, are rarely spared war’s destructive effects on human life and property. As civilians, women’s bodies often become the battlefields on which wars are waged. They are killed, raped, maimed, physically and psychologically tortured and suffer displacement as refugees, all while having

primary responsibility for the welfare of home and community. More than this, women have historically occupied the male space of warfare to great effect. Dahomey Amazons, Greek Spartan mothers, Nanny of the Jamaican Maroons, Boadicea of the Iceni and Joan of Arc of France, Maria Botchkareva, Commander of the Women's Battalion of Death in Russia and Vilma Espin of the Cuban Revolutionary army are just a few of the numerous examples of women's formal military involvement. These examples, however, stand as exceptions to the essentialist ideology that men are inherently warlike, and women fighters are unnatural.

As women are not perceived as history's prototypical citizen soldiers (Elshtain and Tobias 1990, ix) they have been categorised as being on the fringes of warfare as helpmates on the home front and supporters of their male family members who make the ultimate sacrifice for country. However these tropes do not explain the reality of warfare; they function to re-create and secure women's location as non-combatants and men's as warriors, and perpetuate gender inequity Elshtain (1987, 4). As Cockburn (1998, 13) argues 'essentialism.... is a dangerous political force, designed to shore up differences and inequalities, to sustain dominations. It operates through stereotypes that fix identities in eternal dualisms: woman victim, male warrior.' These binaries have been the foundation of the misguided and all-pervasive ideology of male supremacy and must be dismantled if we are to see the true picture of the strengths and vulnerabilities of the sexes and move towards equality. It not only distorts the place of women in discourse related to militarism, but also places men in the position of the enemy of peace and stability. Traditional histories would for instance overlook the example of Isaac Hall, a black Jamaican conscientious objector to World War I, who was far more vocally pacifist than any known Jamaican woman at that time (Smith 2017).

However, even feminist writing on war has assumed the inevitability of links between women and passivism and between men and militarism. Indeed, feminist thought is divided on the issue of women's place in wars, and various branches make contradictory and sometimes equally appealing arguments. As Elshtain (1987, 231) indicates, 'from its inception, feminism has not quite known whether to condemn all wars outright or to extol women's contributions to war efforts. At times, feminists have done these things, with scant regard for consistency.' Pro-war feminists argue that women's maternal roles extend beyond that of the family to protection of the nation. For anti-war feminists, women are not only naturally suited for peace but should deliberately embrace passivism

as a personal and political counteraction to destructive masculinised military spaces rather than aiming to be participants. These feminists also argue that women have played vital roles in peace movements and that women should continue to act in this responsible manner to prevent wars, especially since they are the primary victims of wars.<sup>2</sup> Vickers (1993, 18) for instance paints a vivid picture of the reality most women face in military conflicts as innocent bystanders and civilians:

Their houses may be damaged, or they may flee from home in fear of their lives. Dwindling food supplies and hungry children exacerbate tensions. And so, to the loss of husbands, fathers, sons and brothers who are killed in battle is added the longer-term suffering of further deprivation. Often defenceless against invasion, women can find that armed conflict means rape and other forms of abuse by occupying troops, as well as loss of the means of livelihood.

Vickers, therefore, focuses on women's unique ability to undo armies and warfare, typified by masculine aspirations and serving patriarchal objectives. In this conceptualisation, wars do more good than harm to men and more harm than good to women. Women are therefore charged with the responsibility to be more involved with conflict resolution; women's standpoints are identified as critical to peaceful settlement of confrontations between nations and communities.

Early Western feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) opposed war because it was a manifestation of a minority forcing its will on the majority; the subaltern. Though she supported the idea of 'civic motherhood', she held the view that militarism threatened women by reinforcing masculine habits of authority. In this way, women's peace movements are not only signs of women's nurturing nature, but a deliberate attempt on the part of these women to oppose patriarchal values. On the other hand, Simone de Beauvoir (1949) theorised that women's involvement in peace movements tended to reinforce women's subservience in a male-dominated world. In her words, movements that stressed women's nurturing nature 'project an essentialist view of women that not only reinforces our secondary status but also lays the basis for all other forms of social oppression' (Serdlow 1990, 7). Therefore, despite the noble efforts of women peacekeepers, feminists of the liberal faction argue that women's equal participation in warfare is a necessary step for them to gain equality as citizens with their male counterparts.

Feminists also apply gender analysis to the justifications for war. Theorists such as Michael Walzer (1978) among others hold that Just Wars are fought for a just cause, sanctioned by the correct authority, fought to bring about peace, should be the last resort and should have a possibility of success. It is also widely accepted by Just War theorists that conduct during war should also be humane. Feminist thinkers have identified a range of problems with these criteria. Ruddick (1983), Elshtain (1987), Tickner (1992) and others have qualms with the theory's dependence on realism, noting instead that human nature does not necessarily make war inevitable. Feminists also have a specific issue with the theory being largely dependent on stereotypical masculine traits. Women's ways of knowing and thinking are notably missing from any decision on the 'just' nature of wars. In this vein, Sara Ruddick also highlights that in many cases peaceful alternatives to war are not fully explored before war is waged. The alternative suggested by her is firmly grounded in feminine epistemology or a maternal peace politics in which birth is privileged over death. In Ruddick's estimation, war is by no means inevitable even though human discord may be, and can be replaced by maternal thinking with its inherent tendencies towards love, nurturing and preservation of life. Since mothers are perhaps best at settling conflict in the home, their strategies can be appropriated by the state to settle disagreements without resorting to war at all. As she explains, this mothering can be done by men and women since 'mothering may be performed by anyone who commits him—or herself to the demands of maternal practice' (Ruddick 2009, 305).

As part of their mandate to secure a new order in which men and women are treated as equals, liberal feminists argue that women have to be made equally vulnerable with men to the political will of the state. The close ties between civil identification and military commitment has led many to believe that women, who are traditionally the supporters of male soldiers rather than soldiers themselves, have been relegated to an inferior position in society. The tradition has largely been for women to be excluded from the honours attached to military valour, making their relationship to the nation a vicarious one through their husbands, fathers and sons. Radical feminist Shulamith Firestone (1979) also claimed, guided by Liberal feminist scholarship and inter-rogation, that feminists should welcome warfare as a chance to improve the status of women in society. As Enloe (2000, 3) so aptly explains, the benefit of feminist scholarship may be: 'as one learns to look at this

world through feminist eyes, one learns to ask whether anything that passes for inevitable, inherent, “traditional” or biological has in fact been *made*.’ Feminism invites us to realise that gender is created to serve a political agenda involving the maintenance of power. This allows us to do more than look for women’s place in wars; feminism calls us to investigate why women may have been sidelined from the war-making project, policy discussions on war and peace talks, or why the roles women played in wars were thought of as relatively unimportant, unworthy of documentation. It also facilitates a better understanding of war and masculinity as a space to interrogate the ways in which men’s bodies are paradoxically desired and treated as disposable by the military complex.

While not disregarding the need for women and men to be active seekers of peaceful resolution to interpersonal and international conflicts, dominant essentialist stereotypes do not explain the long-standing relationship between Caribbean women and participation in resistance, rebellion and wars for human rights. Long before the emergence of 1960s Western feminist ideology, subjugated Caribbean women cultivated and honed a quintessential spirit of rebellion against systems buttressed by hegemonic masculinity. Resistance against colonisation, enslavement and indentureship by women and men was an almost daily feature of life in the Caribbean. Faced with exploitation, inhumane treatment, mental, physical, economic, sexual and psychological abuse, brave warriors emerged to challenge colonial authority using various methods. While many of their names may never be known, we do know of the activism of Nanny of the Maroons who undermined British efforts to recapture these brave runaways, Susan, who played an active role in Jamaica’s 1831 Emancipation war or ‘Sam Sharpe Rebellion’, and Carolyn Grant, who was famous for punishing traitors in the Morant Bay rebellion in 1865, among many others who ‘subverted and destabilised the slavery and colonial systems’ (Shepherd 2007, 96).

Even in cases where women were not at the forefront of armed revolts, we have gleaned from Beckles (1989, 1999), Bush (1990), Shepherd (1999, 2007), Mathruin Mair (2006), Wilmot (2009) and many others that day-to-day insolence and resistance strategies of oppressed women served to weaken the pillars of the colonial fortress and undermined the efficacy of the plantation system. These revisionist scholars record and analyse various forms of gynaecological resistance robbing plantations of labour; acts of sabotage that women inflicted on the plantation property, the poisoning of enslavers, and the

unfaltering power of their fiery tongues, which would jeer and castigate colonial authority in spoken word and in song. This tradition continued after the end of slavery, as women and men alike joined the struggle to secure rights as free people in a milieu of continued domination and exploitation. The 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion, the 1912 Tramcar Riots and the widespread 1938 workers' protest action were not bereft of women. There is little or no evidence to suggest that working-class women thought peace should be maintained at the expense of inalienable human rights. Therefore, the collective story of working-class Jamaican women can be better linked to warfare than peacekeeping and provides a counter-discourse to the view that women are naturally inclined towards non-combative behaviour.

The Jamaican reality also counteracts traditional understandings of women's inclination towards opposition to total war. As will be discussed in this work, elite Jamaican women, paragons of war efforts, endorsed the Empire's prosecution of war, taking it as their remit and were only publicly concerned with peace efforts in the interwar years. In 1932 for instance, Judith deCordova, a leader of Jamaican women's war efforts facilitated the local signing of a petition aimed at global disarmament.<sup>3</sup> However this effort to mobilise women to sign a peace petition in no way hampered organisation for war work after September 1939. Even more evidence of Jamaica's women's challenge to traditional androcentric military narratives is found in the experience of Mary Seacole. Born in Jamaica in the early nineteenth century to a free black woman and a Scottish soldier, Seacole received a full dose of fascination with militarism. Her mother owned Blundell Hall (where the Institute of Jamaica is now located) which housed and cared for British wounded sailors and soldiers stationed at Up-park Camp. She also became a 'doctress' and worked in Jamaica, North and Central America, especially with cholera victims. However, she was mainly recognised as a heroine in the Crimean War (1853–1856), where poor provision of food and inadequate medical attention led to more deaths than injury from combat.<sup>4</sup> Her urge to assist in this crisis as well as her longing to experience war led her to the front lines after being rejected by the corps of nurses under the leadership of Florence Nightingale. Her determination to serve led her to self-finance the British Hotel in 1855 for wounded soldiers in the Crimea.

Seacole was one of the first non-army personnel to go on the battlefields of Sebastopol and Tchernya to care for soldiers. She was even wounded during the course of her service:

I threw myself too hastily on the ground, in obedience to the command around me, to escape a threatening shell, and fell heavily on the thumb of my right hand, dislocating it. It was bound up on the spot and did not inconvenience me much but it has never returned to its proper shape. (Seacole 1857, 1988, 158)

Her personal account of the motivations for care work so close to danger is rife with passionate civic motherhood. Even Florence Nightingale, whose name still epitomises nursing globally, did not bring her nursing corps so close to battle. Her presence on the front lines was geared towards fulfilling her ‘motherly’ duty to Empire and her ‘sons’ using the skills she honed in medicine and caregiving. In so doing, she not only elevated menial care-work to transnational importance but established parity between the capacity of male and female bodies to serve in conflict. In opposition to what Ruddick would later envision as maternal peace politics, Seacole was the epitome of maternal war politics. In her own words, ‘the battlefield was a fearful sight for a woman to witness and if I do not pray God that I may never see its like again, it is because I wish to be useful all my life, and it is in scenes of horror and distress that a woman can do so much’ (Seacole 1857, 1988, 159). Sentiments such as these undoubtedly constituted a challenge to the gender inequalities inextricably linked with war and militarism. As Sandra Paquet (2002, 60) explains:

(Seacole’s) unabated exhilaration in the war effort constitutes a serious assault on gender binaries. Her use of a maternal narrator challenges the conventional dichotomies associated with respectable Victorian womanhood and with war. When Mother Seacole insists that the battlefield is her rightful place, she is demolishing the boundaries between the home front and the battlefield.

It is true that Seacole’s role as a health-care professional was a typical role for women in the military. Even in modern armies, female soldiers are predominantly positioned in roles that reflect a gendered civil market as secretaries and nurses (Nira-Yuval Davis 1997). However, Seacole was deliberate in her challenge to existing military gender dynamics. As she explained, her interest in war was genuine and effervescent: ‘no sooner had I learned of war somewhere, that I longed to witness it and when I was told that many of the regiments I had known so well in Jamaica had left England for the scene of action the desire to join them became stronger than ever’ (Seacole 1857, 1988, 73).

By tracing the ways in which Jamaican women negotiated military and para-military spaces created by World Wars I and II this work continues in the tradition of those who have opposed the notion that women have been exempted from combat and its consequences. Increasingly, historians have come to realise that women were not insignificant in wars, but that less significance was attached to their roles because they operated primarily in the private rather than public sphere (Kessler-Harris 1989). The categories of public and private spheres have hidden the true contribution of women in general and Caribbean women in particular, resulting in a distorted account of the historical reality of warfare and human responses. Feminism and gender analysis, post-colonial cultural and sub-altern studies have attempted to correct this discursive short-sightedness and show that women and men are both involved in war, as participants, victims, actors, beneficiaries and survivors. Analyses of gender, race, class, citizenship, and sexuality have added depth to the study of the world wars. Anderson (1982) informed us of the plight of Black Americans who were the last hired and first fired during World War II. We are informed by Grayzel (1999) that knowledge production about women's bodies in Britain and France was linked to their later claims to citizenship, as their identities, particularly as mothers, became synonymous with the survival of the nation during World War I. Braybon and Summerfield (1987) and Braybon (2013) have also highlighted that both world wars put conventional perspectives about sex roles under strain. While they did not suggest that the wars emancipated women, they made the pertinent point that on a personal level, women were imbued with a new sense of self as a result of their participation and this served to liberate them mentally. This along with minor inroads made in employment served to remove the 'cage' of domesticity of women in Britain and its dependencies worldwide. Later work by Summerfield (1993, 1998) has given useful insight into the complexities involved with the mobilisation, training, employment and demobilisation of British women during World War II. What Summerfield did to advance our understanding of World War II through women's eyes, Thom (1998) accomplished for World War I. Through the use of oral history, she assessed the lives of munitions workers and found that war work provided new opportunities, though not lasting improvement, in women's lives. She also tackled the issues surrounding the danger these workers were exposed to through interaction with harmful material such as TNT, reminding us that this war of attrition took a toll on female's bodies as well as men's. Studies by

Gullace (2002) and Noakes (2006) evaluate the gendered intricacies of the world wars by suggesting that the wars shaped gendered understandings of citizenship and obligations to the nation. Gullace achieves this through a gendered analysis of men's and women's roles in World War I, while Noakes traces British women's involvement in the army through their agency from 1907 to 1948 with all its contradictions of progress and constraints.

World Wars I and II also resulted in a concerted effort on the part of many countries to include their women in various aspects of the war effort; typical images or roles assigned to men and women were slowly eroded by necessity (Greenwald 1980, xx). As Rupp (1978) theorises, both the United States and Germany solved their unemployment problems by utilising propaganda to urge women to take part in the war effort. In some cases it afforded them higher wages than they earned previously, and in other cases it opened non-traditional 'male' jobs to them Campbell (1990). The wars were more than catalysts for new types of work for women however, and a body of work has emerged regarding the impact of the wars on shaping new ideologies regarding the intricate interactions between male and female bodies. Bland (1985) and Bean (2009) among others have addressed the policing of women's bodies during the World Wars, while Bland's later work (2005) tackled the fear of miscegenation between white women and men of colour in Britain after World War I. Here, the dreaded black or yellow peril—a threat to white women's purity—is cleverly used to analyse wider issues of coloured men's and women's claims to citizenship. Costello (1985) explored the changing values and beliefs regarding sex that war facilitated. The subject of his work was the claim that the urgency and thrill of war as well as the realisation that both military and civilian life could be cut tragically short in war were key in eroding previous sexual restraints. The experiences of exploitation of women's bodies for the sexual pleasure of soldiers drew the attention of Hicks (1995) who recounted the painful experiences of thousands of 'Comfort Women'.

Arthur Marwick (1974, 1988, 2001) in writing about the ways that warfare has affected societies, points out that pre-war relationships are invariably disrupted resulting in social change. Most importantly, he argues that previously under-represented groups in society have to be conscripted in the workforce of countries immersed in total war. These groups such as women and racial or ethnic minorities usually benefit from this inclusion in the formal economy as well as a change in

consciousness about themselves. While Smith (1986) considered wartime changes for women to be temporary and superficial, Summerfield (1998, 2013) supports Marwick's modernisation thesis to an extent, and argues that for British women, wartime social changes, though temporary in her estimation, were key transformations that women found to be meaningful. Higgonet and Higgonet (1987) advanced the discourse on war and gendered social change through the concept of the double helix. Utilising the imagery of a strand of DNA, they argue that in this gendered double helix, the female is subordinate and opposed to the male. Any improvement in status by the female strand causes upward movement by the male to maintain power and superiority. Women who moved from the home into munitions factories or auxiliary roles in the army were met with men moving from these roles into more prestigious combatant roles. It also meant that when men returned from war women were expected to revert to domestic roles to maintain the status quo of the helix and the society. What the strict helix structure could not account for however, were the intangible but very real improvements in women's self-worth and the shift in their understandings of their own capabilities, which made settling quietly into previous roles impossible. Evidence of such shifts is evident in Jamaican women who undertook military and paramilitary work. As Colley (1992) indicates, this shift in self-perception due to war-work was evident even before the 1914. Indeed, her examination of domestic patriotism during the Napoleonic Wars indicates that women elevated their worth by engaging in acceptable work to support British troops. First-hand experience in fund-raising, lobbying, public organising and committee formation would serve them well as they pressed for increased political and social rights. By providing food, clothing and other comforts for the troops, women were also extending into the military sphere traditionally female virtues of charity, nurture and needlework. More than this, however, war-workers highlighted the importance of previously second-rate 'domestic' tasks and, like Jamaican women over a century later, they carved out a public and civic role for themselves.

This work has been influenced by historians who have chosen not to omit half of the world's population from studies of warfare. The experiences of British women would be vastly different from those in Jamaica as the former experienced total war, which pulled on every aspect of the nation (Grayzel 2004). The nature of colonialism, distance from the theatres of war and other Caribbean realities would impact on how persons

in this part of the world experienced the conflicts. Nonetheless, the contribution of Jamaican women to the country's war efforts, and the results of this participation, has been no less important than their counterparts in other countries. The tendency to omit Caribbean women from the literature may be seen as a natural extension of the general trend of sidelining the contribution of minorities in the 'White man's war'. Until recently, relatively little was known of the thousands of African, Indian and Caribbean men and women who served on the side of the British Empire in both international conflicts. Where work has been done on these minority groups, men are usually given pride of place for the reason that they were the majority of the soldiers, pilots and factory workers. Indeed, while scholars have investigated the extent of the impact of these conflicts on Jamaican society and have written gripping volumes about Jamaican men's contribution, the impact of world wars on women in Jamaica is largely neglected (Post 1981; Baptise 1988; Smith 2004; Puri and Putnam 2017).

Sherwood (1985), Bousquet and Douglas (1991), Howe (2002) and Smith (2004) and Goldthree (2016a, b, 2017) have paved the way for the mainstreaming of gender analysis in the study of world war and the Caribbean reality. Sherwood has effectively chronicled the struggles of West Indian workers and service personnel in Britain in World War II while battling colour bars and racist tradition, while Howe has contributed much to our understanding of the links between West Indian men's service in World War I and the stirring of race and class consciousness in the 1930s. Smith achieves similar aims through a more nuanced investigation of World War I and Jamaican masculinity, while Goldthree has added much to the study of BWIR service, migrant labour and public claims-making through poetry. Bousquet and Douglas have explored Caribbean women's military experiences during World War II. Their focus is on analysing the interplay between racism and military service as it affected those that joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in 1943. This pioneering work contributed much to the historiography of West Indian women's military service. But there is still much more to be done to assess the holistic effect of both wars on Jamaican women's roles and status. As this work illustrates, as civilians and as soldiers Jamaican women, particularly those of the middle and upper classes, were involved extensively in both world wars; they were not indifferent to the conflict from which they were so far removed. Where they were excluded from the front-line battle, they carved out spaces on the front lines of

change in relation to women's roles and socio-political status. In doing so, Jamaican women certainly rallied behind King and country. In some cases these two ideological markers were inseparable for a colonial population accustomed to a diet of dependence on the metropole for identity formation. For many Jamaicans their ideological citizenship was dual; British and Jamaican, and gives legitimacy to Colley's (1992, 6) claim that 'identities are not like hats; human beings can and do put on several at a time'. Invariably, preference was given to the 'British hat'; a legacy of the colonial order in which the Creole, or 'local' was inevitably inferior to the European. Jamaican war activists' conceptualised their efforts within the parameters of 'oneness' with England and her struggle. This 'oneness', though perhaps a façade, was strengthened in the face of conflict with a common enemy. While this may not have been legitimised by granting of full citizenship by mother country, it did not hinder many Jamaicans from identifying themselves as belonging to the Empire. But in many ways women's war-work became a dualistic attempt to solidify many Jamaican's aspiration to be considered worthy British subjects while illustrating that Jamaica was defending its own national legacy and identity. The world wars facilitated a new relationship between Jamaican women and the/metropole. As we will see, their unique sense of identity and belonging inspired creative ways to participate in the Empire's war efforts. The impact of this involvement was far-reaching and long-lasting, if not for King and country, then most certainly for themselves and Jamaican conceptions of womanhood.

The work is organised chronologically and thematically in eight chapters. Chapter 2, "War can no longer be confined to the battlefield": Jamaica grapples with the global conflicts', addresses the setting within which Jamaican women participated in the world wars. It illustrates that despite the primarily European flavour of the wars, Jamaica and other colonial dependents of the belligerent nations were invariably affected by the conflicts. During both conflicts it was clear from rhetoric from England that loyalty was not merely appreciated but required. It was important to ensure that the colonies were in support of the British Empire's efforts in both wars, if nothing else, to counteract propaganda from an enemy force that was intent on eventually hijacking the colonies and claiming them as their own. The chapter will also highlight the gendered implications of conscription of men for service. Jamaica was the first Caribbean colony to pass a conscription law, and the only colony in the British Empire to do so, apart from New Zealand. However, the need for

conscription never arose and all those who went to war volunteered their service, largely through the recruiting women's movement; an issue which is addressed in detail in Chap. 4. Chapter 2 also grapples with the knotty issues of loyalty to Empire and a growing nationalist fervour that characterised Jamaican responses to the wars. In the midst of widespread provision of gifts from Jamaica to England in cash and kind (largely through the efforts of Jamaican women) was a burgeoning nationalism, race consciousness and at times, outright dissent against the British Empire. This complex milieu was the setting for Jamaican women's wartime service and sets the stage for the analysis of their involvement in the wars.

Chapter 3, "Doing their little bit": women's organisation of Jamaican World War I efforts', focuses on twentieth-century Jamaican women and their response to World War I. It briefly examines the various forces that impacted women's roles and status on the eve of war. The heterogeneity of Jamaican womanhood necessitates explanation and clarity on the distinctions that separated the classes and races of Jamaican women, who carved out various niches for service during the war. This chapter highlights the mobilisation of women for an international war effort for the first time in Jamaican history. Though women were not eligible for service as soldiers, they were widely encouraged to 'do their little bit' in seeing to the Empire's victory. Eventually, this 'bit' became a widespread local movement to produce war supplies. This chapter traces the development of what can be called a 'Great War Women's Movement' in the country. While they were expected to have different roles from men, women were encouraged to actively participate in securing victory for Britain. Jamaica's leading newspaper, and mouthpiece of pro-colonial conservatism, *The Gleaner*, tried to motivate Jamaican women to get involved in efforts by highlighting the gallant work of women in Britain. Critical issues of race and class are interrogated in this chapter, as the initial target audience for war-work was the white or near-white woman of the leisured class. War-work was constructed as an acceptable engagement for women who, prior to this, were not concerned with formal employment outside the home. This functioned to maintain the continuity of class and race distinctions among women in the colony, while simultaneously building a foundation for increased participation of women in public duties later in the twentieth century. This chapter also offers a subtle challenge to the view that 'female domestication' was a source of oppression. Even in the domestic sphere, Jamaican women created avenues for participation in the island's war efforts and increased

their political influence. Indeed, the notion of separate spheres of existence for men and women, once thought of as limiting female potential, is now seen as one of the most important sources of female empowerment (Kessler-Harris 1989, 32).

Chapter 4, “Masculine duties and feminine powers”: recruiting efforts during World War I’, continues the interrogation of the construction of gendered ideals during World War I by addressing the key role women were expected to undertake in recruitment of men for service during the war. The production of a Jamaican wartime masculinity to serve the needs of the Empire was only possible through the concurrent creation of active civic womanhood. Women emerged as prominent speakers and writers on the topic of recruitment and were in fact a major feature of recruitment strategies. Portrayed as the main hinge on which Jamaican recruitment efforts hung, elite and working-class women alike were tasked with ensuring that their able-bodied men signed up for service during the war. What began as a move to show support for Empire eventually became a necessary move to supply His Majesty’s Forces with manpower as severe shortages of human resources hit the British Army. In all, some 15,204 West Indians were recruited for military service by the end of the war in 1918, largely through the combined efforts of recruiting agencies and women throughout the Caribbean territories. The chapter also analyses the gendered rhetoric that became a very real part of the movement to motivate men to enlist. For instance, ‘feminisation’ of men by women was a strategy used to encourage men to fight; one which proved successful for the recruitment movement. These and other gendered strategies are assessed within the wider context of a racialised military complex in the colonial environment.

Chapter 5, “Votes for (some) women now!” The road to political franchise in the aftermath of war’, sheds light on the changes in official policy and law that occurred in the post-1918 era. The focus is mainly on the lobbying for political enfranchisement of elite and middle-class women and the extent to which it was as a result of an altered perception of these women because of their wartime involvement. The chapter is set within the context of the English suffrage movements, while illustrating the intricacies of the local agitation for the vote for women. It highlights that women’s involvement in the war was equated with deserving the franchise. It was accepted by many that the out of the ‘evil’ war came the greater ‘good’ of enfranchisement of women the world over. Men and women were working side by side in unprecedented ways as a result of the

war exigencies, and this prompted the view that such a society should be governed by both men and women. The chapter highlights the road to franchise initiated by male politicians who lobbied for a restricted franchise of the middle and upper classes synonymous with war-work during World War I. This would result in small minority female electorate, buttressing the upper-class vote. The chapter therefore explores the campaign for the vote within the context of rigid class and race delineations, highlighting the gender and class contradictions of colonial society. It examines the heated debates that raged in the print media about the proposal to grant some women the vote. Harsh critiques of women's political ability seemed only to goad women to lobby harder, and what began as a call by men became the dominion of fiery female writers and lobbyists who no longer sat idly by. The chapter goes beyond the passing of the legislation in 1919 to explore the unintended consequences of enfranchising some women after World War I. Though class and gender contradictions riddled the fight for the vote, middle- and working-class women capitalised on the movement, leading to Afro-descended Mary Morris-Knibb becoming the first woman to be elected to public office in Jamaica in 1939.

Chapter 6, "A woman's place is in the war": continuity and change in World War II', advances a discussion about the need for 'placement' of women in Jamaica's World War II efforts. Though women were more active in the recruitment of men for the army in World War I, there was a more concerted effort to organise women to bolster the wartime effort during World War II. Through these efforts, women were not only able to provide critical supplies, commonly called 'comforts', for those who served in the armed forces, but also increased their visibility in the society. The chapter argues that despite the fact that women were accorded a special place in the war, the adage which the chapter title seeks to contradict, 'a woman's place is in the home', was just as influential. This speaks to the systematic policy from the late 1930s to encourage women to maintain their place in domestic affairs rather than in the public domain. The concepts of continuity and change in this era are critical to an understanding of the impact of World War II on women in the island. While there are some similarities with the previous era of war, there are key differences, which will be explored. Much of the official work of women during World War II did not upset the status quo, but as the chapter illustrates, the domestic work of women, previously sidelined, was accorded increased status on a national level as a necessary war measure rather than simply a hobby of the leisured class.

This contributed greatly to changing views in Jamaican society about the status of women's work. In addition, Jamaican women attempted to broaden their reach by assisting in the evacuation of English children in a bid to 'save the future generation of the British Empire'. A more widespread task undertaken by women of every class was that of food production to assist the country in cutting imports at a time when shipping was restricted due to hostile activity on the seas.

Chapter 7, "We were soldiers": Jamaican women enlist in World War II, utilises the oral testimonies of women who were involved in the war as soldiers, to examine their motives for participating and unearth their wartime experiences. The results of participation are also assessed, around the themes of what was achieved for King, country and self. The chapter begins with an overview of the long battle to get the British War Office to accept Jamaican Women in the army. The War Office, guided by racist principles, was not eager to recruit Caribbean nationals, regardless of gender. Sexism as well as racism punctuated the debates as to whether West Indian women were to participate in defending the Empire. The issue of recruitment of West Indian women elicited heated secret debates from Britain's top political and military figures. The chapter explores the issues of race that punctuated the discussions, with the War Office insisting on upholding the colour bar, while the Colonial Office feared the wrath of West Indians' likely insurgence. This background to enlistment is juxtaposed against the oral accounts of the soldiers' experiences before, during and after their service. Their major concerns were not what got them there, but that they served their King and country and brought to fruition a better-quality life for themselves. Their motivations to enlist are explained, along with their challenges and triumphs during the war. Finally, their ability to utilise every opportunity for self-advancement as a result of the war is a hallmark of the chapter. It closes with an assessment of what these and other Jamaican women were able to achieve, and an examination of the extent of the contribution Jamaican women made to the war effort, emphasising the greatest result of participation—empowerment and self-advancement—and supporting the claim that the modernisation thesis is applicable to Jamaican women's wartime experience.

The concluding eighth chapter, World wars as catalysts for empowerment of Jamaican women, pulls the themes in the book together by arguing that the wars were indeed critical to the empowerment of Jamaican women. It demonstrates that Jamaican women were not the

same in 1945 as they were in 1914 and that the wars contributed greatly to the social shifts. Set within the wider context of the political consequences of the conflicts for the nation, it is evident that men and women were critical to the war project as civilians as and combatants. Women cannot be omitted as they played important roles in wartime and were impacted upon in turn. The chapter argues that Jamaican women as a collective were not indifferent to war, as many were directly or indirectly involved in Jamaica's efforts. Though their participation was different from that of other women worldwide, it is still important to Jamaican history and reality and should not be overlooked when appraising the factors that influenced the status of women in twentieth-century Jamaica.

Jamaican women can no longer be omitted from the literature on World Wars I and II. They played important wartime roles and experienced positive shifts in their life-chances and social development. Their contribution is critical to a more robust understanding of Jamaican history and in fact, provides a more historically accurate context for the study of the efforts of Jamaican men during both world wars. More than this, however, this book pays homage to Jamaican women of the twentieth century who participated in global conflicts and battled gender and race discrimination while making their mark on the front lines of social change.

## NOTES

1. At the Paris Peace Conference on 18 January 1919, the president of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, chaired the committee responsible for drawing up a covenant for such an organisation. Various articles made up the Charter of the League. The covenant's 26 articles were largely dedicated to maintaining peace and promoting international co-operation. However the League wielded no considerable military force and its attempts to impose economic sanctions on offenders were largely ineffective. The League was dissolved on 19 April 1946, and replaced by the United Nations.
2. The international women's movement has been instrumental in peace initiatives. During World War I for instance, women from warring and neutral nations interested in suffrage and peace worked via the International Congress of Women, which met at The Hague to establish peace initiatives. This was a path-breaking initiative because these women made an expression of revulsion against war even at the risk of seeming unpatriotic (Costin 1982).

3. A portion of the petition read: According to the vote of the Peace Committee at the Belgrade meeting, May 1931 the women of the alliance and other international women's organisations declare: 'their profound satisfaction that a conference on disarmament has been called for 1932 and trust that this conference will realize the hopes of the world by making a first important reduction of armaments.' See *The Gleaner*, 11 January 1932, 3.
4. Of the 20,000 British soldiers who lost their lives in the war, 3000 died in battle and the remainder from disease. See Alexander and Dewjee (1982) and Josephs (1986) for an assessment of Seacole's life and work.

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## ‘War Can No Longer Be Confined to the Battlefield’: Situating Jamaica in World Wars I and II

I now call my people at home and my peoples across the seas who will make our cause their own. I ask them to stand calm and firm and united in this time of trial. The task will be hard. There may be dark days ahead and what can no longer be confined to the battlefield. But we can only do the right as we see the right and reverently commit our cause to God. If one and all we keep resolutely faithful to it, ready for whatever service or sacrifice it may demand, then, with God’s help, we shall prevail.<sup>1</sup>

In a radio broadcast to the people of the British-colonised world George V, King of England, uttered these words to cement the importance of loyalty of the British Empire at the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Though his appeal contradicted the stance of the War Office, which was decidedly opposed to black and brown bodies in the army, his appeal not only presented the war as just, but gave a timely reminder that its course and outcome would affect every far-flung member and subject of the Empire. Such rhetoric from the Crown during World Wars I and II also aimed at making a critical point to subjects far from the trenches, hostile seas and invaded airspaces; that they were not excluded from the deleterious effects of modern warfare (Marwick 2001). It is for this very reason that these conflicts have been labelled as world wars. While critical analysis of the wars by writers like K. M. Panikkar have lead them to consider the conflicts as ‘civil wars with the European community of nations’ rather than world wars (Page 1987, 1), the position of the belligerent nations as imperialists meant that the fate of the world was inextricably linked to the outcome

of these wars of might and ideology. Though geographic distance from the front lines may have spared dependents, colonies and protectorates from experiencing the most debilitating effects of wars, it not exclude them from feeling the pinch of wartime exigencies, disruption in imports and exports, economic hardship, death and injury among volunteers and a range of socio-political changes brought on by the wars.

Certainly, these wars were not confined to the battlefield. Jamaica and other colonial dependents of the warring countries featured as key actors, not only as sources of natural and human resources for the war machinery, but as bedrocks of loyalty and devotion. Indeed, the absence of a democratic political system and the harsh economic realities of the wars did not prevent an overwhelming majority of Jamaicans from being loyal to England. Despite the complicated nature of the racial and class delineations in the colony, which fostered a range of responses to the colonial establishment, the dominant narrative was of a supportive member of the British Empire. Throughout this book the loyalty of some Jamaican women will be assessed and, as this chapter will highlight, while there were important exceptions, Jamaicans rallied to the call of Empire during its most desperate moments, and led the Caribbean in the wave of support of the British Empire.

## CULTIVATING A RESPONSE TO WORLD WAR I

The tendency of West Indian colonies to jump to the aid of the mother (even if not maternal) country was not merely a spontaneous combustion of collective loyalist energy, but was engineered over centuries through carefully crafted policies geared towards subjugating colonised spaces and people. Naturally, this system did not always yield the desired results. Centuries of resistance created chinks in the imperialist armour (Craton 1982; Hart 1985; Wilmot 2009). However, the early twentieth-century Jamaican social landscape was characterised by a well-cemented affinity to the metropole. The colony remained dominated by a small percentage of White, Christian and Jewish, male elite who not only controlled the Crown Colony Legislature, but who also exerted a stranglehold over the country's economic assets. The socio-political landscape was contested terrain as the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of a middle class, populated by coloureds, (products of 'miscegenation' between the Whites and Blacks) and upwardly mobile black professionals, public officials, clergy, teachers among others, who carved out a niche of influence from

their acquisition of European styled-education, culture and respectability. The masses included a majority African descended working class involved in agriculture and poorly paid wage labour in industry, commerce and domestic employment.

The Jamaican racial milieu was further complicated after 1845 when indentured immigrants were brought to the island to secure labour for the fledging plantation economy (Look-Lai 1993; Shepherd 1993). With the abolition of slavery came some amount of movement of ex-enslaved people and choice as to where and for whom they worked. This, coupled with a growth in peasantry and small farming by the ex-enslaved population, threatened to endanger the livelihood of the plantocracy, who for over 300 years had become accustomed to a steady stream of forced labour. To ease the psychological burden and the loss of control over the workforce, the British House of Commons passed a resolution in 1842 to introduce alternative sources of labour into the Caribbean sugar economy. Immigrant labour was sought from India, China, Africa, Java, Madeira, Europe as well as North America, but it was the Indians and Chinese that came in the greatest numbers to Jamaica. Between 1845 and 1916, 38,000 Indians were imported to Jamaica as well as 1152 Chinese between 1853 and 1884 (Shepherd 1998; Look-Lai 1993). These numbers included very few women, especially in the case of the Chinese.<sup>2</sup>

In early twentieth-century Jamaica, the concept of Empire was stronger than country. The 'ranking game' was in full swing, evidenced by racism, shadism, social ordering and cultural hierarchising that privileged British over creole/local and whiteness over blackness, as well as racial tensions between Blacks and immigrants (Bryan 1991; Brathwaite 2005; Shepherd 2007). In Jamaica, the formal education system was almost wholly influenced by British curricula and was geared towards a thorough indoctrination of British values in the minds of Jamaicans. Palmer (2016, 8) summarises the 'genius' of British colonialism as one which 'relied less on physical force for its sustenance and more on its capacity to invade the inner sanctuaries of its victims, making them internalise their subordinate status accept for the most part the normalcy of the abnormal'. Symbols of national identity displayed in Jamaica—the flag, the national anthem and the pictures of leaders—were British. As Howe (2002, 1) explains 'British practices, institutions, language, and religion fashioned the consciousness of the West Indies. The physical impress of British ideas was everywhere evident in place names, road patterns, naval and military bases, military bands, architecture, surnames and sporting activities like cricket.'

Constance Marks, a Jamaican woman who served in the British army during World War II, indicated the effectiveness of these symbols when she said: 'I was proud to be British and did not see myself as Jamaican. I had no loyalty to country, but to the motherland.'<sup>3</sup>

Among the most evident public displays of loyalty in Jamaica was Empire Day, observed each year on May 24 in recognition of Queen Victoria's birthday. In schools, the day was commemorated by assembly, hoisting of the Union Jack, singing of the National Anthem- 'God Save Our Gracious Queen', reading of the Empire Day message, saluting the flag and singing the song 'Flag of Britain', and an address on British citizenship.<sup>4</sup> Pre-independent Jamaica and its symbols of imperialism and unification were cemented in colonial peoples and inspired self-sacrificing love toward the motherland, regardless of the fact that the colonial status was remarkably politically, economically and socially oppressive.

The outbreak of war in 1914 and 1939 facilitated perhaps the most overwhelming and tangible manifestation of Jamaican devotion to the British Crown and Empire. Inculcated in the public consciousness was the narrative that the British Empire was involved in morally just wars against fierce foes and needed all hands on deck to squash the enemy. It was made clear that the enemy was not merely a Kaiser Wilhelm or an Adolf Hitler: both conflicts were wars of ideology; freedom vs. slavery, democracy vs. dictatorship, Christianity vs. secularism. The hypocrisy (which would be pointed out by Césaire's 1950 polemic *Discourse on Colonialism*) of Britain being a slave-holding and imperialist nation fighting for freedom and self-determination was lost on many colonial subjects.

At the outbreak of World War I, the Local Legislature first sought to secure the Empire's communication through press censorship. Any information that could have been used by the enemy as propaganda against the British Empire was forbidden. Law 38 of 1914 secured press and postal censorship, and Major E. T. Dixon was appointed by Governor Manning to be both press and postal censor. The Governor also met with Kingston's newspaper managers and advised them not to publish 'any reference to the strength or location of the troops or of their movements... and to make no reference to the movements of the ships of His Majesty's Navy.'<sup>5</sup> Germans living in the colony were viewed with nervous suspicion by authorities and were often arrested or interned. In an extreme case, a working-class boy, Oscar Lewis, was charged for delivering letters to his German employer and sentenced to five years in prison.<sup>6</sup>

Martial Law was declared and a proclamation was issued, 'we do hereby call upon our loving subjects therein to continue peacefully to pursue their usual avocations, carefully abstaining from all action likely to produce popular excitement, unrest or confusion, and doing their utmost to check, restrain and dissuade all who may be inclined to such action' (Cundall 1925, 20).

The Governor's message was aimed at offsetting the possibility of an eruption of a black working class who could be counted on to publicly revolt for rights and freedoms. If the watershed Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 was fading from the memories of colonial officials, they were given a reminder of the capacity of the daughters and sons of Africans to wield political influence in the 1912 Tramcar Boycotts a mere two years before the outbreak of the Great War in Europe (Smith 2014, 93). To ensure that Jamaicans focused on the grandeur of Empire and not on the minutiae of hardships of home, the colonial establishment, led by Governor William Manning and buttressed by schools and churches, spread the message of service, sacrifice and patriotic sentiment. The imperial mission was propagated through the major newspapers, literature, and art. This included but was not limited to rhetoric of loyalty and duty used at public recruitment rallies as well as the literati's use of the poetry and short stories published to create a specific war-time imagination in the population and reinforce the aims of the British Empire.

The mobilisation of Jamaican resources was also in full swing in both World War I and II and was one of the front-runners in the West Indies offering gifts, cash, men and women to Britain. During World War I, a sum of £10,000 was voted for defence purposes and a Jamaica Reserve Regiment, the Kingston Infantry Volunteers and the Jamaica Volunteer Defence Force were formed to shore up the island's defences and train a pool of men to defend the Empire if called upon. The Legislative Council offered a gift of sugar to Britain in the form of 1300 tons or £50,000 worth of sugar, which was shipped early in 1915.<sup>7</sup> Between 1920 and 1921, Jamaica paid an annual war contribution to the British Government fixed at £60,000 for 40 years.<sup>8</sup> As Table 2.1 indicates, other gifts were given, including cigarettes, woollen clothing and bedding, largely through the work of women, food from the Jamaica Agricultural Society, as well as funds to purchase aeroplanes and motor ambulances (Cundall 1925, 82).

**Table 2.1** Summary showing total public collections during World War I. *Source* Compiled from CSO 1B/5/76 #349 Central War Fund War contributions

<i>Year</i>	<i>Nature of collection</i>	<i>Total</i>
1914	Cash	£16,114 14 2
	Cigarettes	600,000
	Clothing	2 packages
	Preserves	6 cases
	Walking sticks	1 case
1915	Cash	£26,291 17 6
	Fruit	3249 cases
	Preserves	6526 lb
	Honey	80 gallons
	Walking sticks	5211
	Cigarettes	400,200
	Clothing	1 parcel
1916	Cash	£10,359 5 5
	Fruit	2151 cases
	Preserves	651 lb
	Walking sticks	2396
	Cigarettes	70,500
1917	Cash	£8,597 13 11
	Fruit	2998 cases
	Preserves	311 lb
	Walking sticks	1570
	Cigarettes	40 cases 78,850
	Sugar	4 tons and 37 boxes
	Eggs	180
1918	Cash	£19,729 17 2
	Fruit	1015 cases

Apart from gifts in kind, the War Contingent Committee was formed to organise the sending of troops from Jamaica overseas to various theatres of war. In true colonial fashion, Jamaicans exhibited that paradox of imperialism; that of defending the very institution of their subjugation (Page 1987). Nine contingents were dispatched between November 8, 1915 and October 2, 1917, with total numbers estimated at 250 officers and 11,042 rank and file members (Lucas 1923, 350). The first contingent of 550 men was sponsored by Jamaica's own coffers and between clothing and transportation expenses Jamaica spent £93,335.<sup>9</sup> Jamaica was only colony in the British Empire to pass a Conscription law apart from New Zealand. On 22 March 1915 'a law to make provision with respect to Military Service in connection with the present war' was introduced by Hon. H. A. L. Simpson, solicitor and prominent elected member of the legislature. This bill provided for the registration of every man in Jamaica between the

ages of sixteen and forty one and was passed by a majority of 21 to 4 on 1 June 1915. However, the need for conscription never arose and all those who went to war volunteered their service, partially through the recruiting efforts of women, which will be discussed in Chap. 5.

Women did not serve overseas in notable numbers during World War I, as female involvement was organised locally to assist the war effort. Guided by the prevailing gender military order of the day where male bodies were drafted to fight the enemy and female bodies were to be protected from the enemy, Jamaican women made little effort to serve in the burgeoning female auxiliaries in the British Army, apart from 24 Jamaican Red Cross Nurses who served in England. Governor Manning suggested that women should form local organisations to supply woollen clothing for the British soldiers and the Jamaica War Relief Fund came into being to fund this effort. The Kingston Women's Fund Committee headed a strong women's movement. Through the efforts of this organisation, Jamaica Flag Day was constituted on July 27, 1915. This brought in over £2000 and the Jamaica War Contingent fund followed which collected an impressive £10,000. In sum Jamaica contributed over £194,780 in monetary subscriptions between 1914 and 1920 (Lucas 1923, 352). Women were active in the Contingent Comforts Committee and in the Ladies' Working Association.

Various other fundraisers were organised to send money to Britain, including *The Gleaner's War Fund*. The Contingent Sufferers' Fund was formed for the purpose of attending to the social welfare of the families of troops and the Queen's Hotel was used as a soldier's home. In addition, in August 1917 a home for the children of soldiers on active service was opened at the Rio Cobre Hotel in Spanish Town. As early as November 29, 1914, over £16,000 was collected island-wide from various funds to assist Britain, Belgium, Russia, France and Poland.<sup>10</sup> The tangible and intangible expressions of support to the British Empire by Jamaicans during World War I were, by all accounts exemplary. As a dispatch from Downing Street indicated:

...the people (of Jamaica) have displayed a spirit of the greatest loyalty and I have received a large number of offers of personal service... there is a very excellent spirit aboard and I can confidently assert that there is no more loyal colony than that of Jamaica... and are generally unanimous in their support of the Empire of the mother country in its prosecution to a successful conclusion.<sup>11</sup>

## THE EMPIRE CALLS AGAIN: JAMAICANS RALLY DURING WORLD WAR II

By the end of World War I in 1918, it was clear that Jamaica had done more than her fair share to provide support for the Empire. Jamaica emerged as a critical player in the defence mechanisms of the metropole. The country provided raw materials for industry and was a source of human resources when needed. The second global conflict of the twentieth century was to see an even greater level of participation of Jamaican men and women. Though dubbed the wars to end all wars, The Great War of 1914–1918 would certainly be superseded by World War II in terms of scope, reach and geo-political consequences. Dominated by trench warfare, World War I was overshadowed by World War II, in which technological advance was fully utilised and was fought on multiple fronts including land, air, sea, underwater and through the use of advanced weaponry and nuclear energy. As Bryan (2003, 50) indicated, ‘starting in 1939 Europe was wracked by a war which by the time it ended in 1945, had touched every corner of the globe, and was destined to have long-term political, economic and technological repercussions’.

As with the outbreak of World War I, the Jamaican press was charged with reinforcing the need for loyalty to present a united front to the enemy. *The Gleaner* in particular was what Lewis (2004, 176) rightly dubbed ‘the mouthpiece for Jamaican conservatism’ and was wholeheartedly devoted to directing the thoughts of Jamaicans as to how to approach the war effort. As Bean (1994, 96) concluded ‘*The Gleaner’s* reports were not simply a catalogue of unfolding events but it reported with a sense of urgency and a particular slant to achieve specific objectives, that of preparing and mobilising Jamaicans to respond to the war with loyalty to Britain and to fight to preserve democracy.’

For much of the twentieth century, the pro-British stance of this dominant Jamaican media powerhouse was preserved by its editor Herbert George DeLisser. DeLisser hailed from the upper echelon of White Jewish families in Jamaica. A prolific writer and novelist, he held top positions in various organisations, including being secretary of the Imperial Association, a pro-British organisation founded in 1917. His reign as editor (1904–1944) spanned both wars and he can be credited with not only presenting the Jamaican public with news of the wars from reputable sources such as the Associated Press, United Press International

and Reuters, but also with crafting and disseminating the response to the wars considered most appropriate to further the cause of Empire. Shortly after World War II was declared, *The Gleaner* crafted a statement to remind the Jamaican people of their ideological place in struggle and the tangible contributions they should make to Britain. It read:

This is an Empire War—it concerns every man, woman and child in the British Empire so that every citizen of the Empire can, and should, do their bit to help. It doesn't matter at all how large, or how small that bit may be, if you only give one shilling to the cause, you are doing your share, just as the soldier who fights in the trenches, or the sailor at sea, is doing his share. Your one shilling, or sixpence, or whatever you can afford is just as meritorious an effort. (*The Gleaner*, October 30, 1939, 3)

*The Gleaner* facilitated and encouraged fund raising drives such as the Empire War Fund, printed extensive pieces on the efforts of British women and men in order to influence the establishment of similar organisations in Jamaica, and spearheaded the drive to increase local food production. The newspaper also routinely published expressions of gratitude from British and Colonial Officials as proof that a grateful Empire appreciated Jamaican efforts. So effective was *The Gleaner* in whipping up support for the British Empire's cause and inciting hatred for German barbarity, that in 1944 a crowd of over 200 Jamaicans were reported to have burned Hitler's effigy in a great celebration of the expected Allied victory (*The Gleaner*, December 6, 1944).

A survey of leading newspapers including the *The Gleaner* and *Jamaica Times* indicates that during World War II, as in the Great War preceding it, fundraising was once again a hallmark of the Jamaican response, with one of the major contributors of World War II being the Bombing Planes Fund, founded in May 1940. It was reported that in seven months Jamaicans contributed £75,000 to purchase vehicles, aircraft and bombers for Britain (*The Victory Book* 1941, 205). Support also came in the form of man- and womanpower. Over 4600 Jamaicans were despatched as servicemen to various theatres of war during World War II.<sup>12</sup> In addition, thousands of West Indian seamen made their contributions to one of the Second World War's most dangerous services, the Merchant Navy. One thousand volunteers for army service also formed the Caribbean Regiment and served in the Middle East and Italy. Jamaicans served in the Royal

Engineers as highly skilled technicians. Britain recruited Jamaicans as pilots during World War II, over 50 joining the Royal Air Force (RAF) by the end of October 1940 (Johnson 2014). As the war progressed however, the number of RAF volunteers grew exponentially to approximately 6000 as aircrew, ground crew and munitions workers (Bryan 2003, 52).

An important departure from 1914–1918 war was that Jamaica furnished Britain with women for the British Army, particularly in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). Some 600 Caribbean women joined the ATS during World War II. These women served in their home countries, the United States and Britain. Trained as soldiers, many did secretarial work during the war and as Fig. 2.1 illustrates, were part of the country's symbol of loyalty to the Britain in the 1944 Empire Day Parade. The appearance of women in uniform had dual and somewhat incongruous effects. On the one hand, they embodied the ultimate expression of loyalty to the British crown and its attendant racial and gender ideals. On the other, the optics of women in military uniform; apparel previously exclusively reserved for male bodies, served as a warning that gender norms and roles were bending as a result of the war.

Despite the obvious dangers involved with military service, Jamaicans were very willing to give their services to Empire in return for honour, pride and, for some, to acquire skills and expertise in new areas of employment. The mobilisation of Jamaicans for service occurred even before Britain asked for assistance. As the *Victory Book* (1941, 207) proudly stated, 'the spontaneity with which men have flocked to the movement is yet another proof of the deep-rooted loyalty, and an appreciation of the ties existing between this colony and the mother country. It also indicates Jamaica's awareness of her responsibilities and the part that she must play in this war.'

Evidence from War Office and Colonial Office correspondence, however suggest that schemes to recruit West Indians were not always well received by British officials. Shrouded in a cloud of racism, concerns were often raised about the competence of black West Indians. As the Ministry of Labour indicated,

...many of the Jamaicans are not fitted for the work in which they are supposed to have skill. For example out of 50 of these men placed with Messrs. Shell Mex Limited...16 only could be employed as skilled men. The remaining 34 had to be engaged as mates in the trades in which they had been classified...The example given shows the need for much greater care being exercised before men are brought to this country for employment.<sup>13</sup>



**Fig. 2.1** Empire Day in Jamaica, 24 May 1944: Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) march-past with junior commander Barbara Oakley in command. *Source* Imperial War Museum

However, given that many persons were able and very willing to travel to Britain to give their service, the Colonial Office considered it to be politically prudent to have an outlet for West Indian patriotism so as not to offend and incite colonial subjects.<sup>14</sup> In addition, as the war progressed, the British Empire and her allies suffered great losses at the hand of the Germans and resulted in Britain needing to accept assistance from its colonies, particularly in the area of human resources. As a result by February 1942, it was reported that close to 400 Jamaicans travelled to the United Kingdom to participate in the war. Of these, 64 joined the RAF, 101 were skilled tradesmen who joined other units of the army and 201 were mechanics working in munitions factories. By October 1942, the number of Caribbean technicians in Britain totalled 179 with a great

majority coming from Jamaica.<sup>15</sup> By 1944, 222 Jamaicans joined aircrews as pilots, navigators and bombers in the RAF, with a further 3624 joining the ground staff of the RAF and 251 in munitions (Bryan 2003, 55).

It is perhaps not surprising that the Jamaican population clamoured to give their service to the war effort, as their leaders set the tone by professing adoration for Britain and loathing for her enemies. Interestingly, many of these leaders expressed varying degrees of anti-British sentiment prior to 1939. Norman Manley, who served in World War I and was the leader of the People's National Party (PNP), which heralded self-government prior to the outbreak of war, passed a resolution, which suspended agitation for political reforms until a more appropriate time. Lewis (2004, 185) commenting on Manley's pro-British sentiment during the war years said, 'for the PNP it was a gradual surrender of its early anti-imperialist stand in favour of a policy of collaborationism with the British ruling class'.

Alexander Bustamante, cousin of Manley, leader of the Jamaica Labour Party, a champion of workers' rights who had frequent conflict with officials, also expressed his love of British democracy in a letter to Malcolm McDonald, Secretary of State to the Colonies. He said:

On behalf of the working people of this island I beg with due deference to re-affirm my steadfast and unflinching loyalty and allegiance to the throne... and renew my pledged determination to use my influence over the working people to achieve the effective prosecution and victorious culmination of the present war which His Majesty's Government is engaged against the common foe of civilization and democracy.<sup>16</sup>

These stalwarts, who prior to war highlighted the oppressive nature of colonial rule, expressed their allegiance to Britain during World War II ostensibly because the wars highlighted the stark contrasts between the ideologies of democracy and totalitarianism represented by the British Empire and Hitler's Germany respectively. Regardless of whether Jamaicans were afforded the rights of full self-determination at this time was less important when faced with a very real possibility of the horrors of fascism/Nazism. In addition, many Jamaicans who strove towards the goal of self-government envisioned autonomy within the context of a British Commonwealth of Nations and obviously anticipated a dire state of affairs for countries with a black majority in a world ruled by the virulent breed of German racism. A resolution by the Jamaican Progressive

League (JPL), the New York Chapter of the Jamaica League, a self-labelled nationalist organisation, aptly describes the thin line between British Loyalty and Jamaican nationalist sentiments thus:

...whereas the Jamaican Progressive League of New York, a Nationalist Organization dedicated to the task of securing self-government for the Island of Jamaica within the framework of the British Commonwealth of Nations, is convinced that the best interests of the people of Jamaica are bound up with those of the Nations engaged in rescuing the world from the menace of German Fascism...

The JPL continued by signalling to Britain that reward was expected for the devotion and sacrifice of Jamaicans in a more tangible form than letters of thanks and national parades:

And be it further resolved that in order to free the just objectives of the allied Governments from suspicion or insincerity and to inspire the people of Jamaica and other non-self-governing sections of the British Empire with unreserved enthusiasm for the allied cause, the British Government be requested to ledge itself to reward these peoples for their participation in the present struggle by granting them self government if they demand it after the restoration of peace.<sup>17</sup>

The JPL and other like-minded organisations and political leaders were sending a very clear triple-pronged message to Britain; that as colonial subjects they were interested in helping to secure Allied victory in a just war against the Axis powers, that they would not abandon a peaceful and equally justified campaign for political reform and finally, that they expected to receive the blessings of self-government at the end of the international hostilities.

These sentiments were not unique to Jamaica, as other Caribbean leaders such as T. A. Marryshow of Grenada and Captain Cipriani of Trinidad also expressed similar views. Barbados instructed England to 'go ahead' with war with confidence that its Barbadian subjects would fully support the move (Phillips 1998). Nelson Mandela's memoirs indicate similar contradictions of imperialism when Prime Minister Jan Smuts visited his college to speak on the war effort. Mandela (1995, 49) recounted, 'along with my fellow classmates, I heartily applauded him, cheering Smuts's call to do battle for the freedom of Europe, forgetting that we did not have that freedom here in our own land'.

When faced with a common foe, British subjects followed their most learned and trusted leaders, and rallied together for victory. Being frugal, these leaders also estimated that if, or when, war was won by Britain, she would reward their patriotism with closer attention to concerns. The cause of King and Empire assumed a deep significance for persons who would later strategically use this loyalty to demand post-war reforms. Perhaps Bustamante said it best: ‘no matter what we may have against our mother country at this time, even though we cannot forget, we must sink our own personal feelings for our flag and at this time, that comes almost first to me. When the war is over, that will be time enough to tell England more of our minds.’<sup>18</sup>

Jamaica not only offered ideological moral support from its leadership but tangible assistance through the facilitation of refugees. Approximately 2000 women, men and children from Gibraltar, Malta and Jewish persons from other European countries were housed at a camp situated at what is presently University of the West Indies, Mona (Francis-Brown 2004). In 1940, the Gibraltar Camp was constructed to house between 7000 and 9000 war-threatened civilian inhabitants of the British Mediterranean colonies, Gibraltar and Malta. The civilian population was evacuated to Britain, Madeira and Jamaica in order for Gibraltar to be fortified against the possibility of a German attack. The Mona Estate was the site for the large camp which operated as self-sufficient and spacious accommodation for less than half the persons it was constructed to house. The camp contained schools, rooms for churches and synagogues, a hospital, shops, offices, a police station as well as plots of land for subsistence agriculture and gardens. By 1944, Italian and German internees previously housed at Up Park Camp and Hanover Street were also interned at the Gibraltar Camp.

The presence of United States military bases in the island further cemented the country’s strategic importance in the international conflict. Though the United States did not officially join the war until after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, it was neither unaware nor unaffected by the growing presence of the Germans in the Caribbean. U-Boat warfare occurred in the waters of the Caribbean and there were also German financial interests in Haiti. These factors however perhaps were only the icing on the cake of a previous and long-term plan that the United States had to exert control over its Caribbean neighbours (Baptiste 1988). The war provided the perfect opportunity for the United States

to enter into an arrangement with Britain to initiate formal strategic sites of military influence, and in 1941 the two nations signed the Destroyer for Bases Deal ('Lend-Lease'). Under this agreement the United States gave Britain 50 destroyers in exchange for naval and air bases, on ninety nine-year rent-free leases, in the Bahamas, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad, Antigua, British Guiana (present-day Guyana) and Bermuda. It was open secret that the United States got the better end of the bargain as a fleet of suspiciously dilapidated and battle-worn destroyers was a small price to pay for bases of such strategic naval and geopolitical importance. However Britain was desperately short of warships to track down German submarines and secure convoys of merchant ships. As Kelshall (1988, 4) explains, 'old they may have been, but they arrived just in time and made an immediate impact on the battle. They bridged the gap while specialist convoy escorts were being built and helped to keep the Atlantic route open.'

In Jamaica, The United States gained control over 23,000 acres of land at Pigeon Island, Vernamfield, Moro in St. Thomas, Airy Mountain in Negril, a portion of Hellshire Hills and Portland Bight. With the bases came the formation of the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission in 1942 for the purpose of encouraging social and economic corporation, between the United States and its possessions and bases in the Caribbean and the United Kingdom and British Colonies in the area (Fraser 1994).<sup>19</sup> Employment opportunities were also facilitated by the bases, as over 9000 Jamaicans were employed on the bases up to 1942.<sup>20</sup>

## HARDSHIP AND DISSENT DURING WORLD WARS I AND II

Amidst the support for the British war effort, Jamaica reeled from the negative ripple effects of total war during World Wars I and II. Deficiencies in imported foodstuffs and manufactured goods crippled the island during both wars as the government imposed quota restrictions on imports. As people who lived through World War II told reporters of the *Sunday Gleaner* (2000, D4):

...before the war you could get all the commodities you need- salt fish, kerosene oil, flour not to mention sugar because the estate could always step in and we get a little sugar. But with the war everything was scarce. We came down to a point when we have to use coconut oil to burn as light.

The shortages also severely affected the price of basic goods. Hart noted that the price of flour rose from 22s to 27s, and cornmeal from 19s to 24s per bag in September 1939 (Hart 1999, 46). The price of salt fish increased from 30s to 38s per barrel and that of imported beef from 50s to 55s per kg. During World War I also, wheat, grain and flour were in short supply. Of the 650,000,000 tons of wheat produced worldwide, 300,000,000 tons were produced by the warring nations.<sup>21</sup> World War I also had an effect on the island's revenues. Governor Manning noted that import duties for the year 1914–1915 up to September 15, 1914 decreased by £7575 when compared to the corresponding date the year before.<sup>22</sup> Also in March of 1915 the budget was in deficit of £40,872 due for the most part to natural disasters and the increased war expenditure.<sup>23</sup> According to the Collector General's Report of 1912–1918, this situation was made worse by the fact that hurricanes in 1912, 1915, 1916 and 1917 severely damaged banana production in the island (Bean 1994, 50). There was also drought in Vere in Clarendon and St. Elizabeth prior to the hurricanes, which affected the agricultural sector as well.<sup>24</sup> As a result of the depressed local agricultural sector, there was a fresh campaign for increased home production of foodstuffs, and the year 1919 opened with the passing of a food control law and the appointment of a food controller.

The situation was perhaps even more dismal during World War II, the underdeveloped nature of colonial capitalism, which was compounded by the global depression of the 1930s and inevitable wartime exigencies, meant that by 1942 every aspect of the Jamaican economy was reeling. The few increased job opportunities that the war afforded<sup>25</sup> to a relatively small segment of the population were not sufficient to supersede the increasing cost of living and harsh economic climate exacerbated by war exigencies. The post-war Annual Report of Jamaica indicates that between 1939 and 1942 the cost of living rose by 55% and by 1946 there was a 75% increase over the 1939 level. A close examination of the overall statistics indicate that clothing items showed the greatest level of increase, with over 200% increase between 1939 and 1946, with fuel being a close second with an 80% increase for the same period. Where one could perhaps do without new items of clothing, the increases of basic food items hit the masses hard. Between 1940 and 1946, flour increased from 2¼ d to 4d per lb, bread jumped from 4d to 6¾ d, while rice soared from 2¼ d to 10d per lb.<sup>26</sup> The increases were as a result

of multiple factors including increased cost to the belligerent nations of producing the goods under wartime conditions and perhaps most importantly, increased costs associated with shipping the products in a most precarious time for sea travel.

Shipping was disrupted and trade greatly curtailed in order to direct most ships towards supplying goods for battle in both world wars. As Hall (1992, 37) indicates, between 1940 and 1945, warfare in the Atlantic and the Caribbean greatly reduced the numbers of vessels entering the Port of Kingston, and therefore adversely affected the good that could reach the Jamaican ports. In 1937, 1384 steamships had entered the port, while in 1941 only 652, and in 1943 the lowest number, 267, docked. Also as a result of U-boat warfare, shipping losses were immense. During World War II, 17 German U-Boats were sunk in the Caribbean, and for each one destroyed, the allies lost 23.5 merchant ships, causing the Caribbean theatre to be the scene of 36% of all global merchant shipping losses (Kelshall 1988, xiv). Inflation in the local Caribbean economies surged between 1942 and 1943, as German submarine warfare against American, British and merchant shipping in Caribbean waters cut imports of food supplies to the Caribbean territories to dangerous levels. British Guiana and Dominica for instance, were reportedly without bread for about two weeks at one time in 1942 owing to the non-availability of imported flour.

Gasoline was also rationed during the Second World War. Oil tankers were attacked and the colony was plunged into a crisis that forced Governor Richards to forbid all private motoring to save gasoline. In submissions to the Colonial Secretary, many pleaded for increased allocations of petrol in order for them to attend to their duties. Hon. Edward Morris' case highlights the plight of the motoring public:

I came up yesterday from Westmoreland by car to attend Privy Council meeting today. I find myself confronted with the 'Gasoline Regulation' under which I shall be unable to return... I live 25 miles from the nearest Railway Station which would mean that I would have 100 miles if I made use of the railway and even if the railway was safe enough for passenger traffic it would land me in Kingston within five miles of my residence, so that even with the greatest desire to assist in conserving the use of gasoline I shall be unable to attend Privy Council meetings unless I am allowed to get gasoline and it takes me 20 gallons for each journey to and from.<sup>27</sup>

Other citizens also made impassioned pleas to the Colonial Secretary for ease to the gas restrictions. Grace Sellar, a nurse in St. Elizabeth wrote on behalf of the sick in the parish, noting that while adequate help was available to address their maladies, many would soon die from lack of transportation to the hospital. She explained:

I see that there will be great suffering among the sick if at least one car be not available to take patients to the hospital at Black River, 20 miles away.... Doctors are allowed gas to visit patients but very few can afford to find 3 to 5 guineas to call in a doctor. It follows then that many will die at home.<sup>28</sup>

Scarcity of basic food items led some to attack shops in search of goods including kerosene oil, rice, salt fish and mackerel. Shops owned by the Chinese were particularly targeted. E. G. Orrett, the Inspector for Kingston highlighted one such case:

Chung of Oxford Street was transferring some bags of rice to another shop in Barry Street by dray. A man evidently jumped on the dray cut the bag of rice and let it loose. This caused a large crowd to gather in Oxford Street in which the people demanded that the rice should not be moved from the shop as they wanted it to purchase and could not get it. A few arrests were made in this matter and a party was sent out to clear this crowd.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of the shortages and curtailments in shipping, agricultural instructors were appointed throughout the colony to assist small settlers to increase the acreage under cultivation. The government implemented a War Food Programme during World War II under which, measures were implemented to stave off mass starvation of the populace. The Jamaica Agricultural Society undertook work throughout the island to assist local food production by distributing tools, plant material and expertise where necessary. Shepherd (1993, 132) suggests, for instance, that it was mainly due to this programme that rice production grew locally from 315 acres in 1926 to 530 acres in 1942.

The Jamaican population was also encouraged to plant provisions for subsistence consumption, and the newspapers appealed to women to revitalise their kitchen gardens in order to alleviate the shortages of basic food items. Particularly in rural parishes, women were instructed to produce sufficient food for themselves in addition to some excess to provide for persons in urban areas. Large plantations also had to allocate a certain

portion of their land for this purpose. More than 20,000 acres of land on the island was planted with food crops in 1943, and about 75% of the condensed milk and meat used in the island were produced locally (Füllberg-Stolberg 2004, 116).

Partially as a result of the harsh economic realities of the country, which were exacerbated by war exigencies, the war years ushered in a wave of anti-British sentiment, particularly in urban areas. Indeed the post-slavery history of Jamaica is riddled with individual and collective action of men and women against harsh socio-economic conditions, prejudice and injustice; demonstrating that politics cannot be narrowly defined as formal governmental structures, but must account for any activist action to bring about change in people's conditions. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) of 1914 concentrated on uplifting people of African ancestry and developing in them the racial pride denied them through centuries of condemnation and denigration of their skin colour, culture and ancestry. Garvey's core ideology of 'race first' caught the attention of millions of Blacks worldwide and contributed to the racial awareness and class-consciousness, which facilitated the radical political climate to come. His rallying call of 'Africa for Africans at home and abroad' spurred the Rastafarian movement, which sprung up in 1930s among working-class Jamaicans who rejected all trappings of British colonialism and held Ethiopia as their spiritual and authentic home. Initially led by Leonard Howell, the group who wore their hair in dreadlocks and longed for return to Africa, embodied an indigenous and consistent war against the British Empire's oppression of black bodies.

By the 1930s prominent black middle-class men and women had also infused this race consciousness in socio-political activism. Largely alienated from the official channels of power in the Crown Colony government structure introduced after the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion, the black middle class in Jamaica fashioned avenues towards public service. The most prominent women in this group included journalist and playwright Una Marson, educator and social worker Amy Bailey, teacher and politician Mary Morris Knibb, educator and pianist Eulalie Domingo, and UNIA stalwarts Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques Garvey. Bailey's survey of rampant gender inequalities perpetuated by a legal framework which sidelined women from leadership and suitable employment opportunities lead her to develop the Women's Liberal Club (WLC) in 1936

along with her sister Ina Bailey, Una Marson and Mary Morris-Knibb. In 1938, the WLC organised the first Jamaican Women's Conference to galvanise support for full political and economic rights for women. From this conference came proposals to end discrimination on the basis of sex (Brown-MacLeavy 1993).

Alongside pro-Empire rhetoric from Jamaican media houses was much criticism of Britain on the streets of West Kingston in particular, because of the depressed economic conditions prevailing in those areas. Cold supper shops in Kingston, where working-class people bought and sold food items, were areas where large crowds often congregated. One such shop owned by a Mr. Reid (one of the few people at this time to own a radio) drew great crowds to listen to German broadcasts. So troubling were these gatherings that the leader of the Ex-Servicemen's Union, H. M. Reid wrote to the Governor:

As a British subject... I have forcibly to bring to your attention the attitude of a great percentage of the inhabitants, especially in Kingston, who from time to time... meet in public places... in such congregations spreading propaganda in favour of the 'German's rule'... to be preferable for the people of Jamaica than their present beloved British rule, thus being on the side of the Germans.<sup>30</sup>

Reid's concern was not unfounded as there was unease among those who were soldiers in World War I with the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR). Economic hardship and broken promises led to rampant disaffection. As one British Government report noted:

In common with other countries there has been a serious deterioration of economic conditions and unemployment has become acute. While it is fair to say that the great mass of the people are loyal and are anxious to do their share towards winning the war, these conditions have given an opportunity to certain subversive elements of agitation against British rule, which has often taken the form of thoughtless pro-German sentiment.<sup>31</sup>

L. P. Waison, representative of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers and the Native Defender Committee in Jamaica, was at the forefront of opposition to the Colonial government. Waison's contention was that during the war, many promises were made to the people to induce them to become soldiers (such as promises of decent wages

and land) and after the war very little was done to secure their welfare. The consequence was that many were to be found at the prisons, asylum and poor houses. Police Inspector Moight noted the militancy of Waison's followers:

...shortly after 9 am yesterday morning, 26th instant, a report was received that about 300 men had gathered in Victoria Park for the purpose of marching to Headquarter House to see His Excellency the Governor and the members of the Legislative Council. This meeting was addressed by L. P. Waison... I am firmly convinced that these people are out to make trouble either now or later.<sup>32</sup>

The concerns of the ex-BWIR men caused some stir in political circles. As Howe suggests, there was a fear of ex-servicemen throughout the Caribbean. As he explained 'they were believed to have a penchant for violence which would constitute a serious threat to the society if they were not properly re-aculturated and reintegrated' (Howe 1994, 15). More than just a reaction to economic hardship however, the agitation of the ex-BWIR was buttressed by the psychological advantage brought on by the shift in their roles from working-class Jamaicans to soldiers of the British Empire who now deserved recognition for their service and sacrifice. Indeed World War I provided the circumstances for simultaneous expressions of loyalty to Empire and increased disillusionment and a growth in nationalist sentiments when entitlements were not conferred. As Smith (2014, 6) has aptly explained '...as a sense of national identity began to emerge, it was the ex-servicemen's exclusion from both the material and symbolic rewards of the military manhood that became a key issue in nationalist agitation: the non-recognition of male sacrifice that became a significant component of the nationalist narrative.'<sup>33</sup>

The ex-BWIR organised marches in 1935 and 1937 to highlight their grievances. A list of eleven grievances were submitted, including better wages and shorter working hours for ex-BWIR men, suitable land to be given to ex-servicemen who were abroad and were returning home, and the setting up of loan banks.<sup>34</sup> Ex-BWIR men as well as thousands of women and children, gathered at Kingston Racecourse to march to King's House where the leaders, R. Sang, L. C. Henry, C. G. Johnson, C. N. Goldbourne, S. Brown and C. McLaughlin, hoped to have audience with the Governor. Women participated not only to support for their male loved-ones, but many also had grouses with local and British authorities

over the lack of attention they received when sons, husbands and other male breadwinners died in battle. Indeed, many letters of complaint were written stating that these women were on the brink of destitution were in desperate need of state assistance. Detailing their sacrifices for the noble cause, female petitioners exposed the ways in which wartime military mobilisation depended on their unpaid labour and sacrifice, and they demanded justice through compensation (Goldthree 2011, 12). What started out as a peaceful march resulted in six demonstrators and one policeman being injured in a stone-throwing/baton-wielding incident on the part of the demonstrators and police respectively. Twenty-three others were arrested for disorderly conduct (*The Gleaner*, August 16, 1937, 1).

Indeed, the 1930s and 1940s was a period of radical socio-political upheaval in the Caribbean. Post World War I anti-colonial sentiments compounded by the influence of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, increased class consciousness, proto-feminist stirrings and growing dissatisfaction with the weight of colonialism, led to widespread protests by men and women who articulated the need for social and economic reform. The war years were seasoned with the 1939 waterfront strike, the 1941 dock and sugar workers strike; the 1942 Kingston and St. Andrew Co-operation (KSAC) gas workers protest and 1943 railroad workers' strike.

However, the zenith of worker's frustrations surfaced in 1938 as the working class across the island participated in protest actions against low wages, social injustices and widespread unemployment. These combined with crisis in the banana and sugar industry, radicalisation of waterfront workers and rapid overpopulation of urban areas created what Bolland (1995, 132) calls 'an explosive mixture of race and class feeling in a colony that has a long tradition of often violent resistance to slavery and colonialism.' The protest movements and subsequent politicisation of trade union organisation gave prominence to men who led the charge for workers' rights and socio-political reform. The decidedly masculine face of the region's trade union movements has been explained by Lewis (2002) as a product of the masculinised nationalist thrust, where men framed the narrative of workers' rights according to their personal goals and aspirations. Charismatic personalities emerged, such as Alexander Bustamante, founder/leader of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) in 1939 and the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) in 1943. The fierce Bustamante became the face of worker' protest, buoyed by the almost

spontaneous collective vote of confidence by the 1938 protesters. While Bustamante expressed loyalty in 1939 to the British government at the outbreak of war, he was much better known for his confrontational style and genuine disgust with the plight of the abject poverty in the island. By 1940, he was detained for making a speech which authorities considered a dangerous rallying call to incite the working class to bloodshed and revolution. It was assumed that he disturbed the peace and spurred a strike of waterfront workers in Kingston in 1940. At a public meeting, he tore off his coat and paced the platform shouting:

It will be bloodshed... I expect everyone in this country to follow. We will let those employers respect us we will take away their land and give them to the workers we shall fight with vengeance we shall be ruthless with hate... and if the government says that we cannot keep meetings we will go in the forests riversides and bus. We want our own government and it must be self-government too... we don't want to go to war like a timid dog. This will be war... down with white man, down with capitalists.<sup>35</sup>

Bustamante would eventually become the nation's first Prime Minister after independence in 1962, but his cousin, Norman Washington Manley, distinguished himself as the most forward-thinking and shrewd political mind of twentieth-century Jamaica. Manley, a brilliant barrister and one of the founders of the People's National Party (PNP), was unapologetically nationalist and fought diligently for self-government and constitutional reform; a position which often found him in a war of words with Governor Arthur Richards (Palmer 2014, 253). In so doing he and his socialist allies gave formal ideological and political direction to the people's 1938 war on capitalist oppression.

Bustamante and Manley were trailblazers among pioneers. Scores of men and women from various classes and shades rose to the call of the changing political tide. During the protest, *The Jamaica Standard* reported that women 'tried to outdo their stronger halves in shouting for more wages and better living conditions' (*Jamaica Standard* May 23 1938, 1). Women such as Edna Manley, wife Norman Manley, and Aggie Bernard, a washerwoman, played vital roles in 1938 by feeding thousands of men involved in the Kingston Waterfront strikes. As Vivian Durham explained: 'Aggie Bernard used' to wash for the Waterfront men. She was poor and out of her poverty she gave, in order to feed them while they were on strike, so that they would maintain the principle for which they were striking' (Bryan and Watson 2003, 38).

While some took to the streets, others employed the power of the pen to contribute to the radicalisation of the time. Indeed, the outbreak of a second White man's war in which black and brown bodies were to be sacrificed added fodder to the rhetoric. While the pro-British nature of *The Gleaner* was a prominent feature of the Jamaican print media landscape, it was by no means the only narrative of the day. *The Public Opinion* for instance, founded in 1937 by O. T. Fairclough, H. P. Jacobs and Frank Hill (future People's National Party 'radicals') was specifically developed to give voice to those men and women who challenged the status quo with radical viewpoints and for those who dared to opine about issues of race, class, gender and self-government in Jamaica. The Jamaican media landscape was also populated by the literary and education focused *Jamaica Times*, considered to be second in quality to *The Gleaner*. DeLisser served as editor in the late 1800s and was succeeded by Thomas MacDermot (aka Tom Redcam), editor from 1900 to 1920.

The *Public Opinion* newspaper was well utilised by people like Frank Hill, Richard Hart and Arthur Henry of the PNP, who were even incarcerated for their pro-autonomy stance. The nationalistic campaign was considered by the authorities to be disloyal and subversive; dangerous and revolutionary. The spread of Marcus Garvey's Black Consciousness/Pan-African stance, coupled with the increasing insistence on self-rule, were causes for concern among the ruling classes. The war created the perfect opportunity to silence these individuals and movements under the guise of protecting the colony and Britain from political instability at a precarious time. However they refused to be muzzled; Frank Hill, President of the Public Works Department Employees Union, viewed World War II as No-Empire war, but as 'Tory England's War' Bryan (2003, 55). Richard Hart, in particular, was a force to be reckoned with during the war years. As president of the Railway Union, member of the General Council of the PNP and secretary of the Negro Workers Education League, he was painted as an anti-colonialist radical.

'Seditious' writings also came from Roger Mais in the *Public Opinion* newspaper and he was sentenced to six months in prison for an article he wrote on 11 July 1944, titled 'Now We Know'. In this piece he fiercely and eloquently criticised 'a colonial system which permits the shameless exploitation of those colonies across the seas of an Empire upon which the sun never sets'. Perhaps in any other time he would have been merely categorised as being among the zealots pining for self-government, but in the midst of the war, his harsh critique of British colonial rule and his

opinion of the farcical nature of Jamaican's sacrifices during an oppressor's war earned him the accusation of attempting to influence public opinion in a manner deleterious to the achievement of victory in the war.

Mais was not the only Jamaican to point out the irony of Jamaican's support for an oppressive form of British imperialism and concomitant hatred for the German version. From as early as 1939, Amy Bailey, teacher, social worker and public commentator, in a letter to the *Public Opinion* newspaper, asked the Jamaican public to consider that Hitler's ideas were also prevalent in colonial Jamaica. The portrayal that Hitlerism was 'evil, a cruel form of slavery, savage, barbaric and unchristian' was largely accepted by Bailey (*The Gleaner*, December 6, 1944). She decried his irrational castigation of coloured peoples as little better than apes and agreed with most well-thinking Jamaicans that 'we none of us want to be under Hitler's rule'. However, critical thinker that she was, Bailey was not content with pointing out the existence of the excesses Hitler's hatred for non-Aryan races, without considering the impact of racism and classism in Jamaica. She asked:

What do we find here? Don't we find the same idea though of less intensity? Don't we find hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of people who have no use for black or dark folks? And this in a country where the majority are black? Do we not find this brand of Hitlerism confronting us in our economic and social life?

In proffering an answer to her own question she stated:

Every time I go into a bank or into an office and see no black employee, I say to myself, 'there is Hitlerism here'. Every time I see an advertisement in the papers for a clerk or a typist, or governess etc. who must be fair or white, I say, 'Hitlerism again!' Every time I hear of a selection that is done not on merit, or a promotion that is made over the black heads or more deserving cases, I say 'Hitler is not the only sinner'. (*Public Opinion*, December 2, 1939)

A scathing attack on the shadism and racism exhibited by ruling classes and all those who maintained views of inferiority of African-descended working class Jamaicans, Bailey's words did not earn her jail time as some of the men of the time (perhaps because her words were not inimical to recruitment of soldiers as Mais's were deemed to be). However, her sentiments are critical to a full understanding of the ideological landscape of

wartime Jamaica. Her loyalty to Empire was tempered by race consciousness her sentiment was an indictment on a racially oppressive Jamaican manifestation of a British colonial system born from the same parents as Nazism and fascism. As Gregg (2007, 29) indicates:

Bailey couched her unvarnished indictment of the ideology of white supremacy not as an attack on the double standards of the English colonial powers but as a frontal assault on colonial Jamaica's social order, economic structure, and mental universe—themselves, it goes without saying, the poisonous bitter fruit of British imperialism and colonialism.

These critical examples of the growing tide of agitation against British rule and Jamaica's place in the war paint a picture of a complex socio-political milieu and an fascinating backdrop for assessment of the contribution of women to the war efforts. Undoubtedly, twentieth-century Jamaica was riddled with contradictions of colonialism. The workers' movement and its consequences largely shaped the political direction of country until independence in 1962. In the aftermath of the protests, a Royal Commission headed by Right Honourable Lord Moyne, member of the British parliament, was sent to the West Indian colonies to investigate the conditions which facilitated such widespread protest and make recommendations to stave off an encore. Notably, while the Moyne Commission's recommendations were published in 1939, the full text of the report was withheld from the colonies until after the war ended because it was feared that the damning evidence of the dire state of the British colonies 'would feed enemy propaganda during a time of war' (Palmer 2014, 113).

Constitutional changes also came in the form of universal adult suffrage and a new constitution without self-government in 1944. A bird's-eye view of Jamaican constitutional history under colonial rule indicates the extent to which black Jamaicans were systematically omitted from formal processes of governance. With English rule in 1655 came the first constitution of 1663, which afforded a governor, a legislative upper chamber and the elected House of Assembly. The electorate was severely limited to the white male property-owning gentry with holdings of £300 or more. While the structure and functions changed over time, the 1663 constitution held firm until 1865 when the violent Morant Bay Rebellion caused the white elite to surrender their representative governance structure for Crown Colony rule with power in the hands of the governor appointed by the Crown. In 1895, a new constitution provided

for a Legislative Council including appointed and wealthy elected members and Privy Council of high-ranking colonial officials who advised the governor on policies. With a return to elected membership came the re-introduction of the limited franchise based on high annual income and or payment of taxes geared towards empowering the wealthy and deterring the masses from imposing their will on government. By 1919, the voting roll included more women as well as the franchise was extended to them as a direct result of war time service.

The crippling blow to colonial styled 'law and order' and the capitalist structure dealt by the Jamaican masses in the 1938 workers' protests sent a resounding message that if change did not come from above, it certainly would come from below. Even Governor Richards realised that the country would be ungovernable if steps to self-government were ignored, as a result of the work of a 'small circle of dreamers, anti-imperialists and semi-seditious agitators' (Palmer 2014, 284). Reforms were suggested by Governor Richards in consultation with Norman Manley, but perhaps the most influential changes were instigated by the 1939 committee headed by J. A. G. Smith, the well-respected elected member of the Legislative Council who proposed an elected 14-member House of Assembly and a nominated Legislative Council headed by the governor. The final document provided for a bi-cameral legislature with a House of Assembly of 24 elected members and Legislative Council of 15 nominated members, chaired by the governor. Apart from the increase in elected members and the most significant move towards self-government emanating from this process was the introduction of universal adult suffrage.

By 1944, therefore, the colony of Jamaica embodied the stark ironies of anti-colonial sentiments and a pro-Empire ideologies. Nascent nationalist sentiments existed in consort with pro-war rhetoric, and the radical workers' movement did not eclipse the pro-British stance of the elite during the international conflict. Certainly, Benedict Anderson's concept of nations as common imagined communities was challenged by the Jamaican experience of multiple and simultaneous nationalisms evidenced in a white Imperialist paradigm, African-descended nationalist ideals and hues of colour and political ideologies in between (Bogues 2002). World wars added to the paradox of twentieth-century Jamaican civic determination. There was an absence of a cohesive anti-war movement that could have effectively obscured the overwhelming loyalty of the country to the cause of the Empire during the wars. What remained even in the face of political radicalism was an essential

patriotism expressed in various forms, particularly during the war years and an overpowering sense of gratitude for being part of the Empire. To many Jamaicans, the conflicts of 1914–1918 and 1939–1945 were in fact ‘world’ wars in which they were squarely involved.

It is within this context that Jamaican women’s involvement in war efforts must be seen. For those that were involved in the war efforts, they were less concerned with the issues of the ‘worldwide’ nature of the conflicts and more concerned with playing active roles to assist the Empire. Some were mobilised to do their part to secure the victory of the British Empire while others used the opportunities created by the wars to eke out an existence. As the following chapters will indicate, Jamaican women were roused to duty to King and country during both conflicts, and often found ways to do a world of good for themselves in the process.

## NOTES

1. CSO: 1B/5/77 #125 1939: A Message from H. M. King George VI to his Peoples, Broadcast on 3 September 1939.
2. Bryan (2004, 16) does indicate, however, that during the 1920s there was an increased thrust to introduce more Chinese women to the island to ‘reduce the levels of concubinage between Chinese males and “native” Jamaican females that had produced 5508 Chinese coloured by 1943.’
3. Imperial War Museum Interview Connie Marks, Number 15286 reel 2.
4. CSO 1B/5/77 #58: Empire Day Celebrations: B. H. Easter Director of Education to teachers, May 1939.
5. CO 137/705: Letter from Governor Manning to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 October 1914.
6. Howe (2002, 8) indicates that the boy was eventually pardoned by the Governor though not after harsh criticism from many quarters because neither the sender nor receiver of the letter were similarly charged; most likely because of their elite status.
7. CO 137/708: Telegram from the Governor of Jamaica to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 February 1915.
8. WO 32/2813: Accounts and Accounting: Contribution from Jamaica towards Imperial Defense 1934–1944. Letter from Colonial Office to A. J. Newling, 24 August 1934.
9. WO 32/2813: Letter from A. J. Newling to S. M. Campbell of the Colonial Office, 29 August 1934.
10. CO 137/705: Letter from Governor Manning to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lewis Harcourt, 28 November 1914.
11. CO 137/705 1914 Oct.–Dec. From Downing Street November 1914.

12. Annual Report on Jamaica 1946. London: HM Stationary Office, 1948, 13.
13. LAB 13/37: Transfer of Skilled Engineers from Jamaica 1940–1947: Letter from Ministry of Labour and National Service to G. J. Nash, 10 March 1941.
14. LAB 13/37: Memorandum for Overseas Manpower Committee by Colonial Office.
15. LAB 18/97: Recruitment of Unskilled Technicians from Jamaica 1942–1945: Letter Ministry of Labour and National Service, 5 October 1942.
16. CO 137/840/5: Bustamante to Secretary of State, 29 February 1940.
17. 1B/5/77/150: Military Service—Persons who desire to enlist.
18. 1B/5/77 #1430 1940: Bustamante's letter to the Colonial Secretary's Office, 1940.
19. This commission was formed in 1942 to strengthen social and economic co-operation between the USA and its possessions and bases in the Caribbean and the United Kingdom and the British Colonies to address issues of labour, agriculture, health, education and social welfare under war exigencies. Conferences of this body were held in Jamaica on occasion, for instance in May 1942. See, *The Caribbean Islands and the War* (1943).
20. Annual Report on Jamaica 1946, 12.
21. CO 137/705: Speech from Governor Manning to the Legislative Council, 20 October 1914.
22. CO 137/705: Speech from Governor Manning to the Legislative Council, 20 October 1914.
23. CO 137/709: Budget Summaries Reported in *The Gleaner*, 15 March 1915.
24. CO 137/705: Letter from Governor Manning to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 October 1914.
25. The 1946 Annual Report for Jamaica indicates that 4893 artisans and craftsmen were recruited for work overseas in Panama in addition to the 56,432 who did contractual agricultural and industrial work in the United States between 1943 and 1946. These jobs particularly targeted men, 12–13.
26. Annual Report on Jamaica, 1946, 11.
27. CSO: 1B/5/77 #85 1940: Gasoline, Rationing due to War Conditions (volume 2) Letter to the Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1942.
28. CSO: 1B/5/77 #85 1940: Gasoline, Rationing due to War Conditions (volume 2) Letter to the Colonial Secretary, 15 March 1942.
29. CSO: 1B/5/77 #161 1942: Labour Unrests, Kingston: Letter, 6 July 1942 to the Commissioner of Police.
30. CSO: 1B/5/77 #195 1940: Empire Review—Jamaica At War.
31. CSO: 1B/5/77 #195 1940: Empire Review—Jamaica At War.
32. CSO: 1B/5/79 672: BWIR ex-soldiers unemployment, demonstrations. Inspector General Moight to the Colonial Secretary, Kingston, 29 April 1933.
33. As Marwick (1968) has explained this phenomenon was also prevalent in England in the post-World War I era among the working class whose

- political and industrial organisation had been strengthened because of their increased participation in important wartime activities and decisions.
34. These are dealt with in some detail by CSO: 1B/5/77 #260 1936: Points to be raised by Deputation of Ex-BWIR Soldiers.
  35. CO 137/840/5 Governor of Jamaica Cypher Telegram, 13 September 1940.

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## ‘Doing Their Little Bit’: Women’s Organisation of Jamaican World War I Efforts

The onset of World War I in 1914 signalled the beginning of the most wide-scale mobilisation of women for an international war effort in Jamaican history. Pro-British Jamaicans confirmed the truism that total war spares no one. As a result, people geared up for participation in the war in the colonial context appropriate to their age, gender and social standing. Though the sexual division of labour was prevalent in the early 1900s, prescribing that Jamaican women were not eligible for service in the military, they were widely encouraged to ‘do their little bit’ from the home base to see to the Empire’s victory. During World War I, the expectation of the colonial authorities was that women would contribute to the war effort in four key gender-appropriate modalities: production of war materials, fundraising, buttressing food production and encouraging men to join the armed forces. Production of war products was among the most significant, if not the most visible, contribution Jamaican women made to the war effort during World War I. What began as small working groups of middle- to upper-class women grew to become widespread local movement to produce war supplies called ‘comforts’ to send to the Empire’s troops. Elite women became the face of the local Jamaican war effort, and their impressive organisational skills and increased visibility ushered them into the world of recognizable citizenship at a time when this was, without much exception, constructed

as a coveted male birthright (Gullace 2002). Undoubtedly, many Jamaican women exhibited an appreciation of their sex-specific roles within the context of the global conflicts and considered their efforts as key to the victory of the British Empire and her allies. Analysis of the significance of women's war work must however be preceded by an overview of the state of Jamaican womanhood in the pre war era with a focus on the intersection of gender, race and class in the colonial milieu.

### ENGENDERING THE COLONY: RACE, CLASS AND GENDER ON THE EVE OF WAR

In the earliest ages, woman was given scarcely any rights at all; but as time advanced there has been a progress in that direction, still that progress is slow in comparison with the general progress of man.... It is clear then that woman today stands where she has never yet stood; she enjoys more rights than hitherto; but why not all the rights which are accorded to man? From whence comes the authority for the denial of such rights? (Vassell 1993, 16)

In 1901, Catherine McKenzie, Jamaican social activist, penned an article in the *Jamaica Advocate* asking Jamaicans to consider the trajectory of womanhood in the island. More than this, she posited the radical idea that if woman (Eve), did emerge from man's rib (Adam), it meant that she was meant to be by his side in all spheres of life, social, political, economic, familial, private and public. Rather than being on equal footing with men however, the state of womanhood in Jamaica at this time was as pegged at second-class, with limited rights and conditional freedoms. While her colour and social class determined her comfort level, the Jamaican woman in 1901 was far from being equal to her male counterpart. When McKenzie dared to ask readers to consider why women were not accorded the same rights as the male of the specie she not only brought to the fore the fact that such denials of rights were unnatural, but encouraged women and men to work towards a new day; a day when rights were not decided on the basis of sex, race or class.

A simple answer to McKenzie's question 'from whence comes the authority for the denial of such rights (to women)?' is patriarchy. In 1902 she alluded to this in what can be seen as an answer to her own question from the year before when she said:

The rights accorded to women have left much to be desired. Just why woman has [been] denied all the rights accorded to man is one of the unexplained relations of life, except it be that it is man alone who has made the laws denying her such rights; for on examination, it can be easily proved that her claim to the possession and the enjoyment of equal rights under all circumstances, are as clearly made out as that of man. (Vassell 1993, 35)

This social system of patriarchy defined by bell hooks (2004) as one that 'insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance' ranks women as being beneath men. The hegemonic masculine world order has established and maintained a system of binaries that systemically privileges masculinity over femininity. More than highlighting the differences between the sexes, this binary justifies exploitation of women for the purpose of masculine pleasure and enjoyment and extols the subordination of women to men. This gender binary was evident in Jamaica from the onset of contact between Europeans and indigenous people. The power that European colonisers exalted over colonised peoples was not only one for monetary gain and political status, but also included rights to sexual access to those considered subordinate. Thomas Thistlewood's journal entries for instance, are replete with references to the largely non-consensual sexual access he had to the enslaved women under his administration (Hall 1989). Plantation proprietors such as Thistlewood, used their position as owners or managers of enslaved people to reduce women in particular to sex objects over whom they could exercise power. Sexual power and colonisation in the Caribbean arena went hand in hand, and 'sexploitation' of indigenous, African enslaved and Indian indentured women was an integral part of the imperial project.

However sexism/sexploitation rarely worked alone; it was buttressed by racism and classism (perfect bedfellows in the Caribbean region with its history of colonialism and enslavement of Africans), which created overlapping systems of gendered, racial, and cultural stratification. Colonial policy was underpinned by centuries of racist literature and ideology that served to dehumanise non-white peoples to ensure their subjugation, even after enslavement ended. By the twentieth century, the colour bar was firmly entrenched, not only endorsing the separation of races, but also according Whites superior human value regardless of gender. As a result, therefore, one could not take for granted that *any* man

could have power over all women. The concept of brown over black and both under white (Shepherd 2007b) was firmly embedded in the collective psyche of the colony. In the 1900s black skin erased any privilege a man thought he should have over a woman who was of a significantly lighter hue, particularly it was complemented by wealth and social prestige. Colonial relations of power between men and women created a multi-faceted social framework, which not only considered race and class as critical, but gave credence to gendered stratification. Hierarchies of race and class were firmly embedded within a gender system of male domination. Men of each class and race at least could expect to have power and privilege over their female counterparts. In this sense, while race was the overarching social divider, gender stratified each group. In general, rich white men were comfortably perched atop the social pyramid while poor Afro-descended, Indian and Chinese women jostled for last place. As Smith (2014, 92) notes, ‘whiteness equalled power and prestige and petty differences based on skin shade were rife in Jamaican society, a lighter skin being prized as a means of securing social and economic success.’

Despite the assignment of a low socio-economic standing in society, however, various races of working-class women in Jamaica were never without agency. Caribbean women in general often found creative ways to eke out an existence, challenge the status quo and even bargain with patriarchy in order to make socio-political and economic gains. The gradual transition from a largely agrarian economic structure in Jamaica in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to an agro-industrial model, brought the country further into a capitalist system, which impacted on the status of women in the late nineteenth century. The end of slavery ushered in many changes in Jamaican society, including substituting a wage labour system for unpaid forced labour, the expansion of non-agricultural economic activity and the growth of a market-oriented peasantry.

The shift to modernisation was concomitant with a renewed sidelining of women’s place in the formal economy. The ideology which favoured male dominance in paid employment and female dominance in care-giving activities relegated working-class women to the fringes of traditional employment. Simply put, after slavery, plantation agricultural labour became increasingly unattractive to working-class black women.<sup>1</sup> Faced with lower wages than their male counterparts and limited time for their familial gender roles, many black women opted out of the plantations and into more lucrative ventures. As a result, by the time World War II was 4 years underway, over 80,000 Jamaican women were displaced,

or displaced themselves from agricultural labour (Shepherd 2007a, 161). Eking out an existence included migration to urban centres to engage in selling in markets, petty trading, domestic service and ostensibly, prostitution. Women were also present in professional, industrial and commercial occupations in the early to mid twentieth century, mainly as milliners, seamstresses, washerwomen, peddlers and higglers (Lobdell 1988, 213). Women consistently outnumbered men in urban areas such as Kingston, searching for better working conditions wherever they could find or create them. In 1907 there were 18,820 men in Kingston compared to 27,257 women,<sup>2</sup> most of whom worked in domestic services, as Table 3.1 indicates.

Over time, entrepreneurial women migrated to urban areas to open inns, taverns, and lodging houses that catered to travellers. These houses and taverns were situated in Falmouth, Montego Bay and Kingston, close to docks, catering mainly to sailors. Legislators from the nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries surmised that these houses doubled as discreet brothels. Jamaican women also migrated overseas in order to secure upward socio-economic mobility. For instance, women made up part of the migratory population of West Indians who worked on the Panama Canal. The male-dominated nature of the work and space did not hinder women from carving out spaces for themselves as cooks, laundresses, nurses and in construction. Over 31,000 men and women from Caribbean islands were brought to the Canal Zone and another 150,000–200,000 migrated on their own during the second phase of construction between 1904 and 1914 (Duncan 2008, 46).

**Table 3.1** Women employed in domestic services 1844–1921. *Source* Compiled from Eisner (1961)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Domestic services</i>	<i>Washerwomen</i>	<i>Tavern, hotel and lodging-house keepers</i>
1844	20,571	–	216
1861	16,253	2586	48
1871	16,287	5631	98
1881	18,727	8104	123
1891	26,686	10,400	94
1910	35,701	11,715	270
1921	49,965	9580	551

Despite attempts to undermine the economic rights of Jamaican women through patriarchal/colonial machinery, many engaged in commercial activities to support themselves and dependents and contributed to sustaining the island's formal and informal economies. It is also quite clear that working-class women in Jamaica never fitted neatly into the European gender ideals, which created categories of wage labour in the 'public' sphere for men and non-compensatory labour in the 'private' sphere for women. Though the construct did influence official policy related to women's employment and social standing, it could not fully take root in the Anglophone Caribbean. As Phillips-Lewis (1994, 75) opines,

contrary to popular European stereotypical expectations, Caribbean women were not merely ornamental fragile objects of male admiration, affection, protection and domination, given to filial obedience, diffidence, fainting spells and restricted by physical constraints. Not even the 'cultured women' lived up to this image, let alone the working class women.

The inability of European gender ideals to stick in the West Indies was partially because of other cultural influences from Africa and Asia (which had histories of women's productive work outside the strict domestic sphere) as well as the legacy of using African and Asian woman as enslaved and indentured field workers respectively. With these contradictory influences, it was difficult to impose a gender division of labour according to European ideals in Jamaica. Despite the challenges and stigma of women undertaking paid employment, Jamaican women were consistently part of the work force and played important roles as economic providers. The experiences of women in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Caribbean society bestowed on them a degree of economic independence that is rarely found elsewhere. As Colón and Reddock (2004, 467) explain, 'with a high proportion of female heads of households, women of different ages and stages in the life cycle developed formal and informal networks of support in order to fulfil their responsibilities as the backbone of the family and community stability.' Therefore, while the war years ushered in a revolution in facilitating temporary paid employment of women in the belligerent nations, the case was not as revolutionary in Jamaica, as women had always been part of the labour force.

While European ideals about appropriate male and female spheres of influence did not fully take root in Jamaica, particularly among the working class, they did influence conceptualisations of middle- and upper-class women in Jamaica. These ideals were also the criteria used to judge the Afro-Caribbean Jamaican woman, and by these standards she was often found sadly lacking. The 'proper' white or coloured woman in the pre World War I era was labelled 'Excellent Ellen', while the black woman was styled 'Quasheba' and was the antithesis of her white counterpart. While 'Excellent Ellen' was beautiful, given to social welfare and obedience to the male head of the household, 'Quasheba' was hard-working (almost comically so because she worked harder than her mate), and was physically less beautiful (Phillips-Lewis 1994). Pro-imperial periodicals like *Planters' Punch*, a magazine designed for readers of the Jamaican upper and middle classes and for British readers, also portrayed the Jamaican white woman as equal to her British sister in cultural refinement. She was a social hostess who possessed charm, provided support for her husband, and was pleased to function as an ornament. This construction of ideal Jamaican womanhood, while not representing the majority of the female population, did not wane and was increasingly highlighted throughout the war years, as the privileged women of the country were at the helm of women's war-work and were afforded increased visibility and a new status as Empire Builder as a result.

Influenced by the well-established English practice of voluntary social work being a mark of a woman's character, elite women followed the calling of Imperialist-oriented public service. The war years and interwar years saw a proliferation of similar organisations in Jamaica, including the Women's Social Service Club, formed in 1918, and the Jamaica Women's League, founded in 1936, both headed by Judith DeCordova, as well as the Jamaica Patriotic Helpers of Montpelier, headed by A. E. Briscoe, and the Women's War Comforts Committee of 1939. The pre-war years also witnessed upper- and middle-class women establishing groups catering to the moral and social welfare of women and children of the working class and general civic betterment. Churches were central to these early organisations, including the Kingston Charity Organization Society, founded 1882 with the assistance of the Bishop of Jamaica, Enos Nuttal, the Anglican Mother's Unions and the Upward and Onward Society, formed in 1903 to provide employment opportunities for peasant girls and promote womanly virtue, pure family life and a healthy public opinion on

moral questions. The Lady Musgrave Women's Self Help Society, formed in 1879, was another organisation which enabled women of all classes to help themselves by developing crafts such as embroidery, jam production, threadwork, and by seeking to provide employment for poor needlewomen. These societies were intended to serve multiple purposes for Jamaican women depending on their socio-economic class. *The Handbook of Jamaica* (1914, 506) reported these organisations to be 'a great boon to many women in reduced circumstances who have to work for their living, but find it difficult get suitable employment'.

Friendly Societies were prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (over 150 by the 1930s) but women's organisations in particular fell under four broad categories. These included; those which were organised to assist women as targets of benevolence, those established by women as female interest groups, institutions sponsored by individual female philanthropists to give assistance to disadvantaged groups, and groups which undertook social work on a professional basis (Bryan 1990). As will be illustrated in this chapter, many of these early movements and elite women formed the backbone of Jamaica's response to the efforts during both World Wars. Many of these women adopted the tenets of first-wave British feminism along with its imperial structure and hierarchy. As Rosenberg (2010, 52) remarks, 'British feminists worked to improve and uplift the nation's less privileged classes in regard to labour conditions, morality, education and health.' Their counterparts in Jamaica, often women born in Britain, conceptualised their role as tending to the plight of the working class colonial subjects within the context of Empire-building and were undoubtedly influenced by ideals of racial segregation and white superiority. While still beneficiaries of progressive thinking about the changing roles and abilities of women, white women were charged in the early twentieth century with framing their service within the ambit of their domestic duties and maternal acumen. As the self-sacrificing modern female reader of *Planters' Punch* was reminded by the Duchess of Atholl:

The burden of Empire-building does not rest on men alone – that were there no women... the Empire would fall to pieces... You also can do much to promote a better understanding of health and hygiene in the homes of the people, not only by your own word and practice, but by cooperation with all effort, official and unofficial, for the improvement of health...If the women readers of *Planters' Punch* can help to bring about

this desired end, they will not only be adding to the comfort of their own surroundings, but will be rendering a great service to Jamaica and her people, and, through them to the Empire. (Vassell 1993, 15)

The aim was never to raise working-class women and children to the level of an Empire-builder; indeed elite women's claim to English citizenship was constructed as diametrically opposed to the status of Afro- and Indo-Jamaican women. Rather, these women were instructed to lessen the adverse effects of colonisation on the population (even if they didn't conceptualise poverty, poor health care and limited educational opportunities as legacies of the beloved British colonialism) and continue the civilising influence to the masses while maintaining the Empire in all its hierarchical imperialist glory. This role was magnified during wartime and eventually shifted from Empire-building philanthropy to movements towards self-actualisation.

### WAR WORK DURING WORLD WAR I

It has been argued that prior to World War I Jamaican middle- and upper-class women suffered from apathy and inertia relating to geopolitical issues. If these women had any opinion on politics and world events it certainly was not evident in the public domain. In the main, newspaper articles and public opinion pieces were male-dominated. With exception of aforementioned Catherine McKenzie and a handful other progressive women, Jamaican women's opinions featured in ladies' magazines and journals which focused on good home-making rather than issues of public policy. Initially, women were slow to take an active role in war-work because they had little or no prior experience organising public work groups. However, a few women emerged as leaders of the women's war effort and provided a much-needed catalyst for the organisation of war efforts in the country. Personalities such as Judith DeCordova, A. E. Briscoe, Miss Constance Douet, L. S. Blackden (wife of an English Brigadier General), Josephine Westmoreland, W. Coke Kerr (wife of the Hon. Coke Kerr, Custos of St. James) and Dorothy Trefusis (wife of the Hon. Robert Trefusis, Private Secretary to the Governor) became synonymous with women's war efforts. These women gained privilege and prominence from their colour, ancestral heritage, marriages and social service. DeCordova, for instance, was born in Jamaica in the 1870s, a member of the influential Jewish family of Ashenheims. She married

into the wealthy Jewish DeCordova family and her husband, Michael DeCordova, was for many years editor of the island's leading newspaper, the *Daily Gleaner*. Mrs. A. E. Briscoe was the wife of James Briscoe, the well-respected Agricultural Instructor for St. James. In addition to her leadership of war efforts she took an interest in the agricultural and industrial life of the country and was a regular contributor to the *Jamaica Agricultural Journal* and the Home Makers League. Constance Douet served with distinction as a Red Cross nurse in World War I, part of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service, serving throughout Europe, and was also instrumental in fundraising for beds for wounded Jamaican soldiers in British Hospitals. In 1917 King George VI bestowed on her the insignia of the Order of the Red Cross (second class). Even outside the ambit of war-work, these wives, sisters and daughters of white male bureaucrats were critical to the maintenance of the social ordering synonymous with colonialism. During the wars years, however, their roles expanded to include spearheading Jamaica's charitable response to Empire, thereby re-engineering their significance on a national and international stage. DeCordova and Briscoe among others, were awarded the Member of the British Empire honour (MBE) for excellent war-work.

As H. G. DeLisser (1917, 61) expressed it, 'the war seemed to stimulate them (women); from the outbreak of hostilities they began to manifest a patriotic enthusiasm which was welcome as it was novel.' This viewpoint was consistent with his opinions on the war's stirring effects on the population in general. For the imperialist news editor, the war was the injection of colonial-centric energy that was well-needed in the country to counteract stirrings for workers' rights and race consciousness. Borrowing from the rhetoric of Thomas Carlyle (1853), who portrayed the Afro-Jamaican as lazy, idle and lacking industry, DeLisser (1917, 1) characterised the war as the 'shock' counteracting the 'deadening tropical languor' of the colony and rousing the 'soldier when he hears the cannon's summoning roar.' Guided by sexist and racist stereotypes, which held women and black Jamaican men as second- and third-class citizens, DeLisser enjoyed seeing these groups being roused to action to engage in work for Empire without any guarantee of meaningful reward.

Undoubtedly however, the concept of war work was new for elite women in the country, who for the first time were mobilised to such a great extent in support of an international conflict. Jamaican elite women

were slowly stirred to action through various media to contribute to the Empire's war effort. While they were expected to have vastly different roles from men, women were encouraged to actively participate in securing victory for Britain and war-time notoriety for Jamaica. Jamaican women's war efforts must be seen within the context of British women's responses to the war, or at least those that were broadcast by *The Gleaner*. The self proclaimed and proudly imperialist newspaper, in addition to printing blow-by-blow updates of the outbreak and progress of the war, often publicised and lauded as righteous, the pro-war efforts of British women. News of British women enlisting to non-combatant roles in armed forces, as well as the move of women from domesticity to male-dominated jobs in munitions, and working as drivers and nurses, and, of course, their extensive efforts in fundraising, was always prominent. In addition, public opinion pieces that suggested that Jamaican women should participate in easing the burdens of warfare were common. Constructed within narratives of patriotism and belonging to Empire juxtaposed with guilt of being distant from the worst effects of warfare, Britishers in Jamaica wrote of the ways locals could serve and sacrifice and solidify Jamaica's worth to Britain. One such piece in *The Gleaner* (19 August 1914, 2) by one H. S. Bunbury averred:

Patriotism is for all a duty... in any case it carries its penalties, its renunciations. From these most of us in Jamaica will be exempt. Might we not try to lessen ever by so little the adversities...? To women chiefly these offices of pity and tenderness pertain. Theirs are the art and faculty of them as well as the function. The women of Jamaica would I am confident take up eagerly a plan for aiding women and children of Britain... we should be conscious more fully of our common heritage and devotion we owe to our country and King.

Pieces such as this homogenised Jamaican women under an umbrella of elite hegemonic femininity while omitting altogether working-class women, whose lower socio-economic status and African or Asian ancestry excluded them from full alignment with Britishness. These themes served to entrench the deep sense of belonging to Empire in elite Jamaican women and stirred a sense of duty and service to Britain and her subjects.

A few months later, in November, Briscoe spoke to the helplessness experienced by Jamaican ladies who read of suffering and atrocities the war levelled on Europe and suggested ways in which they could assuage

the feeling of guilt and malaise. In an attempt to represent the feeling of every patriotic daughter of the great mother England, she said ‘...we are not satisfied that we are doing our part... cold weather has already come to Europe and will continue for many months, during these months we could contribute many knitted and crocheted articles of comfort’ (*The Gleaner*, 5 November 1914, 14). Briscoe’s attempt to rally like-minded (and like-classed) women included practical suggestions to do with the acquisition of wool and importation of needles to facilitate the task of making warm comforts, as well as suggestions for the export of the finished goods to those in need in Europe. In so doing, Briscoe became a reluctant pioneer and organiser of women’s war efforts. In one article she framed women’s potential contribution and tapped into resonant themes of gender and class-appropriate work in the context of loyalty to Empire. As the war progressed, articles titled ‘The Work of Women: Extended Role Being Played by Fair Sex in Great Conflict’ (*The Gleaner*, 13 May 1918, 14) and ‘Women’s Work: What Weaker Sex Has Done in Empire’s Hour of Peril’ (*The Gleaner*, 3 July 1918, 10) focused on the impressive work of British women, carried out in spite of their inferior status and constitution. These headlines served to motivate and encourage Jamaican women to match the work of their British sisters and continue their efforts as part of the paradigm of civic wartime femininity; which dissolved borders and nationalities and created an army of Empire-preserving women.

Other local print media carried photographs of the work of women in the army, and lauded their efforts. *The Trelawny Advance* (27 October 1917) for instance, highlighted the work of Canadian women who ‘have been magnificent and lost not a day on starting their splendid work after war was declared.’ The message was clear: women of the British Empire, were expected to take part in the effort to win the war. As an opinion piece in *The Gleaner* (4 February 1916, 8) suggested:

The truth is that now not only an army fights but a whole nation must actively fight. We are all in the same boat, we share the same risks. There is no absolute immunity for women now, there is less everyday; when it is recognised as a general principle that women must take the place of the men, not only in ordinary manufactories, but in doing real army work, the last vestige of their immunity will disappear.

Commentary from bastions of Empire implied that women of Jamaica should follow the example set by British women by engaging in a range of war-work and being frugal homemakers. The Empire's women were reminded that they shared the jeopardy of warfare and that the rewards of victory would also be theirs for the taking if 'real' masculinised army work was undertaken.

The context of Jamaican women's war work was not reliant on the imagery of women in the belligerent nations but rather on the gendered imagery that permeated World War I practice, propaganda and discourse globally. In particular, three international incidents were used by the British Empire to vilify German enemies and craft an image of brutal carnality which threatened the highly gendered ideals on which the Empire was built. These were the 'Rape of Belgium', the shooting of Nurse Edith Cavell and the sinking of the *RMS Lusitania*. The 'Rape of Belgium' comprised the series of German war crimes in 1914 against the Belgian civilian population in which thousands were killed, raped and tortured. The invasion of Belgium was reported in British tabloids and newspapers in a flamboyant manner, fixated on deviant public sexual violations, mutilations of nuns and child abuse. The often-exaggerated accounts served the aims of solidifying Germans as barbarians and enemies while bringing the safety of the Empire's virtuous womanhood and innocent children into sharp focus. As Gullace (2002, 24) explains, 'in the press and popular imagination, the invasion of Belgium was transformed into the rape of Belgium, an image that informed the entire iconography of the war.' British recruitment posters reinforced the twin pillars on which Britain entered the war, that of Freedom for Europe and securing the honour and bodies of white women.

Jamaican print media did not spare the reading public from the accounts, and influenced many Jamaicans to take note of the threat to decency that Germans embodied. Relating to the barbarity of Germans in Britain, an editorial in *The Gleaner* (8 January 1915, 8) noted: 'A hundred peaceful non-offending Belgians are shot because one German general officer is murdered. The town is destroyed by fire. The women are handed over to the lust of a brutal soldiery.' Jamaican women were being warned, not too subtly, to view the wars as a general danger to decent womanhood and as a specific threat to personal liberty. Jamaican Red Cross Nurse Constance Douet also shared her personal experience of the advances of the Germans in Brussels; giving further evidence that Jamaican women were not far removed from effects of the warfare. She recounted;

The bombardment and destruction of Louvain, Telmonde, Cetcorde and Malines all took place while we were in Brussels, and the pitiful stream of these refugees fleeing from their homes and the tales of atrocities that we heard constantly were indeed terrible. I am thankful to say that I was spared the sight, which one of my sister nurses saw—a baby dying with both its hands cut off. Alas nearly all these horrible tales are true. (*The Gleaner*, 7 October 1917, 14)

Her speech was followed by an appeal for funds to purchase a ‘Jamaica Bed’ in the Star and Garter Hospital for wounded sailors and soldiers. In so doing, she married service as a nurse with fundraising, the latter of which would become one of the hallmarks of Jamaican women’s work during the war.

Douet’s lengthy piece on personal strife and first-hand accounts of brutality served to highlight the shifting role of women in the international conflict and corroborate the harrowing stories coming out of Belgium, despite the fact that the veracity of the accounts was the source of an official commission (Gullace 2002). As one of the few Jamaican women who participated in World War I in Europe, she embodied the potential of local women to contribute to the effort and served as a reminder that those back home that their privileged position and geographical distance did not exempt them from gender-appropriate service. Her speech was even more poignant within the context of the arrest of Edith Cavell in August 1915. The famous British nurse assisted hundreds of Allied prisoners-of-war in escaping German-occupied Belgium, and was executed by a German firing squad mere days after Douet’s speech. Outrage at the execution of a woman, regardless of her admission of guilt, catalysed anti-German sentiment in the British Empire and served to completely shatter any remaining hope that women would be spared the brutal effects of the war. Conjuring Cavell’s memory also served as a useful tool for the recruitment of soldiers, as will be examined in the following chapter.

Undoubtedly, elite Jamaican women took the well-crafted bait being dangled before them by the press and responded to the juxtaposition of local war work and efforts against German brutality. Mrs. Briscoe exclaimed:

I will not believe that the women of Jamaica are indifferent to the comfort of those who have left home, business and loved ones perhaps forever at the call of England. They can’t be, when they read of the awful German

atrocities perpetrated on the unfortunate Belgium women and remember that they have only the brave men at the front between them and a like fate! Let us be thankful that unlike many unfortunate women in the war zone, we still have our two hands and use them for the comfort of the fighters. (*The Gleaner*, 21 November 1914, 13)

Briscoe expressed the role Jamaican women had to play to secure their own personal safety by caring for the men that fought for liberty and their honour, while reminding them of their fortunate status as distant onlookers. Production of warm clothing and other comforts were therefore constructed not only as tangible gifts to Empire but as metaphorical tools for safeguarding Jamaican women's bodies and respectable femininity.

As the war progressed, a third outstanding act of German aggression gripped the world and was portrayed in Jamaican print media as an assault on the Empire's women and children. On 7 May 1915, shortly after Germany announced unrestricted submarine warfare in the waters around Britain, a German U-boat torpedoed and sank the *RMS Lusitania*, a British liner en route from New York to Liverpool. More than 1100 crew and passengers perished, including more than 120 Americans. The sinking of the *Lusitania* played a significant role in turning public opinion against Germany, particularly in the United States, which had until this moment stayed on the outskirts of the conflict. In a piece titled 'German Murder of Women and Children', the *Jamaica Times* fashioned the gripping details of the sinking of the *Lusitania* into a gendered wartime discourse. The article included the recurring theme of the many bodies of women and children which were found floating in the icy waters off the Irish coast. The narrative was clear: the Empire's vulnerable women-and-children were mercilessly massacred by a vile enemy who repeatedly circumvented the rules of engagement. It was also surmised that at least 3 passengers were Jamaicans: Sister Isabel of the Deaconess Home and Mr. J. Sutton Brown, a merchant, and his son. The war was made personal for Jamaicans who were being emboldened to participate in various gender-appropriate ways. In a follow up piece the *Jamaica Times* (15 May 1915, 15) exclaimed, 'here was the deliberate murder of children, women and unarmed men, no chance being given them to escape. The object of this wholesale murder is clear. It is to strike terror into our hearts.' The sensationalism in reporting reinforced the notion that no one was safe. In addition to being a trope for the call to arms for Jamaican men, the images and reports had a clear

impact on Jamaican elite women, who channelled their fear of German victory into meaningful work for the Empire and who chose not to ignore the plight of suffering Europeans (though largely ignoring the suffering Jamaicans in their midst).

Guided by contemporary geo-political gendered rhetoric and the example of European women, Jamaican women's war-work was constructed as relevant and necessary engagement for women who were not concerned with employment outside the home. For Jamaican women, real war efforts were to be built on the foundation of women's existing ideal roles as homemakers and domestics. For instance, although the issue of women's economising featured more as a national policy in the Second World War, women were encouraged from 1914 to help the Empire by making wise choices in the home. The *Jamaica Times* (2 November 1915, 5) tips to women included:

- Eternal vegetable canning is the price of winter plenty
- It's never too late to send gifts to the boys at the front
- An ounce of sacrifice is worth a pound of knitting
- Take care of the left-overs, and the food supply will take care of itself
- Where there's a will there should be a bequest for war orphans
- Be among the first by whom new economical recipes are tried, and be the last to set the cook book aside
- The wastefulness of women shall visit the nation
- A place for every woman and every woman in her place
- Help and the girls help with you, loaf and you loaf alone.

These suggestions confirm that well-channelled domestic work was the main area in which respectable women could make a real impact on the war efforts at home and by extension to Britain; cementing the existing gender ideals of the time for this class of womanhood.

Undoubtedly however, women's war efforts were mainly related to the creation of comforts and collection drives. The organisations were headed by 'Ladies Bountiful', who were accustomed to charitable work, and functioned to maintain the continuity of class and race distinctions among women in the colony. The organisations were voluntary, unpaid services and required that participants pay a membership fee. The Patriotic Helpers, one of the leading groups organised for war-work,

for instance, had as its only condition of membership that applicants be voluntary and regular war-workers. Prospective members paid 1/ at which point they were given a card of membership and an enamelled badge.

While not enforcing blatant colour discrimination in the groups, monetary requirements largely excluded working-class Afro- and Indo-Jamaican women from participating in the organisations. Well-entrenched colonial policies and practices of racism, shadism and politicised codes of ranking undoubtedly clouded the atmosphere for women's war-work and excluded non-white women from visibility in the movement. Contribution to the war effort was framed as colour blind, as elite women encouraged an all-inclusive bonding of Jamaican women to secure a shared victory for the British Empire. However it was a long-established tradition that it was the responsibility of the self-appointed 'genteel' women of the country to guide their working-class sisters to service. As a *Gleaner* (17 May 1917, 8) editorial indicated,

it stands evident that women by the hundreds are wanted to undertake the work of educating their humbler sisters, their sisters of the working classes, to a sense of the necessity of sacrifice today... let the women of Jamaica show as the women of England have shown, that they too can help to win the war, that they can assist greatly in the achievement of victory.<sup>3</sup>

DeCordova, Briscoe and many others, worked individually and in organised groups to assist in war efforts and were intent on sharing with men the 'privilege of fighting for glorious Empire.'<sup>4</sup> War-work was to women what soldiering was for men; inextricably linked and conceptualised as noble and honourable duties for each sex to contribute to defeating Britain's enemy. Initially, the response to Briscoe's appeal was sluggish, so much so that women were accused of apathy and indifference. However, as Briscoe herself noted, women were unaccustomed to writing in the public press and they were working with small amounts of wool so considering the effort too small to mention on a public stage (*The Gleaner*, 21 November 1914, 13). Indeed, towards the end of 1914, women were working silently in silos on small packages of comforts for contingents. By mid 1915, the women found their voice and became visible in the press and in other public forums. *The Gleaner* was replete with daily lists of women and their innumerable donations for export, and the women themselves became regular contributors to

the print media to galvanise support for the industrial-scale production of supplies for local and overseas contingents. Several groups sprung up over the period to coordinate war work in various parishes. The Kingston Women's War Work Association (WWA), Portland WWA, Vere Women's Sewing and Knitting Club, St. Ann's WWA, the Mandeville Ladies Association, Contingents Comforts Committee and Jamaica Patriotic Helpers were a few of the major bodies. The Ladies Working Association and Women's War Committee concentrated on making garments and comforts for English soldiers and Belgian refugees in England, while the Contingents Comforts Committee, headed by Blackden, focused on the welfare of Jamaican contingents.

The Jamaica Patriotic Helpers, which had branches all over the island and was the local chapter of the Queen Mary's Needle Work Guild in London, was the chief organiser of women's efforts up to 1917. At its helm was Mrs. A. E. Briscoe, considered the most indefatigable leader of women in the island. She worked assiduously to eventually have twenty working groups and over 300 participants across the island (*Jamaica Times*, 1 January 1916, 14). The focus was on providing warm clothing for those serving the King in cold and supplying bedding and bandages for those who were injured (*Northern News and Provincial Advertiser*, 12 June 1916, 1). Through the local organisations women donated 6000 articles per year including sleeping caps, comfort pillows, wash cloths, rabbit skins and old gloves, hospital bags, mufflers and mittens, to name a few. Private companies such as Elders and Fyffe shipped these items.<sup>5</sup> In 1917, the local group focused on providing gloves and waistcoats for the men who were fighting in the cold parts of the world, forming the Glove–Waistcoat Society. Briscoe was featured in *The Gleaner* giving updates as to the number of items made and the appreciation with which they were met from overseas. Briscoe gladly reported:

over five thousand waistcoats have been made this season and if you saw how quickly they got out and the encouraging messages that came from the North Sea, the trenches and the camps in this country telling of the comfort found in the waistcoats, you would be very sure that the collection of gloves, and scraps of fur is a very real service to the men who are fighting for us. (*The Gleaner*, 5 February 1917, 3)

By the end of the war the Guild had collected and distributed 1,060,420 articles to various homes and hospitals throughout the Empire.

Women also featured in the collection of funds for the Jamaica Contingent and wounded soldiers through the 'Women's Fund'. Annie Douglas was the first to make an appeal to the women of Jamaica to aid the contingent movement during the war and initiated the collection of money for this purpose. Advertisements were posted in the newspapers for the duration of the war reporting how much had been collected, and where subscriptions should be sent. Apart from Annie Douglas, the major women behind the fund were Mrs. Sydney Couper (wife of the Hon. Sydney Couper, director of the Jamaica Railway from 1913 to 1918) and Judith DeCordova. In conjunction with the Bank of Nova Scotia these and other women collected thousands of pounds throughout the war to aid in sending the Jamaican Contingents overseas and caring for those that were wounded. Constance Douet also spearheaded a collection for a 'Jamaica Bed' in a hospital ward in England. The island was also able to contribute an impressive £2000 towards the end of the war to the Queen Mary's Fund in connection with the 'shower of gifts'. This shower was organised throughout the Empire to mark the recognition of the Queen's silver wedding and of her service throughout the war, and the gifts were used to send supplies to sailors and soldiers throughout the Empire (*Jamaica Times*, 1 March 1919, 7).

A major feat of the Women's Contingent Movement was Flag Day, held annually on July 27, which raised over £1500 on its inception. Modelled from Queen Alexandra's Rose Day in London, the local Flag Day consisted of women selling miniature flags of the allies, mounted on pins and priced at 3d each, though people were encouraged to pay more, to increase revenue. The annual Flag Days were very successful in raising funds as well as honing the women's organisational skills. As DeLisser (1917, 65) pointed out, 'the women of Jamaica were to show that they could organise and accomplish things quite as well as the men; and it is safe to say that no Flag Day could have been a striking success in Jamaica had not the women had, from first to last, the handling of details.' In addition to hand-made comforts and monetary contributions, many women donated food and preserves for the enjoyment of Jamaican troops overseas. This was mainly done through the Jamaican Agricultural Society. Table 3.2 gives an indication of some of the gifts. The subtle rebranding of Imperialist-centric exercises such as Flag and Empire days to focus on war efforts certainly raised the public profile of elite women. The level of hard work and consistent organising to galvanise meaningful

support served as a wake-up call not only to the women engaged in the activities, but the men of their class who had previously regarded them as mere ornamental necessities. Though not in need of traditional markers of upward social mobility, these women carved out spaces for upward civic mobility which initiated movements towards increased participation in male-dominated spheres of public policy.

**Table 3.2** Items shipped to the UK by the Agricultural Society for men of the BWIR, 22 June 1918. *Source* Compiled from *The Gleaner*, June 25, 1918, 4

<i>Names of women and location</i>	<i>Gift</i>
Mrs. Bourne, Halfway Tree and Mrs. H. Cox Kingston	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Mrs. Bourne, Halfway Tree	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Miss N. Cooke, Bethel Town	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Miss Muirhead, May Pen	1 tin pine apple jam (10 lb)
Miss Muirhead, May Pen	1 tin orange marmalade (10 lb)
Mrs. Grosset, Windward Road	2 tins guava jelly (20 lb)
Miss F. C. Burke, Kingston	3 tins guava jelly (30 lb)
	6 tins guava jelly (20 lb)
Mrs. J. R. Williams, Bethel Town	3 tins guava jelly (30 lb)
Mrs. A. B. Hall, Cross Roads	2 tins guava jelly (8 lb)
Mrs. McNeill, Claremont,	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Mrs. Douet, Halfway Tree	2 tins guava jelly (20 lb)
Mrs. Lyon Hall, Liguanea	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Mrs. Final, Kingston	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Miss Davidson, Kingston	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Mrs. Roxburgh, Walkerswood	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Miss E. Sharp, Cave Valley	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Miss Watt and Mrs. Vesper, Kingston	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Mrs. Viewers, Sav-la-Mar	4 tins guava jelly (10 lb)
Mrs. W. W. Wynne, Mandeville	3 tins grape fruit marmalade (30 lb)
Miss Stewart, Newport	1 tin orange marmalade (10 lb)
Mrs. N. A. Isaacs, Mandeville	1 tin orange marmalade (10 lb)
Mrs. Crum Ewing, Mandeville	3 tins grapefruit marmalade (30 lb)
Mrs. S. J. Howe, Mandeville	3 tins grapefruit marmalade (30 lb)
Mrs. Vancuylenberg, Halfway Tree	1 tin grapefruit marmalade (10 lb)
Mrs. A. C. Westmoreland, Annotto Bay	1 tin guava jelly (10 lb)
Mrs. T. Alexander, Mandeville	2 tins orange marmalade (17 lb)
Mrs. Q. R. Noble, Spur Tree	1 tin apple jam (7 lb)
Miss F. C. Burke, Kingston	6 dozen bottles hot sauce
Mrs. E. E. Grosset, Kingston	2 bundles chewstick

Though the most prominent forms of war-work involved the collection of money and manufacturing of various supplies, some Jamaicans served as drivers in the local ambulance corps in an attempt to release men for military service and showcased the variety of new tasks women undertook as a result of wartime exigencies in the country. Indeed, this was one of the few instances where women were deliberately used in the place of men. The Women's Ambulance Corps rendered services to assist war activities. Among other things, they carried comfort kits to all parts of the country, were subject to the call of the Red Cross, and were a part of the larger home defence and child welfare in the island (*The Gleaner*, 2 August 1919, 9).

Women were also engaged in the war effort overseas, though not in great numbers. Motivated by Constant Douet, Ethel Street of Fair Prospect Portland offered her services as a trained nurse in London where she volunteered for service at the military hospital. Doris Peck also trained at St. Thomas's hospital in England for Red Cross work. Mary C. Denniston worked in England, operating a sailor's rest home, while Nina and Kathleen Tivy supervised women workers who carried out electric wiring work on battleships in Portsmouth Harbour. These and other Jamaican women were among those who received international honours for service at the end of the war, as Table 3.3 indicates. In addition, 26-year-old Ilene Chandler, daughter of the Rev. J. T. H. Chandler, Rector of the Falmouth Parish church, worked as a nurse in an English Red Cross hospital during the war and died in service.

As the war progressed, Jamaican women's war efforts became more and more visible. Typified by work from the home base to provide supplies in work groups, the tasks that women undertook in these organisations fitted into the jobs that were acceptable and suitable for women. The roles those women played during this war inevitably mirrored society's view of women as caregivers and homemakers. By making clothing and engaging in fundraising these women epitomised the dictum of 'women's work' and did not intentionally challenge the canon. Nonetheless, through this organised domestication, women of Jamaica during World War I sewed, knitted and nursed their way into prominence in the society and practised a type of patriotism from which blossomed a civic and public role for Jamaican womanhood.<sup>6</sup> To this end, DeLisser (1917, 70) said:

**Table 3.3** Jamaican Red Cross nurses awarded honours in World War I. *Source* Compiled from *The Gleaner*, 2 April 1919, 1

<i>Name</i>	<i>Award or post</i>
Miss Constance Douet	Insignia of the Royal Red Cross Second Class, Queen Alexandra's Nursing Service of the British Red Cross
Miss Margaret Campbell	Interned by the Turkish government at Beirut. She did Red Cross work for the allies at Aleppo, Syria
Miss Cotter	Silver medal of the Legion of Honour by the French government
Miss Eileen Tivy	Nurse working at the 3rd Sec. General Hospital, Cowley Section, Oxford
Miss Etheline Curphey	Stationed in India
Miss Mary Bussell	Worked with French Army caring for refugee women and children from Verdun and Rheims
Miss Alice Bussell	Nurse in South Africa
Miss Jessie Reynolds	Queen Alexandra's nursing service of the British Red Cross
Miss Eileen Chandler	Proceeded to England at the outbreak of the war and was employed in one of the Red Cross hospitals (Succumbed owing to great strain)
Miss Ruth H. W. Diad	Worked at a US Army base hospital camp, Devens, Massachusetts
Miss Winnifred Fray	Red Cross Nurse serving at the front
Miss Lucille Scudamore	Worked at Middlesex Hospital
Miss Helen Elizabeth Panton	Served in France
Miss Clark	Royal Infirmary, Manchester
Miss Russel	Worked at Oldney Hospital, Devon
Miss Lillian Marguerite Franklin	Royal Yeomanry Nursing Corps, in charge of the Hôpital de Lamarck at Calais

In the year 1914, for the first time in the history of Jamaica, a number of women openly and gladly identified themselves with a public and patriotic movement. And they organized so ably, worked so well and brought to so successful a conclusion the task they had undertaken, that they have made the Jamaica Contingent Movement identify with the women of Jamaica as well as with men.

The war brought much visibility and organisation of women and the groups that war-work spawned later lobbied for social and political changes for women in the country. Also in many instances, the events during the war helped the voice and pen of women to become evident.

Many Jamaican women wrote articles expressing their opinion on the impact of the war on the Empire's women. Governor Manning sponsored a competition in 1915 for Westwood schoolgirls to write on this topic for instance. The winner was Rosamond I. Barron and her essay illustrated the significance of women's support of wartime efforts, tracing the evolution of womanhood's relegation to second-class citizen status and recovery to attain a rousing sense of duty through wartime actives. Barron also framed war work in categories, to include: work as Red Cross nurses, civic mothering, contingent recruitment, fundraising, and the production of comforts. Perhaps most importantly, the essay framed women's work as not merely homemaking, but empire- and nation-building, which proved their worth as full citizens and would lead to increased participation in governance and policy-making. In Barron's own words 'women will be uplifted and fitted for greater work, and thus be allowed many privileges and given a share in wider channels than were experienced before' (*The Gleaner*, 18 October 1915, 18). Cementing the fact that organised war-work was almost exclusively the domain of middle- and upper-class women, Barron's piece suggested, 'for owing to the scarcity of men, women will have to work for the support of themselves and their children and will thus become more hardened and fitted for the battle of life.' Perhaps unwittingly, Barron omitted the long-standing tradition of hardened working class women, who had for centuries, worked in an oppressive colonial economy and for whom participation in war-work was minimal. Nonetheless, Barron's prize-winning essay aligned with the sentiments of the status quo which used 'woman' to mean middle-class and elite women of the Empire, who emerged as shining examples of civic virtue.

Never before had women writers featured so prominently in the print media. There was also an increased interest in women's social issues at this time. In the appeals made to locals to donate materials that women would use to make comforts, there was the undeniable overtone of helping men overseas, and an undertone of helping women locally. As Mrs. Briscoe argued, 'contributors can be assured that their help means work for a woman and warmth for a man.' (*The Gleaner*, 5 February 1917, 3) The connection was clear; through war-work, women were doing their part to help men and themselves as well. This was particularly true of the several needlewomen who engaged in the production of clothing. The Girls Work Room instituted by the Women's Social Service Club (WSSC)<sup>7</sup> instructed unemployed young women in different departments

of work including needlework, basket making, caning of chairs, mattress making and upholstering. The young women were provided with a warm meal and taught a valuable skill, and the organisations that employed seamstresses were essential to their survival during and after the war years.

Towards the end of the war, few were unconvinced of the good that had come from women's work during the conflict. This was not specific to Jamaica, but was intended as a reflection on women's progress in the British Empire in general. In the public imagination women emerged from the war years more assertive, more rounded and more involved in the matters of the state. A speech by Madame de Montagnac, 'Women's War Work' highlighted this in detail. As she said:

good proverbially comes out of evil and it may perhaps be said that but for this terrible war we should not so soon or so convincingly have had a demonstration of women's capacities. I confess to being amazed, as so many others... have been amazed at the initiative, adaptability, and...the actual physical strength and endurance of women at this dreadful time. (*The Gleaner*, 10 February 1919, 10)

By entrenching themselves with an indomitable purpose of ensuring liberty and peace in the world, many Jamaican women emerged from the war in the position of Empire-protectors and heroines in their own right. While women's wartime activities enabled some women of the upper and middle strata to move from strictly operating merely in the domestic sphere to a position of some public prominence, they also disproved the belief that the private sphere was a site of female inactivity. As Briscoe prophetically theorised, the private organisation of women in domestically related war-work bore inadvertent fruit long after the battle was over, reinventing the private sphere as a locus of activism. She opined:

not only does this work satisfy our individual craving to be doing something helpful, but it is also bringing the women of Jamaica together on common ground. Who shall say what the outcome of these gatherings together of women will be. Having tasted the pleasure of mutual corporation of the intricacies of sock making, perhaps will inspire them to try their hands at parish making and country building in the future. (*The Gleaner*, 25 October 1915, 13)

The road from sock-making to country-building included women's active roles in the recruitment of men for the contingents during World War I. Flavoured by the rhetoric of masculine duties and feminine obligations, recruitment of Jamaican men as soldiers was as hinged on gendered propaganda as it was on martial race theory. Perhaps even more than the production of comforts, enlistment of soldiers gave elite women a literal and symbolic platform on which to construct their increased public roles in the colony. In addition, recruitment discourses sharpened the focus on working-class women, who had much sway over the decision of men to volunteer for military service. It is to these issues of this nuanced intersection of class, gender and military service that attention now turns.

## NOTES

1. This was not the case for Indian women who, by 1943, were 76% of the female population engaged as agricultural wage-earners. They remained under-represented in commercial and professional areas. See Shepherd (1996).
2. *Blue Books of Jamaica* (hereafter BBJ) 1906–1907, R 2–R 3.
3. *The Gleaner*, 17 May 1917, 8.
4. *The Gleaner*, 26 June 1915, 13.
5. Governor Manning made special mention of this company's assistance in transporting woollen comforts and cigarettes donated by Jamaican women in his dispatch to Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State to the Colonies. CO 137: 705, 21 November 1914.
6. This concept has been addressed in detail in British case by Colley (1992, 261). Writing about British women's civic roles during the Napoleonic Wars she notes, 'for women to be supplying the soldiery with banners, flannel shirts and other material comforts was, superficially, all a piece with their ministrations to their men folk at home'. Yet in reality, what the women were doing represented the thin end of a far more radical wedge. By extending their solicitude to the nation's armed forces... women demonstrated that their domestic virtues possessed a public as well as a private relevance.
7. This club formed in October 1918 was not specifically oriented around war work though the women at the helm, such as Mrs. DeCordova, Mrs. L. deMercado, Mrs. Priestnal and Mrs. N. Latrielle, did undertake war-work. Its primary objectives were improving the health of the women in the island, taking necessary steps for the enforcement or alteration of the law governing child welfare and creating better housing for the poor, *Jamaica Times* (1 March 1919, 13).

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## ‘Masculine Duties and Feminine Powers’: Gender and Recruiting Efforts During World War I

Over 15,000 West Indian men volunteered to serve King and country during World War I in the British West India Regiment. Of this number, 5 contingents of approximately 10,000 men were Jamaican. The masculine military body, paradoxically privileged and dispensable, was the site on which tropes of nationalism and empire were constructed and contested. Service, particularly of the voluntary kind, was more than an individual decision to participate in a European war, but had broad implications for national pride and transnational concepts of dignity. Much has been said about the ways in which West Indian masculinities were framed within the context of military sacrifice during the war to serve the interests of recruitment. There is also no dearth of perspectives on extent to which the denial of full participation in the military was one of the key ingredients to the decolonisation movement in the region (Howe 2002; Smith 2004). While this chapter will be grounded in these resonant themes it also departs from the main historiographical trends by suggesting that the production of Jamaican wartime masculinity was only possible through the concurrent creation of active civic womanhood. The recruitment of men for World War I was buttressed by gendered understandings of masculinised and feminised responsibilities to the British Empire. Not only were elite women eventually prominent in the leadership of recruitment drives, but new military gendered norms were shaped during the war years to assign roles to men and

women, appropriate to their race and class, in the service of the Empire's war efforts. While not eradicating pre-war gendered culture of the colony, the war era did facilitate the expansion of elite women's civic roles and working class women's value to the colonial order as intermediaries between men's bodies and the Empire's needs.

‘MEN, MEN, MEN!...THE EMPIRE MUST HAVE MEN!’<sup>1</sup>

The project of war-making, service, sacrifice and responsibility has traditionally hinged on gendered discourse. As Enloe (1990) indicates, the nationalistic-militaristic myth perpetuates the construction of the aggressive male who fights for the sake of ‘womenandchildren’. In this construction, men are noble protectors and ‘womenandchildren’ embody a collective of the likely victims of enemy masculine aggression; without agency and the ability to serve and defend. Traditionally, therefore, the duty of archetypal male citizenship, among other things, is to protect the sanctity of the nation and guard its most vulnerable from harm. It is this responsibly that is usually rewarded with rights and privileges in the society regarding leadership, decision-making and sustained earning potential. Within these broad concepts, hierarchies of masculinity emerged, particularly in the colonial milieu. The hegemonic military male was white, strong, aggressive, healthy, rational, and a volunteer. Centuries of racist policy and practice ensured that the non-white recruit was far from ideal, and as Smith (2004, 5) alludes, the volunteer was a public gesture of active masculinity while the conscript was the passive subject of bureaucracy.

Gender, race and volunteerism were the linchpins of controversy regarding the recruitment of West Indians for service. No sooner than the war was declared did Jamaicans take to the newspapers to debate the ways in which Jamaicans could make the ultimate sacrifice for King and country. Four days after Britain declared war on Germany W. Fitz-Ritson wrote to *The Gleaner*, wrote a ‘call to patriots’. He appealed to Jamaicans and loyal Britons to express readiness to serve King and country if necessary. He suggested that Jamaicans should release British soldiers stationed in the island for battle overseas by volunteering to act as local forces. This would have the dual impact of securing the nation's defence and training locals who could be quickly called up to defend the honour of Britain. Fitz-Ritson highlighted nationalist-gendered discourse of masculine duties by saying ‘I am sanguine that there are thousands of

Jamaican men ready to say to all would-be invaders of our dear country "you may take Jamaica if you can but it will be only over our dead bodies" (*The Gleaner*, 8 August 1914, 14). The writer, and many others of the time attached feminised qualities to the nation and Empire as being vulnerable, in need of defence and protection by the eager male corporeal form. In these imaginations, Jamaican men would prove their nobility and pedigree by a willingness to die. Cowardice was worse than death and bravery was synonymous with true masculinity.

These tropes, while well established in the historical parlance of military service took on new meaning during World War I. As Gullace (2002, 37) indicates 'whether a man's failure to enlist was attributed to effeminacy and cowardice or to overt disloyalty, during World War I the decision not to go to war was no longer regarded by most Britons as a choice compatible with loyal citizenship'. Similar expectations of masculine duty and social responsibility to Empire resonated in the Jamaican space between 1914 and 1918, with local commentators unleashing assaults on men who showed no enthusiasm to serve. In a stirring rant against Jamaican men who refused to answer the call of Empire, *Gleaner* contributor 'Chimps' borrowed lines from the patriotic Scottish song *Scots Wha Hae* to illustrate the dangers of shirking masculine duties:

Who will be a traitor knave?  
Who will fill a coward's grave?  
Who's so base as be a slave? -  
Let him turn, and flee.

'Chimps' was in no uncertain terms condemning the unmasculine behaviour of local deceitful knaves who, as able-bodied Jamaicans, refused to respond to their country's call. In a colony with a recent memory of the dehumanising institution of slavery, Chimps' choice of verse would echo among those who were recently emerging from a state of bondage and emasculation. The piece however did not end with those who refused to lay down their lives, but also condemned wealthy men who refused to contribute to the country's numerous war funds. He continued 'is it true of is it not... that there are scores of independent men in Jamaica who can well afford to support a whole contingent who have not given a farthing towards any fund... loyal people of Jamaica wage war against this counterfeit. He must be trapped.' (*The Gleaner*, 13 April 1916, 11). The sentiments represented multi-pronged attacks

against those who compromised two of the main ideals of masculinity: that of protector and provider. Their failure was not merely an individual *faux pas* but presented a threat to colonial pride; cementing the views of Yuval-Davis (1997) and Mayer (2012) who hold that men regard the nation and their bodies/egos as inseparable.

The construction of the colony/nation as masculine enterprises in which men's identities are bound up with the maintenance of stability made for fertile ground for the spreading of gendered wartime propaganda. As noted in the previous chapter, the 'Rape' of Belgium, the execution of Edith Cavell and the sinking of the *Lusitania* formed part of the transcolonial call to arms against an uncivilised barbarous German enemy who threatened feminine decency in the civilised world. These imaginings were reproduced by Jamaican print media in order to systematically infuse a sense of compulsion in Jamaican men. The young men were instructed not to fear death or mutilation since 'those who died would die gloriously (and) if they were wounded they would be taken to beautiful hospitals in which efficient nurses would take care of them'. Indeed, the strength of a military man's conviction was measured by his willingness to die for Britain's noble cause. The memory of the bravery of Edith Cavell was also repeatedly invoked in hopes that the atypical service of a woman would rouse in the men an enhanced sense of moral obligation (*The Gleaner*, 13 November 1915, 14). Reciting the story of her bravery and death accomplished dual aims. On the one hand it was proof that vulnerable womanhood was under attack and could only be saved by noble manhood and on the other, it invoked a sense of shame and embarrassment that women were willing to be sacrificed for Empire while some men continued to evade their rightful duties.

Perhaps even more than Cavell's demise, the invasion of Belgium provided fodder for the imagination of the Jamaican hegemonic military masculinity, which was diametrically opposed to, and the enemy of, vicious German manhood. Examples of the atrocities committed by Germans to Belgian women and children were used to illustrate that men not only had to fight for their mother country, but to preserve the honour of their own mothers and other female loved ones against hypothetical attacks by enemy invaders. In a recruitment meeting in Redwood, St. Catherine, the atrocities of the Germans in Belgium was expressed in graphic detail in the hope that 'young men would answer the appeal and their King and thus save and uphold the honour of Jamaica and of Redwood'. The geo-political was made personal as the inability to

answer the call of the King would not only endanger Jamaica's standing in Empire, but potentially leave Jamaican women exposed to sexual assault. In highlighting this point, Mrs. Briscoe said:

...men must fight as a matter of duty to King and Empire they must fight also to protect their women... we shudder to think of what our fate here in Jamaica will be if Germany wins... and your wives, sisters and daughters. God help them! Read for yourselves what the Hun has done to the women and children of the invaded countries. Up men! And fight for the honour of your women. (*Jamaica Times*, 2 June 1917)

The threat of a barbarous German enemy was used as propaganda, not only to secure allegiance to the British Empire but to keep Jamaicans on their guard, particularly given the strong German presence and business interests in neighbouring Haiti in the immediate pre-World War I era (Smith 2004). While colonial authorities detained German nationals as enemy aliens, the literati undertook a different type of approach, through poetry and prose. Most notable was the fictional musing by 'Harry Morgan' on a German invasion of a vulnerable feminised Jamaican colony, printed in the *Jamaica Times*. The serial 'When the Germans took Jamaica' ran in two parts on November 7 and 14, 1914, at the height of concern over the growing German menace to European stability. His tale explored the invasion through the protagonist Sir Horace Meadow, who simultaneously embodied an impenetrable British armour and rugged Jamaican machismo. Meadow, who recounted the story to his son through a letter, informs him of the murder, destruction and plunder of the Germans. Detailed descriptions of the demise of noble clergymen cut into pieces by German marines, lawmakers hung in the square, poisoning of waterways and over 2400 black and white citizens murdered, painted a grim picture of the debauchery of the Hun. In the midst of the deluge, Meadows praises the efforts of Jamaican soldiers and British forces for their attempts a defence, though they were unsuccessful until an act of God in the form of a well-timed earthquake (proof of divine empathy to the British cause) quelled the invasion.

The story is replete with gendered imagery. Meadows' opens with the noble sacrifice of men who died 'defending their homes and loved ones from the touch of that barbaric host'. Meadows portrays his own bravery and logic in contrast to the constant piteous sobbing of his wife and daughter; the inability of forts to protect German forced entrance

to Kingston Harbour was a most obvious metaphor for the rape of the city. Mirroring the reports of the ‘Rape of Belgium’, Meadows includes the assault and murder of hundreds of women and children and his protection of his daughter Helen, from the ‘vile aggressions’ of a German intruder. Helen’s cries of ‘Father, Father do for God’s sake come and help me!’ not only speak to a susceptibility of a damsel in distress but to the necessity of masculine protection. Meadows’ hubris is undeniable, as he accomplished what entire squadrons could not, that of overpowering the attacker by cracking his skull with his bare hands. As he noted ‘blind with righteous rage, I leapt and dealt the monster a terrific blow between the eyes that sent him reeling to the floor.’ He also battered the others with his fists and was left with the respectable injury of a broken arm as a prize for his gallantry, indicating that armed service could not occur without personal sacrifice. So great was the impact of the tale that the *Jamaica Times* was forced to print a special notice that the story was not true after being bombarded with letters expressing panic. It said; ‘it is only a work of fiction, and in printing it we thought it impossible that anyone could think otherwise, while at the same time we thought it might help us all to realise more vividly what other countries have suffered and what we are escaping’ (*The Gleaner*, 21 November 1914, 14). The *Jamaica Times* used the opportunity to not only ridicule ‘simple’ readers but to remind Jamaicans of its fortune in avoiding invasion through British efforts.

However, British authorities in the Colonial and War Offices did not view the overzealous local sentiment favourably, as they failed to craft an appropriate structure for support from non-white men. Jamaican women’s World War I efforts, which focused on fundraising and the production of comforts, was met with relief and gratitude, but working-class men’s interest to their bodies presented a knotty racial predicament. Though enslaved black men had featured in the British army since the 1790s in the form of the West India Regiments, in their anxiety over recruiting free black and Indian men from the colonies the British authorities highlighted a range of racial insecurities. Despite at times being guided by martial race theory, which established a racial hierarchy among subject races based on perceived suitability for military service (Streets 2004) the War Office was still loath to arm populations who had a long history of violent revolt against aspects of colonial rule. In Jamaica, the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 and the violent Tramcar Boycott of 1912 were two stark reminders that Afro-Jamaicans could

not be trusted to maintain colonial-style law and order. Equipping these men with guns and military training would only make future insurgencies more difficult to contain. Even more worrisome was the very likely possibility that with military service would come appeals for full citizenship in post-war years. Political disenfranchisement of Afro-Jamaicans and stark socio-economic inequalities that buttressed the colonial establishment would be impossible to justify after non-whites fought and died alongside British men of good stock. White privilege was certainly under attack and the War Office was fighting its own micro-war against the winds of change. Indeed, the War Office was not particularly paranoid in relation to the boost that military service would give to black West Indians. As Howe (2002, 17) asserts 'the participation of blacks in the war, it was contended, would provide a significant fillip to their social and political advancement, quite apart from its psychological benefits'. Also, as history would reveal, through the 1930s unrest fomented among ex-BWIR men relating to broken wartime promises; the War Office fears were justified.

Perhaps the most peculiar concern with West Indian recruitment in 1915 was the view that non-white bodies should not be encouraged to fight white men, even if they were German enemies. As Smith (2004, 59) explains, 'regardless of the perceived military capability of the martial races, British commanders were reluctant to deploy them against a white enemy. The fighting prowess of any white man could not be seen as challenged.' It is no surprise that the hero of 'When the German's took Jamaica' was a mature white man. Certainly the story would have raised several eyebrows among a readership with deeply entrenched hierarchies of race if a black man successfully neutralised a white German foe.

While both the Colonial and War Offices had grave concerns about West Indian's military service, the Colonial Office was acutely aware that failure to accept the colonies' overwhelming support could lead to agitation and social unrest; which would be disastrous during wartime. Eventually, the tremendous losses suffered by the British army weakened the position of the War Office regarding the recruitment of non-white volunteers from the Empire. Reports from the Battle of Somme in July 1916 for instance, indicated that British forces lost over 50,000 men in one day to German fire-power (Strachan 1998). While physical losses mounted, psychological issues including shell shock and malingering also systematically robbed the British forces of ideal military manhood. By mid 1916, the strength and image of the 'British Tommy' was

under attack and needed to be bolstered by bodies from the colonies and dominions. Even before the 1916 crises however, King George V on realising the dire state of the supply of volunteers and being cognisant of the looming political fall-out of ignoring West Indian aspirations, intervened in the struggle between the War and Colonial Offices by ordering that the wishes of West Indians to serve in the war be granted (Howe 2002, 36–37). He also contradicted the War Office position and issued a stirring appeal to all men to join the ranks as brothers in arms. He said ‘I ask you men of all classes to come forward voluntarily and take your share in the fight. In freely responding to my appeal, you will be giving your support to our brothers who for long months have nobly upheld Britain’s past traditions and glory of her Arms’ (*The Chronicle*, 25 October 1915).

Realities of centuries of racist policy-making resulted a lack of clarity and ad hoc recruitment of black West Indian men and women for service in the world wars and also influenced their placement away from front-line duty. However by May 1915 the War Office conceded to mounting pressure and made arrangements for West Indian recruits; the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) was formed in September of that year. Undoubtedly the actual recruitment of Jamaican men was riddled with its own race and class issues, where white men were assured of leadership roles while black men were rarely appointed above the rank of Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO). By 1917 the Legislative Council passed the Jamaican Military Service Act commonly known as the conscription bill. Men of military age were registered, but the bill was never enforced. All who served in World War I were volunteers, many of whom were recruited in response to fears of feminisation or by women themselves.

### THE FEMINISATION OF RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Traditionally, scholarship relating to recruitment of men for the BWIR in Jamaica has focused on churches, print media and parochial boards. Local recruitment committees mirrored the British model. They comprised local entrepreneurs, church figures and were promulgated by alliances between the political machinery and literary figures such as H. G. DeLisser and Tom Redcam, who produced stirring appeals to the conscience of the male population (Smith 2014, 91). Posters, films, and pamphlets that projected a staged reality were also prominent in the colonies. While churches, the press and government entities were crucial to

the recruitment movement, women were at the fore of this drive in the Jamaica, though their efforts and contribution to framing strategy have largely been overlooked.<sup>2</sup> Women became vocal presenters and prominent writers to whip up support from Jamaican men and were in fact a major feature of the recruitment strategies in World War I.

Jamaican elite women who were undertaking the project of galvanising themselves for war work were also involved in crafting and promulgating recruitment messages. These ranged from portraying the war as an opportunity for men to prove their bravery, show gratitude to Britain for freedom, defend the honour of Jamaican women, stave off conscription and cement Jamaica's place as a leader among the West Indian colonies. These were all critical to the construction of a Jamaican military masculinity as diametrically opposed to the relative powerlessness of the Jamaican working-class man emerging from slavery. The tactics of women were varied but were all geared towards reminding Jamaican men of their masculine duty and moral obligation to ensure military service (or sometimes creating that sense of duty and obligation). Influenced by British recruitment discourse that hinged on defeating the German menace, promoting national honour, defending King and country, and promoting the strength and vigour of English masculinity, these women embarked on framing recruitment of Jamaican men as an extension of British efforts.

Perhaps the first visible sign of female recruitment was through the print media. The use of poetry and prose to stir the imagination of the populace was a common feature of the media landscape in the early twentieth century, and elite women capitalised on this trend to craft the message of gender-appropriate service. For instance, in response to the King's appeal for men in October 1915, Rose deLisser (member of the deLisser family also known as Mrs. S. R. Rueben; wife of prominent VP of the Chamber of Commerce), penned a lengthy verse to guide the nation's response to the call. Her poem featured in *The Gleaner* (26 October 1915, 6) and read:

An appeal from the Throne! Have you heard it  
 Oh men in this Isle of the West;  
 It was wrung from the heart of our Monarch.  
 It has asked you to do your best.  
 It has asked you to help with the burden  
 Of our glorious British race

To go forth in the vanguard of heroes  
And meet Germany face to face

An appeal from the Throne! It has reached:  
Put forward your courage and might  
Never quad in the direful moment:  
For God, for our land – and the right  
Aye yes 'tis the crisis of nations  
This war with its merciless sway  
Yet remember 'tis England that's calling  
The Huns will still pay for their 'Day'

An appeal from the Throne! Oh, my brothers,  
God knows it is bitter to part;  
But your manhood shall never be lowered,  
No fear; must be now in your heart  
You will go where the colours are flying,  
Where the Red Cross is waving still;  
And Heaven will see that our Ensign  
Rules ever o'er vale and o'er hill.

An appeal from the Throne! Ah, you women,  
Be strong in the hour of strife;  
Never hinder your men that are willing  
To stake all for honour and life  
It is better to know they are fighting,  
For that which is dearest and best  
Than to see them home playing the coward,  
In a languorous ease and rest

An appeal from the Throne! Yes, pray listen.  
Aside put the golf-stick and ball  
Let the racquet be quiet while onward  
You go to your Country's call  
Never once has that banner of freedom  
Ever faltered in duty's wake;  
Then surely ye hearts that are valiant  
Will rally now just for its sake

An appeal from the Throne! How it tells us  
Of that which is loyal and true  
Of the Britons who're striving and fighting

And dying for me and for you:  
 Then go forth where the battle is thickest,  
 Answer promptly your Monarch's call;  
 Let Jamaica be one of the foremost,  
 The first and the best of them all.

The poem is saturated with typical recruitment propaganda and utilises images of belonging to Empire, divine ordinance to quash the German menace, equality and brotherhood among races and classes and the need to maintain Jamaica's standing as a leader among the West Indian colonies. More than these, however, deLisser rhythmically articulates the appropriate response for men and women. She attempts to shame men into serving by associating the feminised characteristics of fear and cowardice with 'lowered masculinity', while concurrently according strength and dignity to a militarised femininity evident through women's willingness to allow their men to serve. In this imagination, failure of men to enlist is not only inherently unmanly and disgraceful but would naturally result from an equally unwomanly and shameful action on the part of women. Interestingly therefore, while the shame tactic was usually reserved for the fragile male ego, male cowardice and shirking of duty were also reinforced as indictments on womanhood. Briscoe channelled this sentiment in her own drive to enlist women in recruitment drives when she said, 'we women want men, not contemptible apologies!' (*Jamaica Times*, 2 June 1917, 11) Surely no man could remain in 'ease and rest' if his female loved one did not support it. The persuasive (read nagging) powers of the typical woman would ensure that men had no peace if they opted to remain at home. As a piece in the *Jamaica Times* reminded women 'There is no doubt about it that if the women of the island decided that they will not tolerate shirkers, the fit men who will not join the colours will be as few as they are despicable' (*Jamaica Times*, 2 June 1917, 14).

In the midst of letters to the leading newspapers, women began organising public recruitment meetings. Dorothy Trefusis and Annie Douglas convened the first women's recruitment meeting at the village of Irish Town in St. Andrew on 14 October 1914. This meeting was held shortly after Britain declared war on Germany, and almost a year before the Colonial and War Offices grudgingly shaped a framework for West Indian military service. These female-led demonstrations were a critical part of the general local movement to showcase Jamaican loyalty

and to prepare men for the opportunity to serve when avenues were created. This initial meeting garnered some 24 recruits. Annie Douglas's experience with the Boer War in South Africa made her the perfect candidate to sell the idea of the glory of war to the men who attended the meeting. Regarded as one of the most efficient and successful recruiting agents in the island, she donned her medals and Red Cross uniform and motivated the men present to follow her example. She reminded them that there was nothing to prevent them returning home after the war with medals and distinctions, of which they would be proud (*The Gleaner*, 16 October 1915, 6).

Douglas embodied contradictions that were useful in the recruitment of soldiers. On the one hand, her sex, race and class precluded her from front-line military service and physical over-exertion associated with lower classes and 'inferior' races of women. She was able to use her respectable femininity and vulnerability to plead with men to serve to defend her and all other women's honour. However her nursing service in the military and awards for brave service masculinised and legitimised her as an example of the efforts needed on the front lines of war. Her position as a Janus-faced 'military woman' allowed her to shame men into service utilising similar rhetoric to the head of the Russian Women's Battalion of Death, Maria Botchkareva, who encouraged her fighting women to set an example of self-sacrifice for cowardly men (Noakes 2006, 3).

These early public recruitment demonstrations undoubtedly contributed to the weakening of the War Office's steely position against West Indian involvement. Demonstrations and parades were grand affairs, which blocked off roads and took over towns. Patriotic banners, propaganda posters, and paraphernalia professing love of the British Empire drew large crowds and whipped up sentiment for the war effort with women prominent on the recruitment platform, as Figs. 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate. Prominent speakers and entertainers featured on the platforms which recurring messages for men, women and children who all had a role to play in the successful waging of the Great War. Certainly, these events served as more than nets to catch men for service, but were constant reminders to the colonial machinery that Jamaicans were crafting their own road to service regardless of official policy.

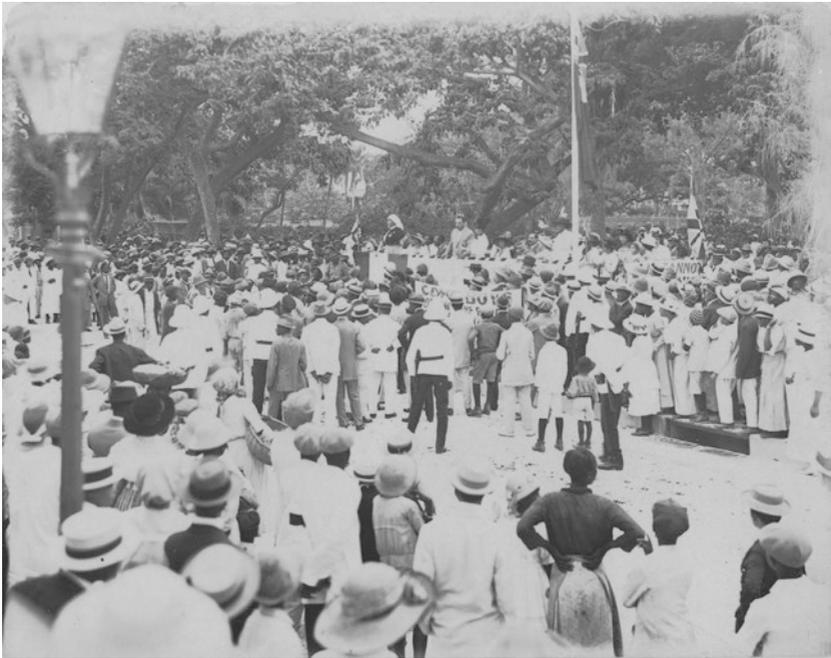
With the King's public appeal in 1915 and the reversal of the War Office's stance on non-white forces came large demonstrations across the island organised by the women's movement. One such was held in Montego Bay in November 1915, netting 187 recruits, many of whom



**Fig. 4.1** War demonstration, Spanish Town. *Source* National Library Jamaica—Photograph Collection: Jamaica and the Great War (Album)

were personally pulled out of the crowd by women.<sup>3</sup> Enthusiastic Jamaicans came out in their thousands to participate in the Kingston ceremony which constituted a march of Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, the West India Regiment band and members of the Jamaica War Contingent. The march ended at the foot of Queen Victoria's statue in Kingston. The recurring message was the nature of the responsibility of men and women in winning World War I with England. As a result of these and other efforts, the first Jamaica contingent of 500 men set sail on 8 November 1915 under the command of Major W. D. Neish.

By June 1917, the successful though largely splintered women's movement coalesced into a Women's Recruiting Movement. The formation of the women's movement was in direct response to the War Office's waning human resources by 1917. Despite the fact that the United States joined the war in April 1917, King George V once again



**Fig. 4.2** Recruiting meeting. *Source* National Library Jamaica—Photograph Collection: Jamaica and the Great War (Album)

issued a call for more men as high casualty rates engulfed the Empire's fighting forces. The Compulsory Service Bill, which facilitated conscription of Jamaican men, was also enacted in 1917 and paved the way for the draft of Jamaican men into service and the simultaneous movement towards garnering volunteers to delegitimise conscription. Headed by Mary Blackden, the committee comprised of prominent women who had become synonymous with Jamaican wartime efforts including Annie Douglas and Judith DeCordova. While the movement was guided by the aim of garnering men for the Jamaica Contingent, its immediate mission was to attract the attention of two classes of women. Blackden and her team appealed to other 'educated and influential sisters of Empire' who would set up committees in each parish and organise large demonstrations, but they also saw the value in preaching to working-class women and stressing to them 'the utmost of their duty in recruiting' (*The Gleaner*, 2 June 1917, 6).

Interestingly, *The Gleaner's* publication of their first appeal made little mention of men's duties, but concentrated on women's duty to Empire. These obligations were undoubtedly framed within the context of race and class delineations; influential women should organise, lead and speak and working-class women should attend, listen and pass on the message to their men. The distinctions were clear, but their unity of purpose was also evident. The gender card was being refashioned during the war and graduated (albeit temporarily) from the prototypical pre-war philanthropic exercise where elite women lifted as they climbed. Working-class women were now being invited into an ideological partnership with the 'Who's Who' in a war-induced sisterhood to garner troops for the contingents. Women's civic quasi-military duties were elevated above being a consolation prize for an inability to join the army; they were branded as fundamental to the Empire's success. As an editorial in *The Gleaner* articulated 'we honestly believe that in the work of recruiting, they can do more than the men; and when they realise that this is so, they ought to come forward and do their share of the work to be done... let them go out in couples or groups and address the men in plain, straightforward language—yes, and the women too, for here every woman's influence counts' (*The Gleaner*, 19 October 1915, 8). The message to women was that an inability to join the army created the perfect niche for them to work to fill the contingents. As Briscoe put it in one of her numerous letters to Jamaican women, 'this war has been our opportunity and no longer are we told that "women don't understand these things"; the ablest statesmen in England have borne eloquent testimony to the worth of women' (*Jamaica Times*, 2 June 1917, 11).

Not to be outdone by the Kingston movement, other parishes hosted large demonstrations, or 'war carnivals' as dubbed by the *Jamaica Times* (23 October 1915, 17). Large towns and obscure villages engaged in friendly rivalry with Kingston to fill the contingent with men. The *Jamaica Times* in particular carried great detail about the efforts across the nation and gave a running count of how many men joined the ranks daily. Headlines like 'Gayle doing its Duty', 'St. Thomas showing its Mettle' and 'Port Antonio Active' conjured images of the entire island's complete engagement in the recruitment drives. Mrs. Manley-Lopez, a prominent Clarendon resident, spearheaded the effort in that parish with remarkable success. In just one of these in 1917 over 190 men enlisted (*Jamaica Times*, 23 June 1917, 22). Planned as large, extravagant affairs, these meetings not only included speeches, but the added spectacle of

inviting and, more often, pulling, men out of the crowd on stage to publicly demonstrate their willingness to serve and prove their manhood. Under the guise of raising volunteers for the contingent, women crafted their own version of conscription by physically engaging the men, essentially shaping sites of forced volunteerism. Indeed, this ploy was not just for show. Those pulled on stage were promptly added to recruitment lists and in one particularly dramatic case, Mrs. Manley-Lopez immediately sent a telegram to General Blackden informing him of the men from Crooked River, Kellits and Mount Providence who were to be sent to Up Park Camp for processing by train that very evening (*The Gleaner*, 18 June 1917, 13).

Annie Douglas was also among those who routinely stepped down from the platform to reason with and bodily drag men out of complacency. Indeed, the justification for her MBE recounted ‘she attended meetings in various parts of the island and by worked and deed has secured many fighters for the King’ (*The Gleaner*, 16 March 1918, 3). Working the crowd became a necessity as the war dragged on. By 1917, recruitment drives would have been a consistent feature of the Jamaican urban landscape for over 2 years. While the demonstrations grew in spectacle, the novelty had worn off and West Indian casualties started to mount, dulling men’s enthusiasm to participate. West Indian recruits deemed as medically or intellectually unfit also started to return to the region, adding to the reality of layers of discrimination and indignity being faced by men of the BWIR. These realities necessitated some updated strategy outside of the usual diet of patriotic speeches seasoned with swipes against the state of Jamaican manhood. Douglas’s plan to counter the malaise included change agents in the crowds and secured the involvement of all classes of Jamaican women. While she lauded those who could organise meetings and eloquently orate from the podium, she encouraged her more humble sisters to engage in one-on-one discussion in the crowds; highlighting the growing importance of women’s collective as well as individual civic duties. As she outlined ‘if you are not able to speak from the platform let those that can do so, and you help in the crowd; it’s wonderful that results one gets. A little talk, coaxing and gentle persuasion go a long way’ (*The Gleaner*, 18 May 1917, 4).

Recruitment women also maintained of the imagery of the German menace by highlighting their evil intent to enslave, in opposition to the British benevolence as emancipators. As Briscoe explained ‘we shudder to think what our fate here in Jamaica will be if Germany wins. We shall

be ground under the heel of Prussian militarism... we shall be driven as slaves, terrorised and tortured' (*Jamaica Times*, 2 June 1917, 11). Guilt and gratitude featured as key tools in the recruitment of men for service. The affinity of many Jamaicans to ideals of British magnanimity (particularly that of the monarchy who 'rescued' the masses from slavery and injustice) influenced gender-appropriate responses related to service. The war was increasingly portrayed as just and therefore participating took on special meaning for would-be-volunteers. This strategy was designed to whip up sentiments of masculine duty in both the descendants of enslaved people who would not want to return to shackles and those whose ancestors were the beneficiaries from slavery, who would not be so fortunate as to be exempt from a German bondage. In a rare acknowledgment of the British involvement in slavery a recruiter in Manchester noted that under British slavery there were good taskmasters, in comparison to the brutality that German enslavement would unleash. Each woman in the crown was entreated to stave off this possibility by sending at least one man to the fighting line (*Jamaica Times*, 30 October 1915, 8).

The message was quite consistent with the colonial authorities, who sought to hold Jamaican men and women personally responsible for the defence of liberty and the British imperial project, even before their services were accepted by the War Office. In October 1915, for instance, Governor Manning reminded men at a recruitment meeting that they should be grateful for the rule of Britain, and failure to enlist would signify their preference of the 'iron heel of Prussian militarism' (*The Gleaner*, 12 October 1915, 13). In a subsequent speech in 1916, Blackden reiterated a similar rhetoric; painting the war as one between the ideologies of slavery and freedom and contrasting the dishonour of conscription with the pride associated with volunteerism. He said 'if you were German subjects you would be forced to do what the Empire required but England realised that one voluntary fighter was better than ten slaves' (*The Gleaner*, 10 April 1916, 13). This strategy found root as part of the military consciousness of men. As a member of the BWIR wrote 'don't forget that England was the first country in the world that set our fathers and mothers free and that everywhere that grand old union jack flies, there are real courts of justice where everybody gets a square deal'; the Germans in contrast 'hate the coloured people' (Goldthree 2016).

Jamaican men were bombarded with layers of messages to ensure their enlistment. If the German menace was not sufficient, branding non-soldiering men as weaklings would help the cause. *The Gleaner* chastised

men who refused to enlist for fear of their lives or the threat of death or injury, calling them contemptible cowards (*The Gleaner*, 27 November 1915, 8). This was not specific to Jamaica. While the world sank deeper and deeper into the conflict, feminising men became a dead horse that was thoroughly flogged. As Gullace (2002, 43) suggests, ‘under British wartime gendered definitions, men were those who protected; women those who required protection. Unlisted men, existing among those who were being protected, were ineluctably feminised by virtue of their place behind the lines.’ In Jamaica, a society where ideals of masculine prowess were well inculcated, the strategy of taunting was most effective. Questioning men’s courage and virility had the desired effect of rousing them to prove their manliness, even unto death. As Governor Manning explained at a recruitment exercise in Kingston, ‘those who could bear arms but would not, would bear a slur of the choice they made’ (*Jamaica Times*, 16 October 1915, 11). Very often, this slur included the feminisation of men. Recruiters capitalised on male pride by portraying men who did not enlist as weak slackers, shirkers or worse. The great worth of women was often touted in the same breath as branding men as effeminate if they shirked their duty. Annie Douglas’s antics at a recruitment drive in St. James offers an excellent example. In her usual theatrical style she said ‘I had brought this (holds up a woman’s skirt) to put on the men today who refused to come forward, but the chairman has told me there are no slackers. Are you going to wear this? (cries of NO!) Well I know you will not wear it for you are men of noble St. James’ (*The Gleaner*, November 1915, 18).

When women branded unlisted men as female, they were proving that cowardice was no longer the remit of women but that of powerless, feminised men. The accepted military binaries of the male as defender and the female as requiring defence facilitated the feminisation of men who chose to remain on the wrong end of the spectrum. Essentially, women separated themselves from their own femininity and reassigned it on men, just as British women did through the order of the white feather and other tangible forms of taunting of non-enlisted men (Gullace 2002, 44). Men who stepped up at recruitment meetings were therefore engaged in a process of reclaiming their masculinity in a critical moment when it was being hijacked.

Douglas was consistent in her tone and message and maintained this self-deprecating rhetoric for the duration of recruitment efforts. Two years later in at a recruitment Kingston she admonished the men who

remained in the crowd 'you men, you ought to be ashamed to come and hear a woman speak; but I am not ashamed to speak to you' (*Jamaica Times*, 26 March 1917, 3). In taking a leading role in public speaking, Douglas and other female recruiters stepped out of typical accepted private roles assigned to genteel women; but only far enough not to threaten the status quo and to shame men into activism. Though seemingly contradictory, these sentiments formed part of a larger message that linked the British Empire's victory with the moral and physical courage of its men and the selfless sacrifice of its women. The enforcement of appropriate gender roles was the ultimate weapon to secure German defeat, and placed the burden of British triumph on each colonial subject. These tactics were effective tools to shame men into service. They were particularly efficient when combined with reminders that the gentler sex was also carving out niches to serve at the front. Douet was one of the primary examples of military womanhood and used every opportunity to remind men that if she could plunge into service, so should they. At a recruitment demonstration in November 1917, for instance, she revealed her intention to request from the War Office, permission to take up duties in England until she could accompany the Jamaica contingent to go to the front (*The Gleaner*, 3 November 1915, 13).

Volunteering for service was set within the framework of masculine duty while 'forcing' men to volunteer was conceptualised as feminine duty. Recruitment rhetoric was therefore gendered discourse and entrenched ideas of ideal masculine and feminine behaviour were played out on recruitment platforms. As Howe (2002, 54) explains,

Collectively these recruiting tactics which sought to capitalize on culturally constructed notions of femininity and masculinity were effective because of the importance attached to patriarchal ideas in the West Indian society. Men were socialized into specific gender roles, which required them to present themselves as tough, strong, controlling... and dominant.

### APPEALING TO WOMEN

Women were specifically targeted in the recruitment of men for the army as direct pressure was applied to them to allow their male family members to enlist. Civic motherhood in particular, has been established as one of the greatest forms of service women have offered in times of war. It has even been suggested that women over 30 were the

ones enfranchised in Britain in 1918 rather than their younger counterparts because the state was attempting to reward mothers for their ultimate sacrifice of their sons (Grayzel 1999; Gullace 2002; Smith 2004). In Jamaica, special appeals were made to women of the working class to encourage their able-bodied menfolk to join the Jamaican Contingent. Women were portrayed as all powerful in this regard. An editorial in *The Gleaner* (17 May 1917, 8) said it best: ‘the women of Jamaica can make their husbands, their brothers, their fathers, their lovers, do almost anything they please. They can shame the men into greater patriotic activity.’ In keeping with the promulgation of the German menace, women were constantly reminded that it was in their own interest to be protected by sending their men to preserve Jamaican womanhood from vicious onslaught. As the Custos of Linstead alluded, ‘do as the other women of England, Canada and Australia, New Zealand and other countries are doing. They are sending their young men forward to protect them from slavery and other abominations connected with the Germans and their Allies’ (*The Gleaner*, 27 January 1917, 13).

Indeed, women were not only part of organising committees and avid speakers, but in some instances, made up the majority of the audience at these meetings. At one such meeting in St. Ann’s Bay, there was a notable absence of military-age men and Mr. A. N. Dixon, Chair of the St. Ann’s Bay recruiting committee, noted that he would have ‘preferred to see the room full of men of recruiting age instead of ladies and children’ (*The Gleaner*, 26 November 1915, 11). He however took comfort in the fact that the women would communicate the urgency of the matter to their male loved ones and encourage them to enlist. Similarly, in speaking to a majority female crowd, the gospel of ‘selfless womanhood’ was preached by Brigadier General Blackden, head of the Jamaican local forces, who said ‘I hope that you women who have sons, brothers, husbands who are of fighting age will not hold them back. But will encourage them to come forward as English women have been encouraging their men ever since the war began’ (*The Gleaner*, 20 December 1916, 19).

Women who had male family members enlisting were lauded in the print media. For instance Mrs. A. England, and Mrs. Agnes Godfrey, who each had three sons in the army, were given special mention in the *Jamaica Times* (29 January 1916, 6). In these instances, more attention was paid to the women who encouraged their sons to go, over the sacrifice of the young men. Recruiters often used their locus as mothers to entreat other women to allow their sons to serve, under the

ideology that motherhood during wartime acquired military significance and national importance. Mrs. Priestnal and Mrs. Blackden for instance reminded crowds of their own sons' glorious service; Blackden even going as far to say that if the war went on long enough, all six of her sons would serve in the army (*The Gleaner*, 3 November 1915, 13). These women invited Jamaican mothers to rebrand themselves from child-bearers and homemakers to soldier-bearers and empire-builders; callings which necessitated equating sacrifice of sons as a privilege. Mrs. Briscoe explained the joy that should accompany death and sacrifice: 'what more can we wish for our sons than that they give up their lives for a great ideal, for the cause of Empire and freedom, the freedom of people's yet unborn!' (*Jamaica Times*, 11 June 1917, 11). Undoubtedly, these women found creative ways to personalise the mission while giving Jamaican motherhood new importance. As the war progressed, mothers of fallen soldiers also featured in recruitment meetings as honourees. Amidst their tears, mothers were often regaled with speeches about the nobility and bravery of their sons and encouraged to feel pride at their sacrifice. Three such women, Elizabeth Hutchinson, Effa Taffe and Peggie Prince were given medals at a recruitment meeting in Linstead 'to show that [they] are the mothers of brave sons who have laid down their lives' (*The Gleaner*, 27 January 1917, 13). These medals were branded as being for the mothers, not as rewards for their sons to be collected by the women. Selfless motherhood was therefore accorded the highest honour and rewarded with tangible tokens. Perhaps more importantly, however, this focus on the civic importance of motherhood during the war would eventually extend during the 1930s to the framing of black women's citizenship in terms of their identities as wives and mothers; resulting focus on reducing illegitimacy and low marriage rates among the black population (Altink 2011).

A major calling-card of recruiters was the idea that women held the power to stave off conscription in the island. This move to ensure that suitable men in the island were automatically drafted for the Jamaica Contingent was seen as a disgrace by recruiters. They encouraged persons to join voluntarily rather than being forced to do so by the law. Mrs. Wates, who spoke in Portland, made this point clear saying, 'we are calling on the women to encourage the men to go. I know it is hard to lose husbands, brothers and sweethearts. However don't wait for conscription. Conscription is a disgrace. One man who goes voluntarily now is worth twenty of those who are bound to go' (*The Gleaner*, 20 July

1917, 9). At local meetings, women were portrayed as the final arbiters in the issue of voluntary service of their men. Their opinion was seen as having a 'great force' which was 'most far-reaching in influence' on men.<sup>4</sup> They were encouraged to make it difficult for their men to stay at home while King and country needed them. Naturally, the issue of the certain danger the men faced was hardly ever mentioned at these meetings. War was seen as joy. When death and injury were dealt with, they were veiled under the greater good of protection of the British Empire. At a meeting, Miss Turner argued along this vein saying:

If they (men) never come back can we Christian women really grieve? Should we not rather rejoice that we have been allowed the privilege of giving so fully, and they have been called to the richer, fuller life beyond the veil? What are the women who are left behind to gain? We gain as women the knowledge that we have done our duty. (*The Gleaner*, 25 May 1917, 11)

#### SEPARATION ALLOWANCES AND WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

The effectiveness of these strategies was evident to the extent that conscription was never imposed. Men were often eager to serve and avoid being labelled as cowards, and many women supported the enlistment of their male family members. However women's support of enlistment did not only hinge on gender ideals; in most cases women made real economic choices. For instance, working-class women would be more likely to support enlistment of male relatives if they thought that separation allowances or an army wage would benefit the family. The lure of separation allowances was often used at recruitment meetings to bolster recruiters' arguments. Island-wide drives were geared towards the middle- and working-class men and women, and recruiters attempted to capitalise on the very real issue of the less than desirable economic state in which many of these women and men found themselves. As Howe (2002, 55) aptly perceived, 'as a marginalized, chronically underpaid and generally underprivileged group, their main concern was to secure food, shelter and the other basic necessities of life for themselves and their families'. Though these men and women of the working class should not be characterised as acting solely out of economic considerations, financial suasion was undeniably a part of the recruitment tactics. Mrs. Wates noted at a meeting: 'women need not to worry about their men's maintenance; you will be well provided for just as if your men were here, and in some cases better separation allowance will be granted' (*The Gleaner*, 10 July 1915, 13).

However, these allowances became inadequate for sustenance as the war progressed. For NCOs and men of the Jamaica War Contingent, the allowances approved by the war office were as follows: for women married to men of the rank of private, but not of higher rank than corporal, the men were mandated to contribute 6d per day for support of their wives and the government contributed 1/1 per day or 1/7 per day in total. Married men of rank higher than corporal had to contribute 10d per day and the government then contributed a further 1/1 per day, 1/11 per day in all. Wives, therefore, received 13/5 per week.<sup>5</sup> Separation allowances were also granted for 'legitimate children' of 2d per day for girls under 16 and boys under 14 years of age. Soldiers' common-law domestic partners could also petition for separation allowances if they proved that they had been financially dependent on the soldier for at least a year prior to his enlistment. In cases where families could prove legitimacy, the earning to be gained from recruitment was cause for celebration and encouraged women to ship their husbands to war. As Goldthree (2011, 111–112) informs us in relation to a case in Trinidad and Tobago:

In a piece published in the *Port of Spain Gazette* entitled, 'Inside the Recruiting Office,' a sergeant asks a woman if her husband wants to enlist. 'Want to enlist! He's *got* to enlist,' she quickly replies. Stating that she has four children to support, the woman asks the sergeant if she will receive a separation allowance. When the recruiter responds that she will garner 28s. 6d. per week, the woman exclaims: 'Twenty-eight an' six a week!' 'Nuff said. Rope him in.'

In Jamaica, the dependents of the soldiers were frequently unable to come up with the proof needed to access the allowances. In addition, many—particularly the female dependents themselves—thought that the allowances were out of touch with the high cost of living. As supportive as *The Gleaner* was of most of the status quo, even its editorial noted that the Central Recruiting Committee seemed unaware of the plight of dependents of Contingents. This was in response to the Committee's proclamation that 'increase in prices did not at present appear to be sufficient to warrant any alteration in the allowances'. Noting that the cost of living was almost double in 1917 what it had been in 1914, and that the rates were set in England and not locally, the editorial was concerned with the apparent aloofness of the committee. It was also mentioned that rates were increased in England but Jamaica failed to mirror this occurrence (*The Gleaner*, 16 January 1917, 8).

The Legislative Council eventually debated the issue in April of 1917. It was perceived that men were being deterred from serving, not from fear of losing their lives, but out of concern that their loved ones would suffer abject poverty in their absence. As a Council member argued, it was not cowardice or selfishness that was keeping men from enlisting but the very pressing problem of making some decent provision for those he would be compelled to leave, to say nothing about his very natural anxiety as to his own future if he should return disabled (*The Gleaner*, 9 June 1917, 8). Eventually the Council granted an increased pensions and separation allowances in 1917. But even when the allowances were raised, there were also issues relating to specific women and their claim to such allowances. Mrs. R. Tyson, for instance, sent letters to the Colonial Secretary claiming that her son, and sole support, died in action during the war and she did not receive any allowances. She became destitute as a result. It was felt by the authorities that she was not dependent on him at the time of his enlistment because no separation allowance was added to his allotment and all salaries were paid directly to him. Her request was therefore denied.<sup>6</sup> There were other such cases of destitute women in the country who looked to the authorities for assistance when their sons or husbands were unable to support them during or after the war, and in many cases their requests were denied for similar reasons.

It is therefore undeniable that many women were wary of allowing their male relatives to go to war on foreign soil with the thought that they would be left without support or that they might never return. The hesitance of some women was admonished by Canon Hendrick, a speaker at a local recruitment meeting. He made the point that many Jamaican women were asking their men ‘Whey you gwine fa?’ (‘What are you going for?’) He continued by encouraging men not to take heed of this opposition saying, ‘if the Germans came to Jamaica those very women would be pushing out the men from their hiding places to fight and save them’ (*The Gleaner*, 11 December 1916, 3). The notion that some women prevented their men from enlisting was a real one and was not just a theory used by recruiters. On the occasion of the recruitment meeting in Irish Town, 27 men went forward, but three were married and their wives apparently prevailed upon them not to go (*The Gleaner*, 16 October 1915, 6). This was not only a Jamaican phenomenon. As Howe (2002, 74) informs us, some Trinidadian women adopted the American-composed song and call for peace, which said:

I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier  
 I brought him up to be my pride and joy  
 Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,  
 To shoot some other mother's darling boy?  
 Let nations arbitrate their future troubles  
 It's time to lay the sword and gun away  
 There'd be no war today, if mothers all would say  
 'I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier!'

Women who adopted these sentiments were chastised by all who had access to a pen or a typewriter. Miss Douglas argued:

You wives and mothers, your King requires your husband's and sons in order to save your country... we do not want the women who when a young man says yes, I will go, says that he will make me weep, no those kind of women are no good. We prefer women who will give up her young man and encourage him and others to go and though she feels the loss she awaits his return, knowing that he is only gone to assist his King in the cause of right and justice. (*Jamaica Times*, 18 March 1916, 6)

The reluctance of some women to allow their men to enlist was not only as a result of sentimentalism and fear of death. Rather, the reality of the depressed socio-economic state that most working-class West Indian families faced would often dissuade women from persuading male co-breadwinners to leave the family. Particularly when separation allowances proved to be less than the man earned at home, women and men alike would have been hesitant to consider joining the force. Despite the valid reasons however, women who dissuaded their male loved ones from joining the fighting forces were attacked with scathing remarks. An editorial in *The Gleaner* noted: 'surely mamma ought to be ashamed of herself, and the dutiful boy though he is, should make up his mind that the apron strings may form a disreputable tie when they pull against his duty' (*The Gleaner*, 27 November 1917, 8).

Wartime civic duty was undoubtedly guided by gendered discourse in the Jamaica. Men and women were equally praised and criticised by based on how well they conformed to a mix of new and well-entrenched gendered ideals. Jamaica's response to the war placed men and women in separate but complementary places with each having a clear notion of what should be done to be viewed by the society as doing one's bit. Very

few were allowed to step out of line, and by far, the dominant ideology of male soldier and female recruiter and comfort-maker was portrayed as the norm in Jamaican society. The work of the majority of women to assist the war effort in various ways was constantly reiterated in the print media. They were characterised as being ‘strenuous in patriotic endeavour’ during the war (Lucas 1923, 353). Overall, women, though mainly of the upper class, became very visible in the media and in the collective mind of the society in a way that was previously unseen. Ladies Bountiful continued in the pre-World War I tradition of leading philanthropic organisations by rallying women for war work from 1914. Women like Judith deCordova, A. E. Briscoe, Annie Douglas and Dorothy Trefusis became increasingly visible in the public domain and synonymous with women’s organised war work during the First World War. They conceptualised a form of patriotism that emboldened women’s traditional maternal and domestic roles while creating a viable military masculinity. While these women were at the helm of the various women’s war efforts, many others were actively involved with the efforts on various levels and contributed a great deal to the island’s efforts by both manufacturing and sending supplies to war torn nations and also by being integral to the movement to recruit Jamaican contingents for war.

As a result of their war-work, women were not only able to contribute greatly to Jamaica’s war efforts but their involvement also contributed to a heightened sense of awareness of the worth of women’s work by the society in general. The First World War has also been credited with awakening the leisured class of women from a life of idle pursuits to one of organisation, hard work and dedication to a national and international cause. While it is debatable whether the country’s upper-class women were actually indolent in the pre-war era, what is certain is that these women emerged at the end of the war in the public consciousness as shrewd organisers and astute strategists. This gave rise to the notion that these women were fit for a wider participation in the politics of the nation, through voting. Indeed, Jamaica was one of the first Caribbean territories to allow a limited franchise for women. This decision had inextricable links to the local and international political happenings in the aftermath of World War I. It is to this intricate issue of enfranchisement, class and gender that we now turn.

## NOTES

1. Excerpt from a recruitment speech William Wilson *The Gleaner* (10 April 1916, 13).
2. Howe (2002) is a notable exception as he briefly addresses women's roles in his work.
3. Annie Douglas was particularly vigilant and she moved through the crowd 'catching the young men by the hand', *The Gleaner* (18 November 1915, 6).
4. Speech by Hector Josephs, a barrister and founding member of the Jamaica League. *The Gleaner* (14 October 1915, 13).
5. CSO: 1B/5/77 #108 1926 and the *Jamaica Times*, 3 June 1916, 12.
6. CSO: 1B/5/77 #1671 1923.

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## ‘Votes for (Some) Women Now!’ The Road to Political Franchise in the Aftermath of War

Arguably, the most significant political effect of World War I on Jamaican women was in the area of enfranchisement and the attendant process of refashioning the boundaries of female citizenship. Jamaica emerged from the immediate post-World War I years as the second of the British-colonised Caribbean states to grant voting rights to women in 1919; second only to British Honduras, which enfranchised propertied women in 1912. This is a notable feat for a small colonial state when one considers that, just 28 years before, women did not have the right to vote anywhere in the world (Paxton et al. 2006). In Chap. 3 it was established that through political protest and activism, Afro-Jamaican women wielded influence on the wartime affairs of the country and exercised creative expressions of agency. However, regardless of their race, colour or class, women were not permitted to share in the official electoral process in Jamaica. Their rights of citizenship were limited and they had no privilege to officially participate in policy making.

This changed in 1919 when the franchise was extended to women, though on inferior terms to men. The male voter had to have reached the age of 21 and pay 10 shillings in taxes or earn fifty pounds, while women had to be 25 and pay £2 in taxes. The high cost of female citizenship was tantamount to a gender tax, which prolonged the disenfranchisement of working-class Jamaican women. The right to vote was championed by powerful men who linked wartime service to greater civic responsibilities. While the Bill enfranchised 3000 women, it also gave voting rights to returning men of the BWIR though the

road to enfranchisement was quite dissimilar.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the returning soldiers, their growing militant discontent with the conditions of their service, destitution on return to the island and increased class-and race-consciousness led to protest action and pockets of civil disturbance. As Goldthree (2011) has explained, in order to control the veterans, Jamaican colonial authorities crafted a system of rewards and repression. Among the rewards was the temporary removal of property and tax qualifications for franchise for ex-soldiers of the BWIR. On the other hand, the movement to enfranchise women was less influenced by female agitation and more so by their exceptional wartime service and as a result of powerful men's own self-interest in reinforcing the political strength of their class.

As a result of the measure, the electorate was expanded by 25% and paved the way for the inclusion of women and blacks of the labouring classes to participate in representational politics.

However, the move must also be seen as a deliberate strategy to undermine the burgeoning Pan-African and feminist civic aspirations. The lobbying for political franchise was mainly on behalf of elite women, excluded the working-class majority of the population, and involved little or no alliance with black middle-class women's organisations. The process was marred by gender contradictions and did more to cement the ties of the elite class than foster solidarity among the island's women. However this racially charged political development had long-term effects that slowly chipped away at the patriarchal status quo, weakened the pre-eminence of the white male voter archetype and emboldened black women's lobbying for more inclusive citizenship later in the twentieth century.

### SETTING THE STAGE

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the move to grant women and other disenfranchised groups the right to vote was a global phenomenon, marred by long and sometimes violent struggles in many countries. Though the right was granted to women in New Zealand from as early as 1886 and in some states of the USA from 1897, the nineteenth century was an epoch of great efforts to include women more substantially in the political life of their countries. These movements were not only individual country struggles; there were great efforts to formalise an international women's movement. Paris was the site of the

first international women's congress in 1878; the precursor to more recent and ground-breaking world conferences on women in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995). The International Council of Women, founded in 1888, represented a transatlantic movement for women's suffrage. Set up by Susan B. Anthony and May Wright Sewell, among others, the first convention of the Council was held in Washington, DC, and 49 delegates from Britain, India, France, Norway, Denmark, Canada, Finland, Ireland and the United States attended. In an attempt to have as wide a membership as possible, the Council did not specifically lobby for women's suffrage and as a result, a void still needed to be filled. Enter Carrie Chapman Catt, then president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Catt was passionate about the ideal of a global women's suffrage movement. She viewed local nationalism as a myopic masculine phenomenon and her ideology was therefore centred on an opposing feminist standpoint of forward-thinking internationalism. From Catt's and British suffragist Millicent Fawcett's efforts the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) was born in February 1902.

The alliance was populated by Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States, Denmark, Norway, Canada, Hungary, Finland, Italy, Russia, South Africa and Switzerland among others. While World War I did much to further local suffrage movements, it somewhat diminished the momentum of the IWSA, as these women turned their attention to patriotic wartime service. There was some buoyancy after the war ended however, up to the end of World War II. In this period suffrage was granted to women in many of the affiliated nations, and their mandate and name changed to the International Alliance of Women (IAW).

In addition to these two organisations, mention must also be made of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) which, in 1915, grew out of the alliance, with the mandate of lobbying for peace, as the name suggests (Rupp and Taylor 1999).

As a result of the widespread global women's alliance around the issue of suffrage, authors like Ramirez et al. (1997, 736) have argued that the vote for women was realised only in part by national struggles and the local mobilisation of women. As they argue, 'from the outset, we believe, the battle for women's suffrage was an international crusade drawing on universalistic principles'. However, the Jamaican case, while situated within the transnational women's movement, was more influenced by

internal class pressures and the example of the parliamentary suffrage movement in Britain. The exploits of British suffragettes and suffragists were well known to Jamaicans, who followed the major news and developments in the mother country. What began in the 1860s when John Stuart Mill introduced women suffrage in his election programme, blossomed into a small women's movement to secure women's rights before later evolving into a complex mass movement involving thousands of women and male allies to acquire the vote and other political reforms for women.

The British movement was not short of influential and oftentimes controversial personalities. Numerous persons are associated with the movement, many of whom, though working towards broadly similar aims differed in their methods. Emmeline Pankhurst, along with daughters Christabel and Sylvia, were synonymous with the British movement and formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1903. A major characteristic of their campaign was acts of violence. In an attempt to draw public attention to the cause, send the message women were adamant about their rights and to challenge traditional views about women's meek nature, militant suffragettes demonstrated, heckled parliamentarians and participated in hunger strikes, which resulted in their imprisonment. Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy started the Women's Franchise League in 1889 which became the voice of radical suffrage movement because it was willing to include married women in its lobbying. In 1867 her Manchester Society was responsible for uniting smaller groups in the National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS). Millicent Fawcett led the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, a moderate campaigner who distanced herself from the militant activities of the WSPU. Others, including Lydia Becker, started print journals and periodicals into spread the word about suffrage. Her *Women's Suffrage Journal* started in 1870 was the first women's magazine to deal with the issue. Charlotte Despard and Teresa Billington-Greig followed in 1907 with *The Vote*. The Pankhursts were not to be outdone, and *The Suffragette* became a sounding board for the efforts of the WSPU. Before the start of World War I, these and many other women made the issue of British women's suffrage impossible to overlook. Eventually, their struggles bore some fruit when, in 1918, the Representation of the People Act became law and gave the vote to all women over the age of 30 who were on the local government register or who were wives of men on the register. The campaign

came to an end in 1928 when full equality in suffrage was granted (Rosen 1974; Holton 1995).

A key point of departure from the Jamaican case was that from the outset, the British suffrage movement aimed at not only securing the vote for women, but was interested in shifting the male-dominated nature of the British political system. Token inclusion of women was not enough, an evolution in the values and attitudes associated with the political process was also key. As Smith (1986, 7) indicates, while the movement was only partially successful in its efforts to eradicate broader gender barriers 'the campaign was part of a specifically women's protest against a gender system that disadvantaged females. Women sought the vote not only to gain equal citizenship rights but also as a means to the political power necessary to transform gender structures.' These sentiments did not feature in the Jamaican case until long after the initial call for the vote for women, and emerged as a late by-product of the campaign rather than the guiding philosophy behind the local suffrage movement.

The Jamaican movement also differed from the British Movement in that the latter included a wide range of ideologies and classes of women. There were conservative proponents who wanted a limited franchise for older propertied women, and at the other end of the spectrum were those like Elmy who not only focused on representation as a result of taxation, but were guided by feminist ideology and believed that women's roles as paid labourers, reproductive agents and as people were more than enough reasons to secure them full citizenship. Also, while the British movement began as a middle-class movement, it had evolved by the 1900s to become a mass movement (Smith 1986, 16–17). The Jamaican case was typified by more moderate views, which focused on cementing middle- and upper-class unity rather than facilitating radical and progressive feminism.

However, as this chapter will highlight, there were some notable similarities between the two movements. The British suffrage movement wavered between discourses of equal rights and notions of female moral superiority. The concept of equal rights for men and women was a derivative of liberal theory and indeed, many supporters participated on the basis that women were equal to men and therefore deserved similar access to full citizenship. However, perhaps more critical was the view that women were of superior moral calibre and that their access to political privileges could only serve to improve governance. This was also a

recurring sentiment in the Jamaican case, where supporters often claimed that suffrage opponents did not want women to vote because of the fear that they would do too good a job of eradicating bars, brothels and other sites of unsavoury male pastimes.

### THE LOCAL CALL

In Jamaica, female enfranchisement was discussed at a national level from as early as Lord Sydney Olivier's tenure as Governor during the period 1907–1913. A resolution was passed by the Legislative Council of Jamaica expressing that 'in the opinion of this council, women should have the vote'. Though this did not go much further than the stage of a resolution, it was passed by most of the elected members present (*The Gleaner*, 19 September 1916, 8). The suffrage campaign by British and American women during and after World War I resonated in the local media and Jamaicans who read the leading newspapers were in tune with the international suffrage movements before 1919. During the move for the vote in Jamaica, local women were encouraged to assist in the movement in the United States by signing a petition that appeared in *The Gleaner*. This petition encouraged women from all over the world to support the amendment that 'the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by any State on account of sex'.

The first meaningful call for the vote for women came from Honourable H. A. L. Simpson of the Legislative Council during the First World War in 1917. He used the performance of women in the war up to that time as a basis for his claim that justice, rights to citizenship and true comradeship was long overdue. As he explained:

The injustice done in depriving them (women) of the right to vote at elections or of representing a constituency, notwithstanding that so many laws have a direct bearing on their sex, only appears to be greatly increased when we consider that under our present system... a male drunkard so long as someone will take him to the poll and he can stand long enough to go through the short ceremony required by the law can vote... but the woman with a university degree of extensive experience and intimate familiarity with political conditions and subjects is deprived of the right as if she had no natural capacity to think for her country. (*Jamaica Times*, 23 June 1917, 2–3)

Simpson's lengthy article related to the political worth of intellectual women; its context was changing as opinions in relation to de facto male superiority changed.<sup>2</sup> It became glaringly obvious that masculinity could no longer be the sole arbiter of rights and privileges. While World War I did much to facilitate increased public attention to women's worth as citizens, Jamaican women had already made economic and educational strides at the turn of the century. Jamaica was not short of educated and socially conscious women of the wealthy classes, as well as a growing middle class of skilled workers, entrepreneurs and property owners. The notion that these women would be continually denied the rights afforded to less capable men lost some of its earlier traction.

Simpson found a supporter in H. G. DeLisser, editor of *The Gleaner*, who used the newspapers as his personal notebook to stir the political consciousness of literate Jamaicans on the question of women's enfranchisement. Like the British suffragist Eleanor Rathbone and the Consultative Committee of Constitutional Women's Suffrage Societies, who in 1916 presented a case for women's suffrage by highlighting both the work of female munitions workers and the wartime service, DeLisser used the competence of Jamaican women during World War I as evidence of their ability to handle more meaningful public responsibilities. He noted:

The present war has placed the women of the Empire in a glorious light... Work which before was thought could only be performed by men with any degree of thoroughness is now being ably executed by their sister women... The conclusion of the matter is that if during the present war women have been called upon to take the place of men in so many situations, it is but fair to extend her the great principle which men claim, namely that there should be no taxation without representation. (*The Gleaner*, 4 July 1918, 8)

Women's rise to notice as a result of war-work was ostensibly proof of their abilities related to public policy and became the guiding principle behind suffrage. Evidence of their organisational skills, strategic planning, public speaking and shrewd fundraising abilities mirrored the type of work that needed to be done in the countries' governing bodies. As a contributor to the debate in *The Gleaner* argued (13 September 1918, 13), 'the women of the island in common with the women of other lands have given war recruiting speeches and does not this sort of speech

savour of politics?’ It was often remarked that out of the evil war came the greater good of empowerment of women the world over. Men and women were working side by side in unprecedented ways as a result of the war exigencies, and this prompted the view that such a society should be governed by both men and women. This sentiment was not unique to Jamaica. In Trinidad in the 1920s, Captain A. A. Cipriani, leader of the Trinidad Workingmen’s Association and supporter of women’s franchise, used the fact that women were branching out in new areas of employment during World War I as a justification for supporting the motion to enfranchise them (Reddock 1994, 174).

In Jamaica, powerful and learned men were the first to initiate and seriously support the enfranchisement of women. This resembled trends in Britain where philosophers and parliamentarians including John Stuart Mill, Richard Pankhurst, Charles Dilke and Jacob Bright had been outstanding male supporters of the cause. While the Jamaican men were not ‘philosophical feminists’, as Sylvia Strauss categorised men like John Stuart Mill, they were somewhat forward-thinking in their views of women.<sup>3</sup> Like the British fathers of feminism, the Jamaican men who championed this cause threw their power and political influence behind a movement that needed the legitimacy their masculinity and class could supply. In this way, men such as Simpson and DeLisser were invaluable allies to the cause of female empowerment.

These men should not be characterised as ‘traitors to the masculine cause’ by calling for political rights for women. As Altink (2011) has correctly noted, elite Jamaican men often took the lead in demanding rights for women in order to stave off more far-reaching claims by women themselves, thereby upholding men’s privileged position. Not only did elite men seek to set the limits of progress by leading quasi-liberal moves but in many ways they were typical men of their time, seeing women as partners, but not as equals. A shocking example of DeLisser’s loyalty to the more oppressive traits of hegemonic masculinity is worthy of note. A mere six years after leading the call for the enfranchisement of women, DeLisser shared with Jamaican men, his ‘Good News For Husbands’:

I have just read that the English legal code enacts ‘that a man may beat his wife with any weapon not thicker than his thumb’. I do not think this is generally known, so I hasten to give the fact the widest possible

publicity... many men have not waited for this knowledge before proceeding to action... they have frequently beaten their female connections, with weapons considerably thicker than their thumbs, I now implore them to abide by the letter of the law. After all, many men possess thumbs of a considerable thickness. Their legal instruments of castigation should therefore prove quite efficacious. (*The Gleaner*, 3 April 1924, 8)

DeLisser expressed a dualism by supporting castigation of women, with ideas of female liberation and advancement. It should therefore be no surprise that the type of franchise he wanted would serve to reinforce male dominance. DeLisser lobbied for a restricted franchise for privileged women synonymous with the public image of war workers during World War I. This allowed DeLisser to achieve dual aims: that of lauding the stellar work of these women and limiting the franchise debate to their tight elite circle. This would result in a small minority of female voters, which in his estimation, would buttress the interest of upper class of the society through inclusion of women of that echelon at a time when Pan-Africanism, black nationalism and workers' movements were picking up momentum and growing in influence. As Ford-Smith and French observed (1985, 186), 'the men of the power block saw that it was in their own "enlightened self interest" to uplift "their" women and in so doing promote some of the reforms necessary to ensure the reproduction of the society as it was'. By leading the call for female enfranchisement these men sought to control the limits of such rights and dictate what women of the nation could achieve. It was never expected that women would be given the vote on the same level as men, and the more rigid restrictions on the qualifications for the vote were exposed by DeLisser and Simpson in their debates on the issue. In 1916 it was suggested by DeLisser that any attempt to expand the franchise in the population should be done on the basis of intelligence and literacy, again hinting that they favoured a middle—and upper-class voter. As a 1916 editorial argued:

...any addition to the number of her electors shall be such that while it will fairly represent all classes and colours of the community, it will also aim at representing intelligence and political stability... we are therefore in favour of a democratic franchise; but there is a world of difference between an intelligent democratic franchise and one that places the balance of power in the hands of the ignorant. (*Gleaner*, 18 September 1916, 8)

The colonial setting created the perfect context for these men to be guided by race and class considerations. DeLisser, in particular, had long established himself as a champion of imperialism including the paramount place of whiteness and gentility in women according to English gender norms. As Gregg (2007, 21) explains, his essays and novels mirrored ideals of the imperial order ‘and make visible and knowable a Jamaica ruled and almost exclusively peopled by whites even as they showcase a place from which the majority population had been erased’. DeLisser saw a need to implement suffrage before working-class Jamaican women followed the example of their influential British counterparts. The reports of the violent struggle that British women mounted for the vote, particularly in the pre-war years, were easily accessible. Christabel Pankhurst was notorious for interrupting men’s political meetings, and other members of the WSPU committed various acts with the intention of being arrested. Attacks on private property, arson, public demonstrations and meetings were also a feature of the movement. *The Gleaner* carried extensive stories of the acts of violence perpetrated by British suffragettes on the front page of its daily publication. The newspaper’s editorials were not kind to the movement, particularly after the violent acts increased in frequency and intensity: ‘It has ceased to be fun this struggle: it is becoming a tragedy... These tigerish women are very disturbing, and the effect of their wild, ill-considered acts is to cause many good people to wonder whether their present behaviour is not an example of what would be the attitude and action of women if they got the vote’ (*The Gleaner*, 28 January 1913, 6).

If the suffrage movement had been allowed to develop along these lines in Jamaica, the mass of black working-class women would have had to play a greater role, ensuring them the franchise at the end of the struggle. This was pre-empted by the ‘foresight’ of DeLisser and Simpson. Vassell (1993, 42) championed this view saying:

The male power elite, very conscious of the tactics of the Suffragettes, would want to channel women’s demands in a non-confrontational framework... this would reduce the possibility of inflaming gender sensitivity among women and avoid further divisions in an already unstable situation.

The desire of the status quo was not only to keep working class from the polls because of class differences, but also to ensure that men’s votes were not swamped by those of women, who were in the majority. In

1911, for instance, there were 397,439 men (48.6% over voting age) and 433,944 women (52.3% over voting age) while in 1921 the figures were 401,973 men (47.8% over voting age) to 456,145 women (52.8% over voting age) (Tekse 1974, 24). Suggesting suffrage on a limited basis, and with higher qualifications for women, was an attempt to prevent women outnumbering men on the voter's list. The campaign for the vote for women in Jamaica between 1918 and 1919 was therefore influenced by the rigid class and race delineations of the society and highlighted the gender and class ambiguities of the colonial social order. DeLisser's battle cry, borrowed from the rhetoric of the American Revolution of 1775, 'No taxation without representation', clearly implied that franchise was for those who paid taxes on land or other real property. The concept was adopted by at least one female writer to *The Gleaner* at the height of the debate. Signing her letter as 'Taxed but not Represented' this otherwise-unnamed woman directly positioned her civic identity in relation to her unrequited responsibilities to the colony. Though the taxation rhetoric was intended to alienate the labouring classes, it was long recognised by progressive women as inequitable and unsustainable. Catherine McKensie, for instance, linked the Jamaican woman's subaltern status to her political marginalisation a piece written in 1901: 'Man calls upon woman to contribute equally with him to the general revenue of the State, whether she be maiden or widow, with or without sufficient means whereby she can live independently of him. Then in the face of this he denies her the right to have a voice in the disposal of such revenues, or the right to occupy the offices paid for by the said revenues' (Vassell 1993, 18). The rhetoric of exclusivity did not remain with the male advocates for the vote. For the most part, elite women did not object to the idea of a restricted franchise. Their class-consciousness outweighed any affinity to gender. In much the same way that many middle- and upper-class British feminists and suffragists were imperial in their outlook, aspirations and identities, so, too, were their counterparts in Jamaica—loyal colonialists with entrenched ideas about prevailing class and race status. Playing the ranking game held far more appeal than gender solidarity.

However, some did believe that if elite women got the vote, working-class women would invariably benefit. Nellie Latrielle, was one of the major proponents of the view that more fortunate women should concentrate on rectifying the ills in the society. Latrielle, a middle-class white woman whose father had migrated to Jamaica from England, became

involved in the leading social service organisations of the time including The Women's Purity Association and WSSC.<sup>4</sup> Her pride in female identity was evidenced by her argument that having the vote was one way in which intelligent women could contribute to nation-building and improving the moral tone of the island. She supported the vote in order to do good for womankind in the island. The depressed economic life of many of the nation's women, the high rates of prostitution, as well as their poor health and housing conditions, were issues that could be addressed by women through gradual political reform. Implicit in her thinking was the idea that men were failing to bring about improvements in social services in the country. She argued:

What the intelligent women of Jamaica need to have is a true vision of what their duty to other women of Jamaica is, to realise how their power will be enhanced by the coming of 'the vote' and the remediable possibilities in possessing 'the vote'... Let us learn to make good use of our opportunities and in this fair western land, unite to do our duty, fully realising that if we move not forward we must go backward. (*Jamaica Times*, 9 February 1918, 14)

Though Latrielle and others were interested in social work to uplift the poorer women in the society, they did not indicate any interest in sharing political enfranchisement with them. As Vassell (1993, 46) explained, 'elite women were offered a vested interest in preserving gender discrimination... which would keep coloured and black middle-class women on the margins of the struggle well into the 1930s'.

### THE DEBATE

DeLisser and Simpson were hoping for a peaceful and uneventful franchise of elite women in the colony. The Bill introduced by Simpson to the Legislative Council was supported by *The Gleaner*. The editor invited women to share their views on the issue as proof that they were interested in voting. However, when women were slow to respond in the press, articles surfaced from the editor criticising women as apathetic to their lack of political rights. He was disturbed that in one of the few countries where absolutely no agitation was needed for women to get the vote, they were not actively supporting a measure. In an attempt to galvanise the women into voicing their support for the measure,

DeLisser wrote that silence on generosity of powerful male benefactors would be deleterious to the women's cause:

Unless the intelligent and educated women of Jamaica give some evidence that they appreciate the proposal that women shall share with men the right and privilege of influencing the government of the country, the Legislative Council will never agree to women's suffrage here... It remains for them to support woman's suffrage in this colony or by their indifference, to kill for the present, a proposal that would make them sharers with the men of political rights and privileges. (*The Gleaner*, 23 August 1918, 6)

This spurred responses to counter DeLisser's argument. In one such letter, Irene Campbell of Port Antonio indicated that there was no need for women to comment on a right which was inalienable but withheld by men, suggested by men and could be only be voted on by men. She contended that the right should simply be bestowed and 'then women would exercise her right so long withheld from her!' (*The Gleaner*, 29 August 1918, 14). The most influential response, however, came from Latrielle. Her gripping letter published on 26 August 1917 touched on many key issues to do with the possibilities of citizenship for Jamaican women and the influence of the British suffrage movement, and had the potential to galvanise gender unity around the measure.

Firstly she tackled the issue of apparent indifference to the call for the vote. She suggested that women were not indifferent, but lacked strong female leadership. Such a leader was tasked to educate Jamaican women about their rights and responsibilities and remove the negative stigma of the British suffragettes. She said, 'many qualified Jamaican women look on the vote as a thing that should be chained, it stands only for broken glass, Holloway jail, forcible feeding... this is the vision put before them. When as the aftermath of all this scandal some wise man stands up and says "I am proposing to give votes to Jamaican women" they feel bashful, if not scandalized.' Indeed, *The Gleaner*, *The Jamaica Times* and other leading print media of the day routinely condemned the violent tactics of the suffragettes and contributed to the aura of undesirability that surrounded the enfranchisement of women. While Latrielle called for a more moderate approach to the campaign, she did note the importance of information, parades, speeches and, most importantly, a qualified female leader in generating support for the measure that would result not only in interest in the Bill but meaningful use of the vote once

it was secured. She said, 'what we in Jamaica want now is a leader of women. We want a Mrs. Pankhurst, calm, dignified, determined, never beaten... we must teach our people what the vote means, what its advantages will be for them and for their children; how it will help them to help their sister woman'. Her implicit assumption was that voting women would be influential, property owners of the upper class, but her call for a female rather than male leader had the potential to whip up gender solidarity and result in a women's movement that blurred class barriers and campaigned for wide-scale revolution rather than incremental political gain.

This was particularly problematic in the context of recent recruitment of men for the BWIR, which had fostered some latent partnerships between elite and middle-class women to send their men overseas. DeLisser was uninterested in stronger intra-class ties and quickly sought to rubbish Latrielle's potentially subversive letter. In a burst of nervous energy in the following day's editorial he penned, 'why should they need a leader? What is that leader to do? We say that we can see no reason why women should need a leader to express their approval of a particular proposition. If they do we would suggest that they must also need a leader to tell them when they are hungry and whether they should have dinner or not.' DeLisser's derisive attack on Latrielle and women of the leisured class was worded to goad the right kind of women to respond positively to Simpson's bill without whipping up uncontrollable public demonstration for wider gains which would lower the standard of election qualifications and threaten the foundations of colonial rule.

This exchange sparked a heated debate between those who thought women were suitable for the vote and those who feared that it signalled the end of an ordered society. Between September 1918 and March 1919 hundreds of articles, letters, poems and opinion pieces featured on the issue of women's enfranchisement. The silence on the matter had been brought to an abrupt end. Supporters of the vote borrowed from the rhetoric of women's recruitment of soldiers for the BWIR by realigning public and private spheres as complementary rather than separate and hierarchical. Support for the movement was not always along obvious gendered lines. While the large majority of opponents were male, supporters in the local print media were men and women in almost equal numbers. Women were also notable in adding their voices to the call for a restricted franchise rather than universal female suffrage. Opponents on the other hand, were typically male and held firm to the view that

women were men's inferiors and should be barred from decision-making roles. Many also expressed fear that women could not be trusted to keep traditional masculine pastimes, such as alcohol consumption and brothel visitation, intact. Interestingly, as we will see, women's status as wives and mothers was used both as justification for the extension of voting rights and for their preclusion from such entitlements.

Those who supported the movement for the vote noted that it would awaken in women a sense of duty and responsibility for the country's welfare. As has been previously established, many believed that World War I inspired privileged women to shed their life of leisure and that it facilitated their organisation for service. In this vein, some supporters added that enfranchisement would bring Jamaican womanhood even further into the socio-political life of the colony and facilitate a long-term sense of civic duty even after the war-work ended. As Marian Turner, an English woman living and working in Jamaica, explained: 'The Jamaican woman with a vote would begin a new lease on life... in entering into responsibility of the franchise she would have her eyes opened to the large problems with which she is in many cases unconcerned at present... new responsibilities if taken in the right spirit are bound to call forth new powers to meet them' (*The Gleaner*, 28 August 1918, 4). This messaging was centred on educated and elite women who may have been taken up with idle pursuits prior to 1914, but who were perceived as having the greatest potential to equip themselves with the necessary skills to utilise the vote, if granted. While no one expected men to prove their aptitude for civic duties outside of property and tax qualifications, some supporters of women's enfranchisement held the view that women would require education and training in order to exercise the privilege. The argument was also framed by classism: there was limited consideration for working-class women who had exemplified savvy personal and political agency for many years.

There were some supporters, however, who did not express the need for women to arm themselves with new skills to prove their readiness. This group saw the movement as one which would formalise the status of hardworking intelligent women who were already wielding power in the society (particularly through leading the country's war efforts) even while being excluded from the conventional political framework. As an 'interested observer' indicated: 'extension of the vote is not a delightful privilege giving women power. Power they already possess. The vote is a more finished tool for the better accomplishment of work which they

would do anyway and have always done' (*The Gleaner*, 23 August 1918, 9). William H. Orrett, a prominent solicitor and long-time supporter of the rights of Jamaican women, was a chief proponent of this line of argument. His many articles to *The Gleaner* expressed the importance of women's rights to the sustainable development of the colony and the need for women to unionise not only to secure increased political rights, but to oust worthless men from positions of prominence, shift the balance of power in favour of women, who had proved themselves to be much more deserving, and to champion the end of legislative inequities. He noted, for instance, that 'once you obtain the right to vote with the same qualification of a man to do so, you have won your battle and every portal that that selfish man hitherto double barred against your entrance will be opened to you and you will also be able to eliminate from the Statute books all the unjust laws that enslave and debase you' (*The Gleaner*, 26 August 1918, 13). Interestingly, Orrett was among the few proponents of female enfranchisement who hoped for equality between the sexes in terms of voting qualifications.

Other supporters, particularly women, also linked female enfranchisement with war-work in ways that both challenged and endorsed the prominence of typical war-related tasks of women. Leading war-work organiser A. E. Briscoe, for instance, suggested that working groups could be extended to include education in politics and economy alongside needlework and knitting. In twinning the efforts, Briscoe was not only hoping to elevate the status of seemingly mundane tasks but was defining the type of women who would be suited for franchise; prominent ladies and war workers whose sacrifice should be rewarded with the vote. While women's domestic wartime activities garnered them increased prominence in war-work discourse, these very activities were frequently critiqued as limitations on womanhood in voting rhetoric. As an 'ambitious woman' indicated 'we want to have a hand in the administering of affairs which concern us as much as any man. We are no longer content to sit at home and knit. We want to be progressive members of this community' (*The Gleaner*, 5 September 1918, 3). Such notions also had the potential to increase the attractiveness of the vote by appealing to a modern refashioned woman who had climbed the social ladder through education, rather than the typical prominent Lady Bountiful for whom knitting was the main contribution and accomplishment. Others still focused on women's place in post-war reconstruction and social work as the main justification for the vote. An unnamed woman noted,

'give us the vote by all means: allow us to be articulate, we can help. Don't you think we can plan great things for our returning soldiers? Make the poor houses homes of happiness... what man has thought of that?' (*The Gleaner*, 26 August 1918, 13). These arguments justified the franchise within the socio-political context that the war provided and were articulations of the strengths women would bring to the political machinery.

Regardless of the variation in opinions among pro-franchise faction, most expressed the view that organisation of a women's suffrage movement was necessary to frame the movement and educate women about the process. Some women took up this challenge and organised committees to move across the island to educate women about the issue and encourage them to support the Bill. In September 1918, a Petition Committee was formed and the unnamed women presented their argument to the Governor (*The Gleaner*, 16 September 1918, 3). It made the connection between Jamaica and the broader international suffrage movement and nominated women's war-work as the linchpin of voting rights:

1. The right to vote at Municipal Elections was granted in England to women as far back as the year 1869 and the British House of Commons in the year 1917 by a vote of 214 in favour as against 17, extended the franchise to 6,000,000 women. The right to vote was granted in New Zealand to women as far back as the year 1886; the same right was granted to citizens of several of the States of the United States of America as far back as the year 1897.
2. A large number of the women of this island are landowners and taxpayers generally and are possessed of the qualifications required by Law 62 of 1908 as amended by Law 28 of 1909 to entitle male persons to be registered as voters.
3. There are many women in this island who possess scholastic degrees and high educational qualifications, and are engaged as teachers, clerks in the Government—Services, Commercial Banks and Business Houses, and many are conducting their own business.
4. There is a considerable number of women in this island who are rendering continuous and valuable services on nominated boards entrusted with the education and care of children and destitute persons.

5. The present war has shown that the women of this island are amongst His Most Gracious Majesty's most loyal and devoted subjects and they have shown an inflexible determination to continue to a victorious end the struggle for the maintenance of the integrity and honour of our Empire and those ideals of Liberty, Justice, and Humanity which are the sacred cause of Great Britain and her Allies.

Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that Your Excellency and the Honourable Legislative Council may be pleased to grant to the women of Jamaica the rights of franchise. Your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Through this carefully worded petition, the women of the committee reinforced their ties with class and race rather than with gender. The petitioners agreed that the vote should be confined to those who possessed property and paid taxes. This supports Vassell's (1993, 46) assessment that these women were 'willing to perpetuate discrimination against working class women because of the larger binding force of class affinity and commitment to colonialism which they shared with their male counterparts.'

Many public meetings were held across the island to support the suffrage movement. One such was organised by the Petition Committee under the chair of Lady Probyn and took place at the Ward Theatre, on Wednesday 25 September 1918. Nellie Latrielle, Judith DeCordova, Mrs. Cundall, the Hon. H. A. L. Simpson, and many other prominent Jamaicans made speeches supporting the vote for women. The petition to the Governor was widely signed, and the meeting was considered to be a great success. Though the meetings were open to the public, reports focused on the 'high' calibre of intellectual and educated attendees, omitting any mention of working-class Jamaicans, even though they were in attendance, and characterising the movement as being supported by the middle and upper classes. This signalled a shift from communication around women's recruitment drives between 1915 and 1917, which needed the support of working-class women, and therefore included and lauded their presence at rallies. Actually, black Jamaicans were only mentioned by Latrielle, who insisted that women's enfranchisement would lead to improvements in health care for poorer classes, decreased child mortality and illiteracy and reduced illegitimacy among the masses. The

speakers reiterated the points that women should not be taxed without political representation, and that the vote would ensure a moral revolution in the country in general, and a political revolution amongst women in particular.

Importantly, at this forum it was made explicit that Jamaican women were suffragists, and not Pankhurst suffragettes. This not only distanced the local campaign from the maligned British example, but was an attempt to assure the public that Jamaican women would prove themselves worthy of the vote through a refined, non-confrontational campaign. One of the speakers, Miss Turner, noted that while they meant to succeed in the end, they were not going to make a personal attack on the members of their Legislative Council or throw stones at Headquarters House (*The Gleaner*, 26 September 1918, 3). Other meetings of this nature were held in the rural parts of the country, such as Lucea, with a similar purpose of signing the petition and educating the populace about the movement.

Despite these efforts however, certain men in the society, even those who thought women's work during the Great War was admirable, did not think it constituted enough of a reason for them to exercise the political franchise. Opponents suggested that since women themselves did not initially demand the right to vote, they had not yet reached the level of political consciousness necessary for the responsibility that came with the privilege. Others believed that giving women the vote was a slippery slope leading to women participating in the local councils and other political bodies. Indeed, this view was also expressed by supporters of the move. One such *Gleaner* editorial noted: 'if women obtain the vote in Jamaica, women will also be eligible and must of necessity be eligible to fill seats in the Legislative Council of Jamaica; and the day will surely come when we shall have the Hon. Mrs. John Smith and the Hon. Miss Brown helping to make the laws of the country' (*The Gleaner*, 29 August 1918, 8). While there would not be any Mrs. John Smith, the advocacy of black middle-class women would eventually fulfil this prophecy in the form of Mary Morris Knibb.

However, opponents did not view the slippery slope from voting rights to political office with enthusiasm. Perhaps the most contemptuous arguments were launched by R. B. Lloyd, who wrote countless letters in staunch opposition to female enfranchisement. He was hostile to the proposal and questioned the competence of women's political

consciousness, commented on their shaky nerves and scoffed at their lack of public speaking abilities. Unlike supporters, who proffered revisionist arguments of civic motherhood, he framed domestic duties as a hindrance to public office because of their all-consuming nature. He utilised biblical teachings to support his claims and even went as far to impugn the character of women by saying that they were easily bribed and therefore vulnerable to corruption. His crafty messages not only pitted women against men but attempted to debase Jamaican womanhood in comparison to other nationalities. He said ‘80% of women of Jamaica are inferior to those of other countries. Take for instance England. Could the Honourable Member for Kingston compare the native women of Jamaica educationally with those of England?’ (*The Gleaner*, 4 September 1918, 10).

Many took to the newspapers to fervently oppose Lloyd. E. P. Steward was one such who read Lloyd’s remarks with ‘disgust’. Steward challenged Lloyd to disclose whether Jamaican men were also not inferior to British stock, and insinuated that his worry regarding bribery was as a result of his own proclivity to such actives. Steward also argued ‘if his [Lloyd’s] right to vote is merely based on his magnificent brute strength, it seems a pity he does not start for the front via a recruiting office right away, that being at present the shortest route to the only country where the might-is-right idea flourishes—Germany’ (*The Gleaner*, 9 September 1918, 3). Lloyd and Simpson also had a war of words which played out in *The Gleaner*. This exchange was sparked after Lloyd accused Simpson of being an opportunist who was pushing the issue of female enfranchisement in order to secure his own re-election by having these women vote for him. Simpson replied saying ‘he devotes portions of his letter to a personal attack on me. I should have expected that. It is the custom of persons who suffer from paranoia to express themselves in that way... it does not show intelligence, strength of mind or power in argument’. Lloyd then advised him to drop the ‘stupid vote for women’ and turn his attention to something more profitable for the public in general (*The Gleaner*, 6 September 1918, 10).

The scathing remarks against the enfranchisement of women were not only emanating from Lloyd. When the Woman Suffrage Amendment Bill was brought to the House in December 1918, the Hon. J. A. G. Smith objected that it was unconstitutional, and could only be altered by the British government and not locally<sup>5</sup> (*The Gleaner*, 10 December 1918, 8). D. Theo. Wint, a black member of the Legislative Council and leader

of the Jamaica Union of Teachers, opposed the move on the grounds that there were more pressing matters to be addressed, such as addressing the high cost of living (which he felt women would appreciate more) and constitutional change. He also thought that the women of Jamaica had too many worries at home to be concerned about which persons should sit in a Council (*The Gleaner*, 7 September 1918, 6). For him, the concept of civic motherhood, born out of women's engagement with the war was a contradiction in terms. Importantly, Wint linked the vote for women to the general degeneration of the Legislative Council which began in 1908 with the '10 shilling voter.' Under the 1908 voters' law, men who paid 10 shillings in taxes were allowed to vote. Wint blamed this low standard of enfranchisement for a rise in illiterate voters and a subsequent poor choice in representatives. Simpson penned a reply on 1 September which gave a solid challenge to each of Wint's arguments and spurred much back and forth between himself and H. A. L. Simpson.

Wint was less concerned about a debate around specific points and more taken with the bigger consideration of enfranchising 'untrustworthy' women who would lead to even further degradation of the sacred house by voting for her friend 'no matter what a failure or a fool he is' (*The Gleaner*, 7 September 1918, 18). Wint's position embodied the intersection of race, class and sex considerations by those jostling for prominence in the burgeoning nation. Primarily concerned with carving out a political space for the upwardly mobile and educated middle-class black man, Wint was viewed the enfranchisement of women as a tertiary issue in a colony that had not yet reckoned with the precarious status of middle-class black masculinity, particularly in the World War I era, where the bodies of black men were being sacrificed for a white man's war. The restricted franchise and the even more restricted conditions under which one could be elected to the Council (including profitable land ownership or annual wages of £200–£300 in some instances) still marginalised black men from full participation (Palmer 2014, 10). In Wint's estimation, it was premature to begin the process for women when most black men had not yet achieved full citizenship.

Other detractors borrowed from their European counterparts who often resorted to declarations that voting was unfeminine. Perhaps unwittingly, suffrage opponents channelled the essence of those like Jean-Jacques Rousseau whose poignant 1762 conceptualisation of women's incapacity for public affairs was revived in 1918. For him, women who sought public recognition, regardless of their talent for the same,

were abominable since ‘her dignity depends on remaining unknown; her glory lies in her husband’s esteem, her greatest pleasure in the happiness of her family’ (Colley 1992, 240). The separation of spheres for the sexes essentially meant the women’s contribution was ideally private and unseen. Raising civic-minded children and ensuring that her husband could properly exercise his rights to full citizenship were the woman’s only acceptable contribution to nation-building. In this conceptualisation, franchise was a male birthright and a coveted privilege of which women should have no part. In the battle for British women’s suffrage these views were even articulated by women. Mary Ward, who drafted ‘An Appeal Against the Extension of the Parliamentary Franchise to Women’, asserted that women’s direct participation in politics ‘was made impossible by either the disabilities of sex, or by strong formations of custom and habit resting ultimately upon physical difference against which it is useless to contend’ (Harrison 1978, 116). Another female anti-suffragist, Violet Markham, took a different route by agreeing with suffragists like Pankhurst who saw female nature and identity as superior to masculine traits. She worried, however, that women would lose their virtue and descend to men’s level if allowed to partake in political life. Undoubtedly, many Jamaican men would have loved to have articulate anti-suffrage women like Mrs. Ward and Markham on the island. If Jamaica housed anti-suffrage women, they were mostly silent in the public domain. The majority of outspoken opponents in Jamaica were men. In this way, the campaign did evolve to become a battle of the sexes on the topic of the roles Jamaican women should have in national development and their access to full citizenship.

Local opponents to the vote, even when presented with arguments that the work of women during World War I illustrated that women were capable of organising for the national interest, remained unconvinced and indeed angry at the suggestion. As ‘A Voter’ quarrelled, ‘let me warn the men of Jamaica to ponder long and deeply before they fling their birthright to the women. The world, surprised to find women not completely useless, has become hysterical on the subject and the women’s vote is the result of the hysteria’ (*The Gleaner*, 3 September 1918, 15). Others agreed that women were to be commended for their work, but that this was not a prerequisite for voting, since they were ignorant of electoral politics. They contended that since women organised to assist the war effort without the vote, they could do just as much good in society without participating as electors. Others, like J. Benjamin Ewers,

used the example of Eve's failure in the Garden of Eden as proof that women could not be trusted to handle important matters of state. He also felt that every qualified man should enter the political sphere to ensure that was no vacancy for women on political boards or in public seats (*The Gleaner*, 17 October 1918, 5).

Unsurprisingly, many women and some men were outraged by these arguments, and were further roused into action to write on the issue. As an editorial suggested, 'never before have the women of Jamaica taken so active a part in a newspaper discussion, never before have they fought so skilfully and so well with words' (*The Gleaner*, 26 September 1918, 8). Women chided men who opposed the vote, noting that it was men's fear that the influence of women in political spheres would lead to the abolition of 'vices' such as temperance bars and brothels, which men frequented. In making this point 'Taxed but not Represented' wrote a lengthy letter to the *Gleaner* which contextualised the Jamaican case as part of the wider transatlantic movement for women's suffrage by reporting social improvements that accompanied women's suffrage in New Zealand, Australia and some US states. She was therefore left to conclude 'the only persons who have any reason to fear the women's vote are the immoral, the drunkard, and the criminal, the lazy man, the man who does not support his children' (*The Gleaner*, 10 September 1918, 3). A poem by an unknown author in the *Jamaica Times* (19 October 1918, 8) highlighted this view aptly:

It has been said of old  
 'the devil trembles when he sees  
 The weakest saint upon his knees'.  
 May we now say  
 The devil trembles when he doth note  
 An honest woman with a vote.

Poetry proved to be a key form of expression about the pros and cons of women's enfranchisement. Indeed, as Goldthree (2017, 50) has explained, civilian writers were key participants in the Caribbean wartime literary landscape, with many leaving behind a rich and often overlooked archive of poetry. Her assessment of the wave of poetry by soldiers and civilians during and after World War I indicates the ways in which they used literary devices as a means of 'public claims-making' and how they capitalised on an active political environment. Similarly, much can be

gleaned from women's suffrage-related writing. Prior to the heated issue of suffrage, women's literary tracts in print media emanated from North America and England and the topics ranged from reflections on travel to Jamaica to the wonders of Imperialism. With the advent of the suffrage debate, however, came a paradigm shift from foreign to local poetry and a unique focus on socio-political gendered rhetoric. One titled 'A Man's Point of View' by Eva Nichols (*The Gleaner*, 3 October 1918, 7) ridiculed some men's chauvinistic view of women:

The Lord's creation arose in wrath  
 And chivalry shrieking died;  
 With our sharpest weapons of ridicule  
 We'll mow them down! They cried.  
 And deep in the Slough of Oblivion  
 This Edict of Woman-Kind  
 With its subtle essence of progress  
 A suitable grave shall find.

Equality's platform is creaking now  
 With this vast be-ribboned horde  
 And they dare to hold in their puny hands  
 Great intellect's jewelled Sword!  
 Oh, Man prehistoric! A privileged grand  
 Was yours in the ages dead  
 You need no logic, you used but a club,  
 Th' Objective- a Woman's Head!

Some women have taxes no doubt, to pay  
 On this we'll place no ban:  
 But when we advise them to concentrate  
 On the pot and pudding-pan  
 And they clamour to help up rule the state  
 Panic to reason lends wings  
 They fair-minded public must then agree  
 'Tis a dreadful state of things!

There are cradles though empty at home to rock  
 And pretty journals to scan  
 Crush high aspirations! Away with resolve!  
*Parnassus was made for man!*  
 Some do not deny that they have a Right

But they're wrong we all agree!  
 (THAT'S masculine logic, why argue the point?)  
 Bend, woman to our decree!

But the army of women went calmly  
 Through the portals of the morn  
 Evolved and unfettered each bearing a gift  
 For the epoch newly-born.

Nichols' writing exhibits a sarcastic take on some men's archaic views on women's civic duties and nervousness at the prospect of a redistribution of political power in the colony. It critically and comically articulates the childlike nature of opposition to women's political empowerment in an era when women were proving that they could care for home and manage public affairs with dexterity. The poem also clearly articulates the root cause of opposition to women's vote; sexism. Poetry such as this helped to craft a new public image of Jamaican womanhood. The cleverly penned verses, knowledge of Greek mythology, with reference to Parnassus, and audacity in challenging the logic normally associated with masculinity indicated the existence of highly intelligent fearless Jamaican women who were emerging from the shadows of the private sphere to publicly claim their rights as citizens. Through poetry, women visibly forced a renegotiation of their relationship with the colonial authorities and discredited a priori assumptions of masculine power and privilege. To this end, while the suffrage movement was in the main not one of gendered solidarity among women of different classes, the campaign cannot be seen as solely class-driven. Women were indeed calling for gender justice and a revolution in relation to men's hoarding of formal political entitlements.

While most literary entries supported the Bill, a few detractors also used poetry to belittle women and speak to stereotypical negative traits. Mr. C. A. Wallace in writing to *The Gleaner* at the height of the debate on 15 September 1918 spoke to the incessant chatter women would bring to the Legislative Council noting with derision 'the only month they talk less is February as it only has 28 days.' He closed his commentary with an excerpt from a poem that read 'From rock and sandy desert land my father Fortune set me free; from woman's tongue and a loaded gun Good Lord deliver me.' Women's tongues were certainly unbridled on the matter of their political rights however, and so Wallace's

deliverance was far from imminent. The poem 'Enfranchise the Women' (*The Gleaner*, 16 September 1918, 3) for instance, highlighted the noble and unrewarded work of Jamaican women while challenging men to share political rights for the good of the country:

Enfranchise the Women your country to save!  
 Enfranchise the Women! we cry:  
 Be fathers so wise or sons ever so brave,  
 The reign of the daughter is nigh.  
 'Unable to rule!' say not so, brothers mine –  
 Who else through your life has had sway?  
 Who bent o'er your cradle? shaped youth's every line?  
 And who is your partner to-day?

Enfranchise the Women! The mother whose hand  
 Held yours from life's earliest hour;  
 Whose forethought unfathomed your future had planned  
 Whose sacrifice purchased your power.  
 Your guide in the past and your partner to-day  
 No thought but with her do you share.  
 From her came the counsel that helped on the way  
 Words that urged you to do and to dare.

Enfranchise the Women! Did man ever live  
 Who wrought good on Earth here below,  
 But all of the kudos was willing to give  
 To Woman? –'Twas Mother, you know.  
 As mother, or sister, or daughter, or wife,  
 Still woman is doing her part,  
 At the helm of the home, in each walk of life –  
 In schoolroom, or office, or mart.

Enfranchise the Women! Life's evils still cry  
 For redress women surely will win;  
 You are busy my brothers too busy to try  
 To rescue the sinner from sin  
 From sin and the evils that come in its train  
 'tis Christ-like such work to essay-  
 would you men have your women [illegible]  
 There still are a few such to-day

Who care not so long as they have all they need  
 What horrors; and woes wring the world,  
 Whose god is named Pleasure, and Self their whole creed  
 Not o'er such is our banner unfurled.  
 Enfranchise the Women who work not for self,  
 Who for others will strive while they may,  
 Enfranchise the Women that they may uplift  
 Their downtrodden sisters today.

While exhibiting clear leanings towards classism and exclusion of 'downtrodden sisters' from a share in enfranchisement, the piece presents a push-back against those who belittled women's worth because of their domestic roles. The piece in fact reclassifies these functions as training for greater civic responsibilities and articulates the superiority of women in handling specific matters related to the moral and medical health of the state.

Other attempts at a literary spin on the debates were attempted by *The Jamaica Times*, via the annual Christmas Essay Competition. One of the competitions for December 1918 was titled 'Why I want the Vote' which was open to women only. The first prize winner of 10/-, Miss M. S. Savarian from Grange Hill, noted ten things women could do with the vote, including improving the welfare of the island, improving the education system, and seeing to the protection of women against lecherous male employers. While coloured by the anticipated classist ideology of 'lifting as we climb', the essay, replete with political jargon and with evidence of knowledge of public works, reflected a promising feminist consciousness and revealed the calibre of Jamaican womanhood which was being blocked from meaningful participation in the political processes of the colony.

Proponents also responded to views that women were incapable of handling the vote because they had no history of involvement in political issues. Mrs. Gauntlet, an avid supporter and speaker on the matter, argued that votes for women would nurture skills that women were considered as lacking, but in reality were only lying dormant (*The Gleaner*, 28 December 1918, 9). To those who said that the women's place was in the home and not in politics, proponents argued that suffrage would not in any way remove women from their duties if they had to vote for public officials every couple of years. Indeed, many who supported the movement for the vote shared the view that women's place was primarily

in the home. The Women's Branch of the Labourer's Benevolent Union, for instance, noted that women were apt at helping men in the home, and could help them in public sphere concurrently (*Jamaica Times*, 12 October 1918, 10).

However, opponents (and indeed proponents) did not only think of the franchise as the ability to vote; they saw that granting the vote would eventually and inevitably lead to women's inclusion in other aspects of the political process. Indeed, the WSSC, which did much to lobby for political enfranchisement of women, suggested that women of the leisured class should form a part of the local government, as mayors and members of Parochial Boards. The WSSC's resolution at one of its meetings in 1919 underscores this view:

that the government be asked to introduce a measure entitling women to be elected as members of the Major and Council and Parochial Boards of the island in order that they may be able to do something practical for the better housing of the working classes of Kingston and country parishes. (*The Gleaner*, 11 January 1919, 4)

Lloyd and others shuddered at the thought that the vote was only the first step to radical changes in society. This possible 'presumptuousness' of women was evidenced by the female opponent to Prime Minister Asquith in England in 1918. As a contributor to *The Gleaner* worried, women in Jamaica would soon want to follow her appalling example and contest elections in the island:

I think that the recent announcement that some lady... proposes to pit herself for election at the hands of an English constituency against the well tried, respected and experienced statesman Mr. Asquith, amply supplies all the evidence of what may have been needed! The feminine irresponsibility and lack of an sense of the 'fitness of things', as well as of the calm judicial faculty to which ought 'par excellence' to characterize legislators and all persons entrusted with political place or power, is well exemplified by the extraordinary electoral attempt to be made by this misled female. (*The Gleaner*, 13 December 1918, 9)

Despite the vicious attacks on Jamaica's 'misled' females, the measure won a significant victory in the Kingston City Council in January 1919. At its January meeting, the matter was discussed and most of the Council's members were in favour of the measure. Mr. Myers and Mr.

Farrier agreed that the intelligent women of the island were practical and genuine workers. In their words: 'it was certainly an anomaly that a lady should not be able to vote, yet her coachman was able to do so'. To a vote of four Ayes and only one No, the Council supported the resolution to give women the vote<sup>6</sup> (*The Gleaner*, 21 January 1919, 6).

The winds were obviously changing in favour of women at the beginning of the year. Reports surfaced of women in Finland who not only voted along with men but were proving themselves capable of organising and conducting political elections (*Jamaica Times*, 25 January 1919, 4). This gave local groups even more reason to clamour for similar rights. Religious groups such as the Baptists also supported the campaign in 1919, noting, 'it appears to us to be a matter of the barest justice that if a woman fulfils the conditions that give a man a vote she should not be disqualified by the mere accidental fact that she is a woman' (*The Gleaner*, 5 February 1919, 6). The local movement also received invaluable help from English suffrage bodies, which were aware of the progress the island was making towards the vote for women. News of Jamaica's campaign featured in the English-based periodicals *Vote* and *International Woman Suffrage News*. Harriett Newcomb, honorary secretary of the British Dominions Women Citizens' Union, wrote to Lady Probyn expressing her joy at the campaign in Jamaica and extended an invitation for the Jamaican suffrage bodies to be affiliated with the union (*The Gleaner*, 8 March 1919, 9).

At the end of the year-long debates in the print media, Simpson's Bill was accepted by the Legislative Council. Though women were not yet allowed to be on any elected body of representatives or sit on Parochial Boards, as of 14 May 1919, literate women over 25 years of age who paid at least £2 per year in taxes on real estate or on personal property such as a vehicle or horse, paid at least £10 per year rent on a premises, or earned £50 or more per year in salary qualified for voting.<sup>7</sup> However the work of the WSSC and other bodies was not complete. Eligible women now had to register to qualify as voters and the campaign then shifted from the right to vote to ensuring that women registered before 23 October 1919. To this end, a meeting was held at the Ward Theatre on October 20 to inform women of the regulations and the importance of registration. This meeting was successful to an extent. Women who qualified for the vote came forward and *The Gleaner* proudly displayed a photo of the first woman to register for the vote at the Ward, Nurse Wilkinson, in the 22 October edition.

However, compared to estimated 3000 women who qualified for the vote island wide, a very low proportion featured on the voters' list between 1919 and 1920, as Table 5.1 indicates.

Eventually, more women began to exercise the rights bestowed on them in 1919. By 1927, for instance, there were indications that more women had registered to vote. As an article in *The Gleaner* (30 March 1927, 10) expressed, 'more women have done this [registered] than most of us expected. This is particularly true of the women of Kingston and St. Andrew. In these parishes the woman's vote has to be taken into consideration; it is a very appreciable factor at an election.' While some women were excluded from the franchise based on property and tax stipulations, women as a collective were accorded far more political and social rights than in the pre-World War I years. In the aftermath of the franchise debates, as women were granted the vote, consideration was given to allow women to work in the civil service, and discussions ensued over whether women would be suitable candidates for membership of the KSAC, and other boards. Jamaican women also participated in international forums of women suffragists in Geneva in 1920 and in Rome in 1923. Here, women from all over the world met to discuss issues pertaining to the advancement of the status of women internationally and sought to promote suffrage for those countries that had not granted it to their women. Women on a whole benefited from an increased visibility

**Table 5.1** Male and female electorate by parish, 1919–1920. *Source* Blue Books of Jamaica 1919–1920 2M

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Male registered voters</i>	<i>Female registered voters</i>	<i>Ex-soldiers</i>
Kingston	3446	92	2
St. Andrew	3554	42	–
St. Thomas	1673	–	–
Portland	1869	2	–
St. Mary	3062	5	87
St. Ann	2506	5	20
Trelawny	2330	2	1
St. James	2305	4	3
Hanover	2167	–	2
Westmoreland	4083	4	44
St. Elizabeth	3204	4	–
Manchester	3098	6	2
Clarendon	4256	5	3

in the public domain, as well as social and political mobility in the years after World War I, which continued after World War II and set the stage for more radical changes in the future.

By 1927 for instance, debates were underway in the Legislative Council regarding allowing women to be nominated for seats on Parochial Boards. It was defeated on various occasions, because members like the Hon. Lynden Cawley, of St. Catherine, felt that while women were doing well in social work they were not fit for political bodies. For others, like the Hon. Altamont DaCosta of St. Andrew, women would only prolong debates in the Council. To think that women would be at polling stations opposing a male candidate when they should be looking after their children and household duties was absurd to him (*The Gleaner*, 8 April 1927, 6). Nonetheless, the Hon. A. G. Nash's resolution, 'women possessing the franchise and other relevant qualification under the Parochial Boards Consolidation Law of 1901 should have the privilege of being candidates for the membership of the corporation of the Parochial Boards of the island' was passed on 30 April 1930 with a vote of 11 Ayes to 7 Objections.<sup>8</sup> Further legislation was necessary for women to be elected to such bodies, and this spurred the WSSC to petition the Legislative Council once more to allow such legislation. They won small victories in 1931 and 1937 when the Legislative Council decided that women were eligible for appointment as Aldermen and Justices of the Peace respectively.<sup>9</sup> In 1937, proposals were also made to lower the franchise qualifications for women. It was suggested by the Hon. A. Lowe, member for St. James, and the Hon. R. Ehrenstein of St. Thomas, that the disparity between their qualifications and that of men was too great. Lowe felt, for instance, that women should not have to pay £1 more than men in taxes or be four years older than men to qualify for the same right.<sup>10</sup> The motion was defeated, however, with the Council noting that until representations were made by a large body of women to support the lowering of the franchise, no action would be taken to do so.

Amidst criticism that women in the island had little interest in politics,<sup>11</sup> black middle-class women mounted a campaign in the late 1930s to have women elected to the Parochial Boards through the WLC. This campaign was eventually successful when Mary Morris Knibb became the first woman to be elected to public office in Jamaica in 1939, when she was elected to the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation. Her campaign was pegged to women's rights in society and focused on social

work. Arguments similar to those against women's right to vote surfaced during her campaign, with many doubting the ability of a woman to enter representative politics. Colin Campbell and Mr. Chisolm, her opponents, did not think the Council of 13 men was the place for Mrs. Morris Knibb. Those that supported her did so on the basis of gender, noting that women were the only ones equipped to tackle the social ills plaguing the country. As French and Ford Smith (1985, 387) assert 'in every instance, support for the election was determined by an extension of woman's natural role into public life'. In the end, Morris Knibb won by a landslide; she received 1231 votes, Chisholm and Campbell secured 544 and 93 votes respectively. There is no doubt that the female portion of the electorate was a big reason for her success in the election. As *The Gleaner* (9 March 1939, 8) expressed, 'an unprecedented number of women came out to vote... The female supporters for Mrs. Morris-Knibb were untiring in their efforts to induce members of the sterner sex... to cast their votes in favour of Mrs. Knibb and thus help to make history by electing the first woman to a municipal board in Jamaica.' While it would be another four years before women would receive universal franchise and a wider share in the political life of the colony, by 1940 women were increasing their participation at various levels in the country's bye-elections. These progressions in the political development of the colony in general and of women in particular were a testament to the enfranchisement of women in 1919. Though riddled with class and gender contradictions and prejudices, the movement for the vote sparked unprecedented discussions about and by women, which gave them a new voice in Jamaica. Though the move was initiated by men, largely for their own motives, one cannot deny that DeLisser and Simpson did recognise the potential and worth of women in the island and played an active role in assisting women to achieve greater political awareness. Seen as a fitting reward for war-work, it was no coincidence that this move came after the World War I. The political landscape of many countries was altered as a result of the conflict; Jamaica was no different. In the end, some women received a right that was withheld from them on account of sex. Their use of the franchise was not as important as the fact that for the first time in Jamaica's history, women were presented with the opportunity to cast a vote. This unleashed a shift in the political life of the colony; one which was eventually capitalised on by black middle- and working-class women. Undeniably, many of these women used their ability to vote to improve their political status during and after the World War II.

## NOTES

1. CO 137/732 Law 17 1919: Temporary Registration of Voters or CSO 1B/5/76 #323: Registration of Voters Law 22 of 1919.
2. In response to the British Liberal Government's 1884 Reform Bill, which aimed at enfranchising property-owning women and the rural male labouring class, elite women expressed resentment at the notion that lower-class men could be considered more worthy for the vote. As Smith records, Frances Power Cobbe was angered by the thought that 'a rabble of illiterates' should be granted the vote while educated women were denied the vote (Smith 1986, 13).
3. British male suffragists included William Thompson, George Holyoake, Robert Owen, Richard Pankhurst and Frederick Pethick-Lawrence. In Strauss's view these men held the firm conviction that the franchise could be extended by educating their leaders and by applying pressures, including organising and petitioning. They also believed the future progress of mankind depended on changes in the depressed status of women. See Strauss (1982) and John and Eustace (1997).
4. This major organ of social work in the island was formed in October 1918 came out of the movement for the vote, but the movement also concentrated on fundraising, health and children's service and income-generating among women. One of their first points of interest was the prevention of Spanish Influenza. The 'body of patriotic painstaking, self sacrificing ladies' included Judith DeCordova, Mrs. DeMercado, Mrs. H. K. Bourne and other prominent ladies. See *The Gleaner*, 23 October 1918, 5 and 30 October 1918, 6.
5. Section 14 of the constitution at that time read: 'every male person shall be entitled to be registered in any year as a voter' and Smith argued that any change to that wording could not be done by the Legislative Council but only by the British Government.
6. It was felt by Mr. Phillips of the Council that it was not the business of that body to pass resolutions regarding the vote for women. An editorial in the *Jamaica Times* argued similarly: 'We are supporters of that suffrage... that such suffrage is the right and proper thing, to frame and pass it is not the business of the City Council.' See *The Gleaner*, 1 February 1919, 6.
7. CSO 1B/5/76 #323: Registration of Voters Law 22 of 1919 for details of the qualification for the vote.
8. See CSO 1B/5/77 #23: Women—Membership of KSAC and Parochial Boards.
9. CSO 1B/5/77 #206 1937: Franchise For Women Proposal To Lower Qualifications.

10. The qualification for men to vote was as follows: has attained at the age of 21, is a British subject and either possessed personal property and paid taxes of at least £1 10/-, earned a salary of £50 or more or paid rent for property of not less than £10 per annum. CSO 1B/5/77 #273 1925: Re: Right of Women to Vote.
11. DeLisser said: 'women as a body seem to take very little interest in work that has been done for ages by men: their natural inclinations are towards other spheres of activity'. *The Gleaner*, 24 February 1939, 12.

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## ‘The Woman’s Place Is in the War’: Continuity and Change in World War II

The experience of Jamaicans in the World War I cemented the notion that the effects of warfare among colonial powers could neither be confined to the battlefield nor belligerent nations. By 1939 it was also evident that war was not the exclusive domain of men, as women, who had become hallmarks of loyalty and service to the British Empire between 1914 and 1918, were expected to do no less in the second global conflict of the twentieth century. Though Jamaican women were more active in the recruitment of men for the army in World War I, there was a more concerted effort to organise women to aid the wartime effort during World War II. Through these efforts, women were not only able to provide critical supplies for the armed forces, but also increased their own visibility in society.

Despite the guiding principle that women had a place in the war appropriate to their class and gender, the adage from which the chapter title emerged, ‘the woman’s place is in the home’, was also influential. Ironically, as women were becoming more visible publicly, the intention of policy-makers was to reinforce the importance of the established gendered order, the male–public and female–private dyad. This strategy was not fully successful however, mainly because of the exigencies of the war and the nature of women’s participation in the war efforts.

Undoubtedly, World War I shifted the discourse on Jamaican women’s potential, roles and status within and outside of the ambit of a war economy. At the end of the war in 1918, very few Jamaicans were unconvinced of the great work that local women did in recruiting men

for the armed forces as well as providing comfort items for those who found themselves in battle. The notion that war was a man's affair was eroded, so that by 1939, it was understood that women had important roles to play through its duration. As Irene Wheatle, founder of the Jamaica Dressmakers' Association asserted, 'if our men are called upon to make a sacrifice for the Empire, women should not hesitate to do their part also' (*The Gleaner*, 12 September 1939, 15). An exploratory piece in *The Pagoda* (1 June 1940, 8) explained the shift in women's wartime experiences from inactivity to significant engagement:

Women have always had to be the bearers of sacrifices in the causes of warfare, surrendering with brave spirits all that they hold most dear in their husbands, sons and lovers and enduring too the anxious strain of awaiting news in complete inaction... gradually conditions have altered... for women have become a very powerful factor in modern warfare.

The experience of organising for World War I taught women leaders valuable lessons. Not having an initial and clear path to service, women took some time to craft a concrete response to the first international conflict. However by 1939, war-work was already a well-honed skill for some, and there was a much faster, more concerted response to effectively organise women. Though women contributed greatly to the war effort in World War I, in World War II the island's efforts were coordinated from the very beginning, guided by the experiences of the previous war.

The burgeoning of social work groups was also a feature of the interwar years, paving the way for more robust organisations after September 1939. In the interwar years, women were encouraged to take part in social work, and Indian women took part in social work in Jamaica in the 1930s as a result of the increased visibility of Jamaican women in wartime service (*The Gleaner*, 13 September 1939, 14). However it was black middle-class professionals in particular who found their footing in the interwar years as they carved out niches as social activists and entrenched themselves as part of the political future of the country. Largely alienated from the official channels of power in the Crown Colony government structure introduced after the 1865 Morant Bay War, the black middle class in Jamaica fashioned avenues towards public service. The most prominent women in this group included journalist and playwright Una Marson, teacher and social worker Amy Bailey,

teacher and politician Mary Morris Knibb, educator and pianist Eulalie Domingo, and United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) stalwarts Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques Garvey.

Their ideology was framed by the realities of a black population who were positioned on the lowest rung of the social ladder and whose mobility was obstructed by oppressive racial and class delineations. Not only were they familiar with the harsh social climate experienced by the black population in general but they were also aware of the intersection of race, class and gender and the resulting triple jeopardy, or King's (1988) 'multiplicative' effects,<sup>1</sup> of oppression that poor, black women faced in a patriarchal society. Slavery never spared the black woman equal work and punishment with men, yet she found herself placed at the lowest rung of the ladder in a patriarchal plantation model. In the post-slavery society hinging on white male privilege, all women were denied the official channels of political power, but black women were further marginalised by their relegation to no or low-paying jobs. Amy Bailey's survey of rampant gender inequalities perpetuated by a legal framework which sidelined women from leadership and suitable employment opportunities led her to develop the Women's Liberal Club (WLC) in 1936 along with her sister Ina Bailey, Una Marson and Mary Morris Knibb. As she explained in an interview with Erna Brodber (1986, 9), 'my sister Ina and I were very disturbed at the fact that women were not taking their rightful place in Jamaica and we blamed ourselves.' In 1938 the WLC organised the first Jamaican Women's Conference to galvanise support for full political and economic rights for women. From this conference came proposals to end discrimination on the basis of sex (Brown 1993; Altink 2006). The WLC was just one example of middle-class black women's efforts in the 1930s to place working-class issues on the front burner in the colony. In 1939, their focus rarely shifted from this mandate, but the general tone of women's organisation for social service facilitated the rapid response to the outbreak of World War II.

Indeed, war-specific social work continued to be the domain of Jamaica's white and near-white women. As soon as war was declared, Lady Noelle Richards (wife of Governor Sir Arthur Richards who served from August 1938 to July 1943), used *The Gleaner* (12 September 1939, 1) to appeal to women of Jamaica to unite for the patriotic cause. She was convinced that war meant more to women than to men due to the break-up of the home which left women with no compensating memories of action, but only with heartache at the loss of loved ones.

Richards hoped to counteract this sense of loss with an active civic wife-hood and motherhood through ‘knitting, making dressings and hospital supplies or training or completing training for posts in which later on our personal services may be welcomed.’

Similarly, the Jamaica Women’s League, which emerged in 1936 through the efforts of Lady Denham (wife of Governor Sir Edward Denham who served from 24 October 1934 to 2 June 1938), and Mrs. deCordova, was among the first to start the organisation of women for war efforts. Under the motto ‘We serve’, the major aim of the League was to further social service and philanthropic undertakings, and this took on a war-specific flavour after 1939.<sup>2</sup> The League was the first to suggest that an island-wide census of women who wished to serve in war-work should be created. To this end, they printed detailed forms and questionnaires for women to volunteer for diverse tasks to aid the war effort according to their qualifications and interests. The main focal points included nursing, transport, teaching, office work, and providing clothing supplies (*The Gleaner*, 9 September 1939, 3). The League also published detailed instructions in *The Gleaner* (13 September 1939, 14) on how to knit socks for those who could not attend their classes. The Executive Committee of the League eventually became an offshoot of the Jamaica Central War Assistance Committee, the umbrella body, as its name suggests, coordinating the response of the country to the war in terms of assistance to Britain. It was set up within a week of the declaration of war and under its auspices was the Jamaica Women’s War Materials and Comforts Committee, the central organising arm of the women’s movement. Chaired by Mrs. deCordova, this body consisted of various sub-committees that functioned separately under the aegis of the parent committee guiding women’s assistance to the war effort and engaging in widespread fundraising. Sub-committees included surgical dressings, knitting, hospital garments and preserves. These were fully integrated into the wider effort of the country and were given special concessions in terms of the materials they imported, which were allowed into the island duty-free.<sup>3</sup>

The internal organisation of the Women’s War Materials and Comforts Committee was impressive. It consisted of networks across the country for the single purpose of mass-producing supplies for the fighting forces and civilian refugees of war-torn nations. The knitting committee, for instance, consisted of eighteen groups in rural areas and three groups in Kingston. Other groups, including the Junior Women’s Club,

worked in tandem with this committee to provide knitted clothing for soldiers overseas. Through their combined efforts over 4050 garments were shipped to Britain by September 17, 1940, only one year after its inception. Under the chairmanship of Mrs. W. H. Lyon-Hall, this committee was responsible not only for the making of knitted garments, but for the 'initiation of hundreds of enthusiastic beginners into the mysteries of this difficult and useful art' (*Victory Book* 1945, 58). Apart from consignments of garments sent to England, the committee also ensured that each recruit leaving Jamaica for the armed forces or the Merchant Service was supplied with a warm knitted outfit.

The surgical committee under the chairmanship of Mrs. L deLisser, Mrs. L DeCordova and Mrs. Westmoreland met regularly in the Red Cross room at the Myrtle Bank Hotel to carry on the work of cutting, distributing, and packing the bandages and swabs to be shipped overseas. This committee was able to supply 6869 dressings to Britain with a further 2397 ready for shipment at the time of the 1940 report. The hospital garments committee under the chair of Mrs. Hawkes and then Mrs. R Barker made 1220 garments by 1940.<sup>4</sup> The Merchant Committee, led by Mrs. Croucher then Mrs. Drake and finally Mrs. Leonard Swaby, worked assiduously to provide clothing and entertainment for men of the Merchant Navy who imported vital goods (*Victory Book* 1945, 14). Also, when local seamen were out of employment for a protracted period, this committee contributed £114 to be distributed among them. In other instances they cared for survivors of shipwrecks and U-boat sinkings who were brought to Jamaica.<sup>5</sup>

These committees consisted of local Jamaican women and expatriates. For instance, under the chairmanship of Mrs. G. F. Kelly, the United Service Organisation (USO) moved into Jamaica in 1942 to cater to the entertainment of American servicemen. Young women of the USO entertained the servicemen through dances, picnicking, and gaming activities. Similarly, Mrs. Eleanor McRae, wife of manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, was the president of the Ladies Committee Canadian Legion War Services. This club, comprised of almost all the Canadian women in Jamaica, opened the Maple Leaf Club in 1941 for the entertainment of Canadian troops stationed in the country (*Jamaica Times*, 1 March 1942, 4). The Girls Club entertained the troops with dance-nights twice a week to keep them occupied and dissuade soldiers from engaging in sexual activity with prostitutes (Bean 2009). Local men who were stationed in Canada with

the artillery were also assisted, but more-so through the efforts of the Women's War Materials and Comforts Committee. Up to March 20, 1940, seven pullovers, six helmets, eight scarves, ten pairs of socks and ten pairs of mittens were shipped for this purpose and by July 1941 the committee sent over £500 overseas for purchasing cigarettes (*The Gleaner*, 2 April 1940, 3).

Chief among the comforts produced by local women was knitted clothing, useful for the armed forces as well as for refugees and civilians who were affected by air raids and bombings.<sup>6</sup> Knitting was emphasised as one of the key skills women should acquire, or hone; while some knitted for pleasure or as part of domestic chores, during the war years this hobby took on national and transnational importance. As Ethlyn Lue Shing wrote (*The Pagoda*, 13 April 1940, 6) 'in these days of war there is much scope for knitting. The men at the front appreciate very much the socks and sweaters, which the women at home knit and send to them. Many a woman ... helps to contribute to the comfort of the soldiers.' Girl Guides were also involved in this type of war work and were given special mention in the *Victory Book* (1945, 67).

...there has been work behind the scenes. Knitted and warm patchwork quilts, dainty knitted baby clothes, many dozens of pinafores, and hundreds of soft toys have been made and sent over. Guides have helped with the collection and distribution of Red Cross work from the depots... at home there was not a single committee on which Girl Guides and ex-Girl Guides were not active throughout the war.

Even after the war was officially over, women were encouraged to continue knitting. A special appeal was issued by Ivor Cummings of the Welfare Department of the Colonial Office, through Mrs. DeCordova for help from Jamaicans in the knitting of woollen clothing for those who were still serving with the forces. As one appeal in *The Pagoda* (15 December 1945, 11) expressed:

It is true that the war is over, but these boys and girls are not free to come home to us. They are still being called upon to do their bit in helping to straighten things over there and meanwhile they are having to endure the bitter cold of the winter which affects them so adversely. Those of us who knit will be doing a good turn if we answer to the best of our ability and time, this urgent call for help.

In this way the domestic work of women, previously sidelined, was accorded increased status on a national level as a necessary war measure rather than simply a hobby of the leisured class.

Further evidence of the greater emphasis on organising women's efforts in World War II, compared to the earlier war, was the work of the Ladies War Services Committee in Britain. Under the patronage of Princess Mary, this committee was instituted with the approval of the Colonial Office to give advice to the voluntary organisations in the West Indian colonies as they provided supplies and surgical materials.<sup>7</sup> The committee also acted as a receiving and distributing centre for articles sent from the colonies, and liaised with Red Cross authorities to ensure that the West Indian efforts were in tune with the needs of the men at the front. In all, some 80,400 articles of surgical supplies, hospital clothes and woollen articles were collected through this organisation.<sup>8</sup> The majority came from Jamaica, but other territories such as the Bahamas, Trinidad, Barbados, British Honduras and St. Kitts also contributed supplies. Members of the committee included the wives of the executive of the West India Committee, such as Lady Aspinall, Lady Burdon and Lady Denham. This cemented the understanding that it was the responsibility of women of the upper class to guide the efforts of women's war movements in the West Indian colonies.

Though the organisations were led by elite women, feelings of duty and romanticism attached to wartime contribution reverberated across the whole society and were not class-specific. This is evident in the accounts of an ex-servicewoman, Mrs. Beverley Marsh, who proudly recounted her civilian war work before the option of joining the army was afforded to her, 'the country club (in Morant Bay) allowed everybody to come to work to help to do knitting, and make things for the war effort... if you could knit or if you had an interest, you could go.'<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Mrs. Ena Collymore-Woodstock proudly recounted her pre-ATS war work:

I was a member of the Y [YWCA] and the Girl Guides, I trained in the St. Johns Ambulance (Brigade), they asked for volunteers for camp, and my boss was then the R. M. (Resident Magistrate) in Kingston where I worked, and he allowed me off in the afternoons to go to in my uniform to work at camp as an orderly, where the soldiers were on Camp Road.<sup>9</sup>

Constance Mark also recalled her efforts to help those in the battles: ‘we used to post nylon stockings to England—putting one foot in each envelope and hoping that both envelopes would arrive’.<sup>10</sup> Doreen Rickards noted that in the Bahamas women used to work in a similar fashion. Before she came to Jamaica, she recalled doing civilian war work:

At that time everybody was interested in the war, and wanted to do something for the war effort. I remember we went to the Red Cross, they taught us how to knit... I can remember making scarves... we were civilians then, that’s how we got interested. ... and everybody wanted to do something for the war effort, you wanted to do your bit.<sup>11</sup>

Local women’s committees were able to capitalise on these strong feelings of patriotism and devotion to the British Empire to mobilise Jamaicans to support the war effort. Though many were feeling the pinch of economic hardship, the average Jamaican was encouraged to give even the smallest amount, which would eventually combine to make a great contribution from the island as a whole. Under the slogan ‘give all you can, many are giving their lives’, fundraisers noted:

...just to give an idea to the small subscriber of how useful his pennies can be, we would like to point out that if out of a total population of one million persons one-twentieth of that number were to subscribe one penny each week, the Fund would be in credit to the extent of approximately £200 each week, or no less a sum than £10,000 per annum. (*The Gleaner*, 12 October 1939, 3)

As in World War I, women were chief among the island’s fundraisers, and their ability to collect large sums of money over time was extraordinary. For instance from just two events in 1941, held at the Myrtle Bank Hotel, the women’s committee was able to raise over £800 for the purchasing of materials to make comforts.<sup>12</sup> The fundraising events of the committee were impossible to count: pageants, fashion shows, concerts, dances, flag days, sport events and fairs, to name a few, were held weekly. Voluntary donations were also forthcoming from private bodies. The Pantomime Committee, for instance, chaired by Lady Ethel DaCosta, offered 50% of its profit from the production of *Jack and the Beanstalk* in 1942 to war funds. This totalled £365 to be distributed among various funds<sup>13</sup> (*The Gleaner*, 16 February 1942, 3). The Dunstan’s Committee

was particularly successful in fund raising, acquiring over £11,933 at the end of 1943.<sup>14</sup> Women were also instrumental in poppy sales on the annual Poppy Day.<sup>15</sup> In addition, they were encouraged to use their homes as collection agencies; contributions to the Jamaica Monday Morning Fund, for instance, were collected by interested women at their homes.

Women were not only leaders of collection drives, but were also specially targeted for donations. In one of the most widespread collection drives, for a Jamaica Hut and Motor Unit in France, the appeal was mainly to women to contribute. These huts were administered by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and were used by the Army Council to provide supplies, recreation and entertainments for the men and women of the fighting forces. The aim was to raise at least £1450 for such an entity and a motor unit. Women were challenged to raise at least 20 shillings each to support the fund (*The Gleaner*, 2 April 1940, 3). By August 1940 it was reported that the appeals had met with success. However, the funds were used for a hut and motor unit for a military unit stationed on the east coast of England rather than in France. A further £1000 was sent to buy four canteens for use in the bombed areas of England in 1944 (*The Gleaner*, 4 April 1944, 1). It was estimated that at the end of the war, providing goods to England, Russia, China, to Greek Red Cross funds, Finnish, Polish, Dutch and Belgian refugees cost Jamaicans over £44,000 (*The Gleaner*, 11 May 1945, 14). Evidently, women were the movers and shakers of the island's collection drives, both in terms of cash and kind. While men were also integral to the committees, (such as Sir Arthur Richards and Mr. Lindsay Downer as president and chair of the Jamaica Central War Assistance Committee respectively), the local war effort had an overwhelmingly female face.

Despite the meaningful work these groups of women were able to undertake, they were often beset by difficulties. Once such was the shortage of containers to ship preserves, which had a short shelf life. The Preserves Committee, under the stewardship of Lady D'Costa, and then Miss Sharp, also reported difficulties in acquiring seasonal fruits to produce their jams and jellies. In addition, a large quantity of wool was necessary to produce knitted comforts (up to 50 lbs per week on average) and this was always in short supply in a tropical country. The Knitting and Clothing Committees were particularly affected by this. The Clothing Committee had to eventually abandon making clothes on a large scale due to the lack of suitable materials to produce them. They

made a few pieces for the Merchant Navy who were in port in the island, but were unable to send shipments overseas.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these difficulties, many women were devoted to making their mark on Jamaica's war efforts. However, while they gazed outward at the war and carved out a response appropriate for the colonial territory, black feminists and other social workers critiqued the fervour surrounding war work that held little benefit for poor Jamaicans. May Farquarson, a leading birth control advocate and founder of the Jamaican Family Planning League and Mother's Welfare Clinic, expressed frustration with many women's dogged focus on war-work at the expense of other worthy local causes. In letters to Edith How-Martyn (British suffragette and honorary director of the Birth Control International Information Centre in London), Farquarson complained, 'everybody is so preoccupied with "war" work that the supply of available voluntary labour is depleted. One feels very much irritated at times when people who should be doing a solid job of work make bandage-rolling an excuse'. She continued '... as the war situation becomes more complicated it becomes more difficult to interest folks in anything but war work!'<sup>17</sup>

While Farquarson's quarrel was largely private, Amy Bailey used the print media to express a similar cynicism about what she considered to be the misguided perspective of prominent Jamaican women. While a supporter of war effort, Bailey attempted to redefine the concept of World War II service as 'Jamaica for Jamaicans'. A regular contributor to *Public Opinion* and the *Daily Gleaner*, Bailey's wartime philosophy was novel as it was controversial and added nuance to the responses of Jamaican women to World War II. Bailey's reaction to many women's emphasis on war work at the expense of almost every other type of social intervention was one of irritation. She said:

Must we entirely lose our sense of balance and proportion? Must we suspend all cultural and social improvements all progress along the lines of education and health?... There is and will be more distress and suffering than ever before. ... Our unemployment question still remains unsolved and will be so until we can solve it ourselves – for England cannot help us now. (*Public Opinion*, 23 September 1939, 7)

By affirming that Jamaica had to be self-sufficient in seeking its own social advancement, Bailey confronted the core-periphery colonial relationship between Britain and Jamaica. She not only admonished

Jamaicans who scurried to the aid of the Empire but framed her critique in nationalistic terms by suggesting that Jamaica could no longer lean on Britain for sustenance. She remained resolute that the most important war-work should be attention to Jamaica's endemic social ills, which were obscured by the enthusiasm to organise for wartime collection and production. Even greater evidence of Bailey's frustration with the misappropriation of 'World War II fever' came with the disparity between collection drives for war funds and social service funds. Prior to the war, Bailey made impassioned pleas for assistance with local charities (particularly the Save the Children Fund, established as a chapter of the British fund in 1938, of which she was the secretary). By 1939, her petitions were pregnant with irritation over the vast sums collected for the war effort while the local charities suffered from neglect. She lamented:

The relative disproportion between War and local contributions is often too marked to be satisfactory. Too often the idea is, 'it is local, so it doesn't matter anyhow'... I speak from personal knowledge as Secretary of Save the Children Fund. I am by no means minimising the importance of contributing to the War Funds, but I must emphasize that we cannot depend on outside help to carry on the charities that must go on in spite of the war. Indeed, on this very account the need for local charities becomes more imperative, as a result of increased want and suffering. Let us remember during this week that Charity begins at home, and that we cannot look to those abroad for the help that must come from ourselves. (*Daily Gleaner*, 1 October 1941, 8)

Bailey's wartime writing and activism was not geared towards seemingly token acts to assist the British war effort. Her nationalist thrust shaped her particular brand of feminism and social conscience and kept her focus on the consequences of elite colonial mentalities on the working class and on racial inequalities plaguing the budding nation. Bailey's reprimand was a call to action to both elite and working-class women to a superior contextualisation of their purpose and citizenship. For Bailey, Marson and other black women contending with the realities of Empire and Nation, crafting the indicators of citizenship for women in the Jamaican state was paramount. Their social work and agency through their written and literary works were effective means of performing citizenship even before they were according the official status. As Altink (2011, 151) reminds us, feminist conceptualisation of the gendered

nature of citizenship encompasses not only the status and legal rights accorded to the individual by the state, but also the ability to use these rights to effect change. Black women's subaltern position in comparison to the archetype of the white male citizen necessitated the creation of alternative avenues to social responsibility. Bailey's writings indicate that local social (war) work rather than tasks geared towards efforts for Britain gave Jamaican women a unique opportunity to establish themselves as worthy citizens of the burgeoning nation.

The aims of white and black middle-class women were similar; both groups were carving out a niche of public service, which would afford them increased visibility and improved rights as citizens. However, the avenues were quite distinct. Black social workers devoted their time to uplifting the local downtrodden while white women capitalised on the opportunities of the war to bolster their importance to the Empire. The latter were influenced not only by affinity to Britishness, but by a need to prove that Jamaican women were not lagging behind their British counterparts. This became necessary since it was obvious that the involvement of British women in the war could not be easily replicated in Jamaica given that there was no widespread conscription. Indeed, there were comparisons made between the diminutive efforts of Jamaican women and the more arduous tasks being done by those in England:

While Jamaican women have risen nobly to do their bit in raising money for the war funds... the women of Britain are tackling manual jobs. They're doing men's work with tough gruelling hours... Organizing charity drives and dances to obtain money, knitting socks and sweaters, training for emergency nursing service which are the main aspects of Jamaican women's war work is pleasant occupation compared to the organization of service which the women of England, belonging to every class of society, have accomplished in these months. (*Jamaica Times*, 11 January 1940, 5)

Jamaicans were aware, and constantly reminded, of the type of work British women were undertaking in the war, not only through the print media, but also from discussions on the radio. Una Marson, for instance, made her mark during the wars as the first black female producer at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) with her programme *Calling the West Indies*, on which male and female soldiers would have their messages read on the radio to their families. In so doing, Marson not only facilitated the connection of soldiers to their families but also fostered

her own philosophy of black internationalism (Umoren 2013). As part of her programme, she also interviewed English women and reported their involvement in the war economy.<sup>18</sup> This had the dual effect of adding an impetus to Jamaican women to do their part, while having the unintended consequence of reminding local women that their war efforts were not as glorious as that of British women. While it is impossible to know how many of those involved in the local committees would have actually engaged in more gruelling manual work, there was the distinct feeling among some that knitting and preparing comforts were often paltry endeavours. As a contributor expressed in the *Gleaner* (24 October 1939, 14),

When we see the pictures of women in England dressed in their various uniforms and we read of their innumerable, activities, we women of Jamaica cannot help feeling disappointed that our part is so unspectacularly put at the moment, all we can do is to join with work of the existing war committees, to continue with our local charities, and with the daily round. That is the best we can give to Empire.

Nonetheless, the efforts of the Jamaican women were appreciated by the British government and soldiers in particular. Supplies from the Caribbean area were essential to the sustenance of life at war fronts, and greatly assisted the government by providing necessary items, which would have been otherwise difficult to manufacture at that time. The War Comforts Committee not only volunteered to send provisions, but were often called upon by the international Red Cross to supply specific supplies that were urgently needed. In September 1940 for instance, there was a dire shortage of bandages when over 1400 people were seriously injured in an air raid over London. The Red Cross appealed to the women of Jamaica to assist in supplying the need. Women were asked to turn out in their numbers to the depot at Myrtle Bank Hotel to help in preparing dressings for stitching or to form working parties to sew bandages specifically for this purpose.<sup>19</sup>

Evidence of the importance of the women's work was also found in Jamaica's newspapers and official government documents, which were replete with letters of thanks for specific donations from the island. As one Jamaican soldier, Mr. H. M. Reid, noted, at the very least the gifts salvaged soldier's spirits in unhappy times, reminded them of home and gave them a sense of pride to know that comforts were hand-made

by Jamaican women (*The Gleaner*, 22 February 1940, 3). Mrs. H. C. Toogood, secretary of the Jamaica Women's War Materials and Comforts Committee, received hundreds of postcards of thanks from men of the fighting forces for gifts sent by the committee, one of which read:

This is to thank the lady who must have worked very hard to knit the socks I am now wearing. It is nice to be wearing socks which are from home. They were forwarded to me along with a pullover by the West India Committee in London on coming from Jamaica. There were two little paintings of Jamaican scenery attached to them, which made me realize how beautiful good old Jamaica is. (*The Gleaner*, 18 October 1940, 3)

While production of comforts became synonymous with women's war-work in both wars, women took on a wider variety of tasks in World War II. It was suggested, for instance, that women engage in local food production and practise frugal expenditure in the home to assist the country in its bid to cut down on imports at a time when shipping was curbed due to hostile activity on the seas. As Powell-Benjamin (1988, 77) indicates, Jamaica's emphasis on export crops meant that Jamaica was dependent on external markets. As a result any fluctuations in world market conditions affected the ability of the colony to provide for its people. As discussed in Chap. 2, dependence on imports of foodstuffs from overseas coupled with the strain on shipping during the war, which made the importation of these goods difficult, necessitated increased local food production. At the outbreak of World War II, energetic measures were undertaken by the government to increase the production of food in the colony.<sup>20</sup> A food production board was appointed by the Governor to make Jamaica as self-supporting as possible, and though female effort was not the sole contributor to production, women were seen as crucial to the success of the movement.

Peasants were encouraged to grow more food and to embark on mixed farming for local markets under the Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare prepared by Malcolm MacDonald in 1940.<sup>21</sup> More specific to war exigencies however, Jamaican women were advised to grow vegetables in their backyards and make preserves from the abundant tropical fruits in the island. Many working class women developed a thriving cottage industry around making preserves and pickles (Bean 1994, 64). In addition, recipe competitions were run by *The Gleaner*, and many women became involved. Competitions were geared

towards getting local women to use local food in creative ways to sustain their families and reduce the need for imported foreign staples. The government also instituted a Land Settlement Programme to relieve distress in the agricultural sector. Through this scheme, the government acquired land from large landowners and placed it at the disposal of the peasantry for food production during the war.<sup>22</sup> While the majority of landowners involved in this scheme were male, one woman did stand out as a valuable contributor to this significant effort. As *The Gleaner* (22 February 1940, 3) reported,

one of the most admirable examples of assistance was given by Mrs. Carmen Pringle... when she donated 100 acres of land to cultivators free of charge for the growing by them of local foodstuffs; a triple benefit in one deed; for it helped the funds; it helped the peasants, and it helped the local food supply.

Naturally, other landowners were encouraged to follow her generous example, to aid both the war effort and the Land Settlement Scheme on the island.

### EMPLOYMENT AND THE SOCIO-POLITICAL STATUS OF WOMEN DURING WORLD WAR II

Though middle- and upper-class women were portrayed as doing valuable voluntary work for the British Empire, and all women were encouraged, if not challenged, to give of their time or money to the cause, the reality of the effect of the war on poorer women should not be overlooked. While poverty was not a new phenomenon in the colony, the economic repercussions of World War II were felt by all in the society, and women were particularly afflicted by the war economy's vicissitudes. Post (1981, 21–22) has explained that the starvation wages earned by working-class households during the war were not enough to sustain comfortable living and as a result some men looked overseas for work, and women sought paid employment locally. In an attempt to alleviate the problem of unemployment in the country, local and overseas war-time work schemes were implemented, but these were largely geared towards absorbing large numbers of unemployed and able-bodied men. Even more so than during World War I, the change in the economy as a result of World War II, influenced the labour market, and there was

an increased migration level of 50%, with over 20,690 workers migrating temporarily up to 1944.<sup>23</sup>

The Kingston Employment Bureau, set up in 1940, was vital in recruiting men to work on the US Bases in Jamaica, as well as the Gibraltar Camp, the airport at Palisadoes and the Mona Reservoir. Over 9000 workers were recruited between 1941 and 1942 for construction of the bases. A further 4893 artisans and craftsmen were employed on the Panama Canal between 1940 and 1943. Nonetheless, agricultural work in the United States was by far the major wartime ‘industry’ to employ Jamaican men, totalling 56,432 between 1943 and 1946.<sup>24</sup>

This work was advertised as having a dual purpose. On the one hand it was vital to alleviate the unemployment in Jamaica, particularly in the aftermath of the widespread labour protest movements in the 1930s throughout the region. There was a pressing need to provide jobs for the labouring classes as a way to ensure loyalty and maintain peace. As Baptiste (2003, 5) argued, wartime jobs,

pasteurized the anger of the populace in the base-lease territories that had boiled over in the pre-war strikes. If not addressed, such anger had the potential to become a serious security threat to the US and Allied bases in the circum-Caribbean territories.

Concurrently, these jobs also served the purpose of assisting the war efforts of the United States relating to food production. As a leaflet issued by the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission advised workers, ‘you are here on a war job. Be as proud of it as if you were in the fighting services. Food is as necessary as ammunition’ (Marshall 1992, 27). Farm work in the United States was not specific to Jamaicans; men from Bahamas, Barbados and British Honduras were also employed under the Emergency Farm Labor Program. Specific to Jamaica however, close to 50,000 men were employed in this scheme between 1943 and 1945, as Table 6.1 illustrates.

The scheme had a male gender bias in its recruitment—women were not allowed to participate. Even family members of the men who were recruited were not accommodated in the United States, so the primary beneficiaries were men, though their dependents should theoretically have benefited from their earnings.<sup>25</sup> As with the destitution of many soldiers’ families during World War I, there were cases where the dependents of men who went overseas faced abject poverty due to lack

**Table 6.1** Jamaican farm workers employed under the emergency farm labor program by US state, 1943–1945. *Source* Compiled from Baptiste (2003, 14)

<i>State</i>	<i>31 July 1943</i>	<i>1 August 1944</i>	<i>3 August 1945</i>
Arizona			5
California			2693
Colorado			99
Connecticut	1000	2088	2641
Delaware		580	434
Florida		1722	2141
Illinois	638	996	643
Indiana	186	224	317
Iowa	314	429	766
Kansas			225
Maine		642	212
Maryland		585	1297
Massachusetts		150	362
Michigan	747	1659	604
Minnesota	357	197	
Missouri			143
New Hampshire			41
New Jersey	1942	1664	1758
New York	1524	3005	3072
Ohio	181	1224	1217
Pennsylvania	309	645	560
Wisconsin	1046	1729	1766
US Total	8244	17,649	20,996

of remittances. The *Public Opinion* newspaper indicated for instance, that wives and mothers of Jamaican munitions workers in Britain received money from them in the first few months, but this failed to continue, leading to their destitution (*Public Opinion*, 22 November 1941, 1). Soldiers who left their families to serve in Britain also expressed concern over poor wages and an inability to sustain themselves and send remittances home on the meagre salary. Even when women received remittances, these were often inadequate to sustain families, and as such, an increasing number of women sought local employment since lucrative overseas opportunities were not open to them.

Despite the gender discrimination evident in wartime labour policies and recruitment drives which favoured men, wartime exigencies did provoke changes the labour market in relation to working-class women's employment, largely through their own initiative and agency. By 1942

tens of thousands of women had found jobs in local sectors: 63,000 were domestic servants, about 32,000 moved into agricultural wage labour, while 3250 located opportunities in textile mills and another 2700 in road repair gangs<sup>26</sup> (Post 1981, 21–22). As Table 6.2 indicates, however, there were wage disparities between male and female labourers, influenced by European gender norms, which upheld the male as the breadwinner and prototypical wage earner.

Eventually, the impact of war on the United States spurred a local debate on Jamaican women's suitability for domestic work there. In the United States, there was a marked shortage of domestic workers and it was estimated that up to 25,000 Jamaican women could be used to fill the gap left by American women engaged in war-related jobs (*The Gleaner*, 13 April 1944, 10). It was suggested that they could work in homes, hospitals, schools, colleges and other institutions,<sup>27</sup> a notion supported by various bodies including the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce and the newly formed quasi-capitalist political party, the Jamaica Democratic Party (JDP).<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the most vibrant supporter of the wartime migration of Jamaican women was Amy Ashwood Garvey. As president of the short-lived, but ideologically forward-thinking Jags Smith Party, launched in 1943, Garvey was among the major challengers of the male-oriented bias in wartime labour recruitment and was a staunch supporter of the scheme to recruit female domestic workers to the United States. Key to the party's platform was the training and employment of working-class women; guided by the principle that women's advancement was critical for national advancement<sup>29</sup> (*The Gleaner*, 11 October 1943). Garvey was known for her staunch critique of the ways in which domestic work

**Table 6.2** Average daily earnings of public works department workers in country parishes, 1943. *Source* IB/40 annual report on the work of the labour department, 1942, 6

<i>Unskilled labour</i>	<i>Average number employed weekly</i>	<i>Average daily earnings</i>
Male		
Regular	1494	3/5 d
Casual	5401	2/11¾ d
Female		
Regular	180	1/6¼ d
Casual	1492	1/4¾ d

buttressed shadism in Jamaica through the exploitation of black girls by the brown middle class. Yet her philosophical quarrel with domestic labour did not colour her view that domestic work was necessary and should be professionally taught to ensure high standards of work. While her party worked to secure training prospects for women, Garvey also made specific attempts to capitalise on war-related employment opportunities through overt and clandestine means. For instance, in a bold attempt to bring visibility to the issue of wartime domestic employment and to whip up interest among destitute women, she contrived a rumour that female domestics were going to work in the United States on the initiative of the party. She also took steps to contact the US Vice Consul regarding the matter and advised the Secretary of the Jags Smith Party, D. W. McCartney, to forward to her names and qualification of 25 efficient women who could fill domestic positions (*The Gleaner*, 13 April 1944, 10).

J. Edgar Hoover, the first director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), was disturbed by her plans as he surmised (perhaps correctly) that any success in importing Jamaican workers would have bolstered the influence of the UNIA on Blacks in the western hemisphere (Baptiste 2003, 24). He was not the only opponent to the scheme. The idea was not supported in all local circles and was it was vehemently rejected by the PNP. Through its major media mouthpiece, the *Public Opinion* newspaper, the PNP cautioned women against rushing into a scheme that would place them at the mercy of racist households in the United States. Citing indignities and discrimination suffered by male farm workers, the party was sure that women would have suffered to a greater extent, given the menial nature of the tasks they would perform. The party also labelled the scheme a palliative for some immediate evils and not a lasting alleviation of the problem of female unemployment in Jamaica (*Public Opinion*, 13 November 1943, 2). Amy Jacques Garvey was also weary of Ashwood's 'latest racket ... to take domestics servants' money, letting them believe that she can influence legislation in America to admit thousands of them in the USA' (Martin 2007, 174).

Undoubtedly, Ashwood Garvey dabbled in exaggeration and hatched many short-lived schemes. However, the core of her idea to capitalise on wartime shortages in the United States as a road to economic empowerment for local women was far from being a scheme for personal aggrandisement. Her aim was to infuse gender equity to productive wartime

employment opportunities and challenge the male domination of labour migration. Parity in employment for men and women was rarely espoused by political figures of the day, with perhaps only the JDP expressing similar notions through its 1944 Charter for Women.<sup>30</sup>

Elected members also favoured the scheme, recommending that the co-chairman of the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission be requested to ask the US government to take real steps to allow Jamaican women to obtain work there. The Chamber of Commerce, an association of the island's most prominent and powerful businessmen, also outlined the benefits of the scheme. The group pointed out that it would be of great economic value to Jamaica through remittances, while alleviating the unemployment issues among many Jamaican working-class women. The Chamber of Commerce was banking on the fact that unlike men, women would be quite inclined remit earnings to care for children left at home. This would not only put a dent in the abject poverty of the working class, but give a much-needed boost to the local economy (*The Gleaner*, 19 October 1943, 1).

The scheme also found traction with Eleanor Roosevelt, America's First Lady, who was sensitised to the issue by Amy Ashwood Garvey. Roosevelt acknowledged that since the outbreak of the war and the subsequent migration of domestic help of all categories to the munitions factories and defence plants, the 'servant problem' in Washington and other large American cities had been acute. She surmised that Jamaican women would be welcomed in view of the admirable record of good conduct and sobriety of the country's male farm labourers. In offering suggestions as to how the scheme could be funded, Mrs. Roosevelt floated the possibility of relatives and friends of these workers in the United States putting up necessary financial guarantees to allow their entry (*The Gleaner*, 12 April 1944, 1).

Despite these efforts, and discussion in print media, no concrete plan was in place by March 1944. This prompted response from the JDP whose members supported the plan and made numerous petitions to the government to this effect. The party's lobby was further emboldened with the news that 16,000 men were to be offered in farm work by May 1944. Abe Issa, businessman and a leader in the JDP considered the proposal as vital to the well-being of the nation's poorer women. In an article to *The Gleaner* (26 April 1944, 7) he explained:

...no serious attempt at a solution of the island's staggering unemployment problem can afford to ignore the fact that thousands of women contribute towards that total... if we concentrate on finding employment for men alone, that is tackling only one aspect of the situation... if the US domestic servant scheme is to be abandoned, it will mean a serious setback to the hopes of many who had counted on getting the opportunity to go to America to earn a livelihood... if US immigration regulations can be overcome in respect to our male workers, I don't see any insurmountable reason why similar efforts should not be made for our women.

The scheme for domestic work was not as successful as the farm work for men, though Bean (1994, 91) has indicated that a few Jamaican women were recruited to work in American households. It is likely that the few who migrated were able to either pay their way or had relatives in the United States who could assist them, since no wide-scale scheme emerged from the Labour Department. Though the wars facilitated some shift in the status of women, gendered norms relating to employment policies were firmly entrenched in the 1930s and 1940s and blatant sexism imbued wartime labour recruitment. The 'insurmountable reason' for the inequitable treatment of women was simply that working-class women's reality as heads of households and income-earners remained at odds with colonial policy, which deemed them to be housewives and dependents of men. Concerns over childcare and the possible ripple effects of empowering working-class women were inimical to women's ability to capitalise on wartime employment opportunities. Men continued to be given priority for overseas employment and migratory opportunities and women were left to find or create avenues for survival locally. French and Ford-Smith (1985, 21) state that in 1948, 20 male domestics were recruited by the Labour Department for work abroad while almost 2000 female domestics were placed locally, and were not allowed to work overseas.

To add insult to wartime injury, World War II brought added economic hardship through stark increases in the price of basic household items, many of which women had to purchase for their households. Throughout the years 1939–1946 the cost of living increased by over 55%.<sup>31</sup> Basic commodities increased in price almost as soon as war was declared, as Table 6.3 illustrates.

Even before price increases were officially known, women declared war on grocers (*The Gleaner*, 6 September 1939, 16). Many flocked to

**Table 6.3** Increase in price of some basic commodities between 1938 and 1946. *Source* Compiled from the *Annual General and Departmental Report 1938* and *Annual Report of Jamaica 1946*

Commodity	1938 (per lb)	1940 (per lb)
Cornmeal	1½ d	2d
Rice	2d	2 ¼d
Bread	4d	4d
Codfish	5d	5½d
Condensed milk	5d	6¾d

the stores as soon as war was declared to stock up on imported items such as condensed milk and salt fish, staples of many households, which became subject to wartime restrictions on imports. This reality, as well as the sharp increase in the cost of living, put additional strain on working-class women who bore the central responsibility of putting food on the table. Consumer problems were essentially women's problems.

The war not only impacted on the economic life of women in the colony, but induced paradoxical discourses about their social status in relation to men. While some women were increasing in social and political prominence due to wartime exploits, there were concerns that the 'feminine' nature of women should not be compromised through the shifting tide facilitated by war work. An editorial in *The Gleaner* (16 September 1939) cautioned:

Women not only have a place in politics but they now have in war, but let them be careful to remain women and do their work as women. Let them not become de-sexed beings who defeat their own aims by losing their identity and individuality by aping men.

Self-proclaimed upholders of the gender status maintained that women's identity should still be defined by domesticity when the war was re-fashioning a re-definition of womanhood globally. This was evident by renewed efforts to strengthen the teaching of domestic science in schools locally, reinforcing the concept that women should be primarily educated for a life of service to their families. As a commentator, 'Hancock' (*AAMM News*, April 1945, 3) opined,

domestic science will take its place as a real subject in schools of every kind in the island... when every girl in the island of whatever class or creed, has received this education in home-making which is her right, life in the home will be much happier and better. This is what can and must be achieved.

Amy Bailey's own Housecraft Training Centre, which concentrated on vocational training and imparting domestic skills to working-class Jamaican girls, opened its doors in 1945, signalling the general thrust of channelling women's energies towards domestic sciences. Colonial gender policy was guided by the view that in order for the colony to be socially and morally upright, women had to regain their hold on the private sphere. This concept was termed 'housewifeisation' by Ford-Smith and French (1985, 324). They suggest that every effort was made to relegate female labour to invisibility and wagelessness as a natural extension of their role as wives and mothers. To support this claim, one only has to look to the Moyne Commission's recommendations. It suggested that returning to core values of the women/private, male/public archetype would improve the state of affairs in the Caribbean in general. The focus of the Commission on women is made clear by its three basic remedies for the social ills of the country: amending the status accorded to women, addressing the lack of family life, and the institution of a well-defined programme of social welfare (French 1988, 40). It was expected that middle- and upper-strata women would focus on the latter by being social workers and influence poorer women to develop a 'proper' family life. The lower-stratum woman was also expected to abandon income-generating interests and invest time in her family, ideally headed by a male breadwinner.

In a practical sense, this translated into a systematic attempt to restrict women's access to employment outside the home. The recommendations did not advocate proper wages for lower-class women, rather it concentrated on depriving them of the wages they earned, in order to render them dependent on a male provider. The policies of the commission challenged the right to women's employment, and relegated them to unwaged, low-paid domestic labour. Also, it turned a blind eye to the expulsion of married women from Civil Service posts and endorsed the view that employment was a temporary alternative to marriage. This troubling approach was part of a wider trend to entrench domestication of women and dis-empower those who wished to expand their

horizons. In the midst of colonial gender policy was war-work, which had contradictory effects on Jamaican womanhood. As with work done between 1914 and 1918, World War II-related work brought increased organisation of and visibility to women. However it did buttress ‘housewifisation’ to the extent that acceptable war work was largely domesticated jobs of knitting, sewing and voluntary work from the home base. Women were predominantly portrayed as homemakers and were encouraged to do their part for the war, rather than focus on wage labour or upward social mobility. In this way, the discourse about female citizenship during the war ‘sought to foster the capacity of housewives to assert themselves in the public sphere but to do so in ways that did not threaten the overarching validation of marriage and motherhood as the primary sources of their identity’ (Hinton 2002, 2).

Importantly too, World War II, even more than the earlier world war, brought with it a marriage boom in Jamaica. Many young women seemed concerned with marrying before men went off to war; signifying the importance of traditional marriage in the 1940s. Influential columnist Dorothy Dix (*Jamaica Times*, 24 October 1942, 3) had harsh words against entering into such unions:

...the poorest reason that a woman can have for marrying is the fear of being an old maid... and not the least of the tragedies of war is that it promotes so many marriages that should never take place when girls saw many boys going off to join the army they get into a mad panic about being old maids. It seems to them that the visible supply of husbands will be exhausted before they can get one so they grab up anything in trousers that they can get their hands on and fly to the parson... this is an act of supreme madness.

Despite these views, statistics revealed that the period between 1939 and 1945 saw a marked increase in marriage rates when compared to the 1914–1918 period, as Table 6.4 indicates.

From the point of view of employers, there was also evidence to suggest that ‘housewifisation’ was slowly taking root. There were attempts to exploit the labour of women during the war years in order to maximise profits and reduce wages. Textile industries and garment manufacturers in the Caribbean saw some boost in production during the war, partially due the fact that uniforms were commissioned for the army and for organisations such as the Red Cross (Reddock 1994, 195). The

**Table 6.4** Marriages in Jamaica during World War I and World War II.  
*Source* Compiled from Tekse (1974, 206–207)

<i>World War I</i>	<i>Marriages</i>	<i>World War II</i>	<i>Marriages</i>
1914	2824	1939	5528
1915	2587	1940	4740
1916	2964	1941	5612
1917	2966	1942	5998
1918	2776	1943	5539
		1944	6385
		1945	6305

Jamaican manufacturing sector expanded during the war years, primarily through of the misuse of female labour. The Jamaica Knitting Mills, for instance, commenced operation with four machines in February 1942, bought 29 more in June and in the course of the year produced 54,000 items worth £91,000. Many of those items were produced on machines bought and maintained by women in their homes. Over 80% of the industrial workforce worked for textile stores and factories from home. By clandestinely utilising female work in the home to supplement the work of those in the factory, employers avoided payment of minimum wages, workmen's compensation and other legal provisions, causing profits to increase dramatically.

This tendency to use home-based labour not only led to exploitation in terms of wages but also influenced how women's work was coded and classified. 'Gainful employment' became increasingly identified with male waged rural and factory-based labour, and not with work done by women. As French and Ford-Smith (1985, 29) opine, 'many of the workers in textiles were not considered skilled unless they worked in male-oriented jobs. In 1943, only 1000 of the 5000 seamstresses in factories were categorised as skilled.' This meant that men continued to receive better pay for similar tasks, and women became increasingly disempowered in terms of some legal rights and benefits. As Table 6.5 illustrates, by 1942, a large number of working-class women were paid under 6/- per week while men were in the large majority of those paid 100/- and over. It is also important to note that 88% of female wage earners received less than 20/- per week.

It was not until near the end of the war that a modicum of improvement in wages was forthcoming for women involved in factory work. Up to 1939, female workers in match, tobacco, ice cream, biscuit, mineral water and soap factories received a lower wage than men for similar

**Table 6.5** Wage earners classified by earnings group for the week ending 12 December 1942. *Source* *Census of Jamaica* 1943, lxxv

<i>Earnings group</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Total wage earners	182,029	101,410
Under 6/- per week	20,802	34,145
6/- to under 10/-	29,442	17,141
10/- to under 20/-	38,616	11,336
20/- to under 40/-	19,822	4206
40/- to under 60/-	6947	2163
60/- to under 80/-	3148	915
80/- to under 100/-	1590	390
100/- to under 150/-	1921	237
150/- to under 200/-	731	24
200/- to under 300/-	571	8
300/- to under 400/-	173	1
400/- and over	127	2

working hours and were not allowed to work overtime hours. For a working week of 44–56 hours, men earned from 11/- to 64/9 while women earned from 9/- to 37/-. This averaged a weekly earning of £1 4 9 and £0 15 8 for men and women respectively.<sup>32</sup> After 1945, however, female factory workers in the baking and confectionery, fruit-processing and packing, sugar and rum manufacturing, cordage and twine industries were able to work longer hours. In this year, factory owners lobbied for changes in the regulation to allow women to work longer hours in order to increase production to meet growing demands. These demands were not being met with normal work hours, because wartime restrictions on imports had prevented the import of additional machinery to bolster their businesses. These restrictions inadvertently gave women a small chance to improve their earnings, since the women leapt at the opportunity to work longer overtime hours, taking advantage of lucrative economic activity wherever it arose.

For those who worked in the agricultural sector, the war brought additional hardships, which were the result of the fall out of exports during the war. The decline in employment in the case of banana and cane farming during World War II was not compensated by any significant growth of other avenues of employment. More specifically, in 1911 banana had 28,867 labourers, which decreased to 17,195 in 1943. Although these unemployed labourers were not women, this trend affected women adversely. According to the 1943 census report 45,196

women were involved in agriculture, a 57% decline between 1921 and 1943.<sup>33</sup>

While other areas of employment for women did not experience a clear fall-out, there were aspects of discrimination even in the mid 1940s. For instance, while it was felt that women had all the intelligence, zeal and ability needed to work in the Civil Service, it was not seen as expedient to appoint married women to any public service office. Further, if a woman in Civil Service got married, she was required to vacate her office without receiving pension, compassionate allowance, or gratuity.<sup>34</sup> In addition, in an attempt to reserve positions of higher pay and prestige to men with family obligations, women were generally not promoted to First Class Clerk positions. These rules reinforced the notion that a woman's primary role was as wife and mother, and that this should not compete with any professional job outside the home. In addition, the Employment of Women Act of March 1942 outlawed night work for women, with specific exceptions.<sup>35</sup> This limited the types of jobs women could occupy and was done ostensibly because women were seen as primary caregivers of children, with the ultimate responsibility for their well-being.

However, the attempt to undervalue women in paid employment and relegate their status to primarily that of wife and mother was never fully achieved. While the domestic nature of war work did contribute to this trend, war exigencies and women's own agency challenged official policy. The need to specifically target either female labour or voluntary efforts during the war eroded the belief that women could not function outside of the home and eclipsed the idea that the home could not function without her constant presence. As Dorothy Dix (*Jamaica Times*, 3 October 1942, 3) noted in relation to the war, 'nobody now talks about women's place being in the home. It is being in the factory and on the farm and running the canteen and ministering to the wounded in hospitals and wherever else she is needed in the defence of the country.' The need to include women in key areas of public life was incongruous with a policy that sought to keep them in the home.

Also, as French (1988, 45) indicates, the housewife ideology was largely an impractical theoretical construct because it conflicted with the needs of working-class women on the one hand and the needs of the capitalist system on the other:

The ruling classes were well aware that the non-working housewife ideology could in practice only have limited application among the labouring classes. The dire poverty in which they were kept by the control of the capitalist class over material resources would continually press them into service in those areas where their employment served the needs of the ruling classes.

Perhaps even more importantly, however, the political gains women had made in the aftermath of World War I and their continued campaigning for improved social status in society, retarded the development of the 'housewifeisation' policy. The Moyne Commission itself realised that improvement of the social status of women was the key to social improvement in the colonies. Amy Bailey, in representing the views of the Women's Liberal Club at their Women's Conference in 1941, went even further in suggesting that improvement of women's social standing in Jamaica was the most important effort women could make during the war. She said: 'we must lift up the status of women in this country. I regard it as one of the most important bits of war work that we women can do'<sup>36</sup> (*Public Opinion*, 28 December 1940, 14). She and other members of the club, such as Mrs. Lyon and Mrs. P. A. Aiken, suggested that the government appoint women to posts in Civil Service and called for legislation to curb illegitimacy. Others, including Mary Morris Knibb, have been credited with bringing about the joint demand for a new constitution, which was signed by elected members, the PNP and the Federation of Citizens' Association. Their work was not in vain: various concessions were forthcoming. The new constitution, which came into effect on November 20, 1944, allowed for a much wider measure of self-government for the colony in general, and set the stage for eventual independence in 1962.<sup>37</sup>

More specific to women, measures including the Sex Disqualification (removal) Law of 1944 allowed for the entry of middle-strata women to areas of public life. It provided for the appointment of women as magistrates and their appointment as jurors, entry to the Civil Service and the expansion of their role in education and the social services. Furthermore, under the new constitution women were eligible for election to the legislature, and, probably even more importantly, they benefited from full adult suffrage. While some women were able to vote from 1919, as has been previously discussed, the 1944 constitution allowed for every adult male and female over the age of 21 years to vote for the members of the

House of Representatives without property qualifications. This drew the majority of Jamaican women into a level of political participation from which they had previously been excluded.

The strides women were able to make by 1945 should not be underestimated. Those on local decision-making bodies were able to implement improvements related to women's rights and bring increased visibility to issues that affected women in the society.<sup>38</sup> Amy Ashwood Garvey, as a candidate for the JDP in the House of Representatives, undoubtedly did her part to fight for improved rights for Jamaican women, particularly in the area of employment. In addition, Iris Collins, representative for St. James in the House of Representatives and the first female Member of Parliament, was instrumental in bringing about changes in the employment of married women in government service in 1945. Though a law was passed in October 1944 to discontinue the removal of married women from the service, it was not implemented; Collins brought it to the fore, noting that women should be allowed to work after they are married. She said, 'the new constitution has opened its arms to the advent of women in administrative positions in this country and I should not like the day to come when, if I decided to get married, I would have to go out.'<sup>39</sup> This statement aroused laughter and debate on the matter and the motion was passed. With constitutional change and adult suffrage came specific targeting of women to use their new rights carefully. The PNP in particular, represented by the vocal Edith Dalton-James (candidate for the western St. Andrew constituency and the first female candidate of the PNP), appealed to new women voters. By itemising their plans, which would specifically affect women, such as full employment for every man and woman and proper schooling for every child, Dalton-James targeted 'every honest-thinking woman' to vote for her and her party and was also subtly appealing to a sense of gender solidarity<sup>40</sup> (*Public Opinion*, 4 March 1944, 4).

Cumulatively, both global conflicts of the twentieth century impacted on Jamaican women's socio-political status over time. Gains that were forthcoming in World War I were often reinforced during World War II. Some of these improvements were not specific to the war itself but were part of the general change in colonial policy that Jamaica experienced during the 1940s. This was one of the key differences between the experiences of women in the two world wars, as they were able to benefit from changing policies in the British Empire during World War II. Also, women were better organised in their response in 1939 and thereafter,

and their work was far more extensive because of the greater need for such work during World War II. In addition, women were ascribed a place in the war as well as in the home. Traditionally, women did not indicate an interest to abandon their domestic duties completely. It would be more accurate to say that some women emerged from the war years convinced that their identity was not solely tied to the home, and that they could exercise their political franchise, hold jobs in the public sector and have healthy family lives. For some women their place was squarely in the war, not as producers of war supplies as civilians, but as army personnel engaged in various tasks in the island and overseas. This involvement of Jamaican women in the military in World War II was one of the key departures from the experience of World War I. The following chapter examines the nature of the some women's involvement in the military through the testimonies of those who served.

## NOTES

1. In Deborah K. King's ground-breaking work she is careful to note that multiple jeopardies refer to more than simultaneous oppressions: 'the equivalent formulation is racism multiplied by sexism multiplied by classism' See King (1988, 47).
2. 'A Short History of the League', Jamaica Archives Private Collection 4/39/32 and The Jamaica Women's League: 4/39/31. The League's social works outside war efforts were mainly poverty-alleviation measures. In 1940, for instance, they raised over £500 through charity drives for this purpose. Also the Highgate branch continued running clinics for children and operated a canteen to provide hot meals. *The Gleaner* (12 February 1940, 3 and 11 May 1940, 10).
3. Collector-General Letter Book, 1940 1B/8/3 # 179, 228.
4. CSO 1B/5/77 #13 1941 Report of the Women's War Materials and Comforts Committee 20 September 1939–17 September 1940.
5. CSO 1B/5/77 #13 1941 Report of the Women's War Materials and Comforts Committee 20 September 1939–17 September 1940.
6. CSO 1B/5/77 #3 West Indian Committee–War Services Committee.
7. CSO 1B/5/77/3 1939 First General Report of the Ladies' Committee from 17 November 1939 to 30 June 1940.
8. CSO 1B/5/77 # 3 West Indian Committee–War Services Committee: Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Governor, 17 October 1939.

9. The St. John Ambulance Brigade referred to here was instituted by Sir Edward Denham to train men in First Aid. Eventually, women enrolled in First Aid courses and sick bed nursing during the World War II.
10. UWI Mona Library: Manuscript on West Indian Women at War: 1989 transcripts of interviews.
11. These accounts were gathered through personal interviews. Mrs. Beverley Marsh, interview May 2005; Mrs. Ena Collymore-Woodstock, interview 16 February 2005; Mrs. Doreen Rickards, interview 13 July 2005.
12. An Empire Ball realised £609.18.11 and the Junior Woman's Club dance raised £255.4.0: 1B/5/77 #13 1941: Jamaica Central War Assistance Committee—Report on the Activities of the committee.
13. The funds were distributed as follows: £165 to the Women's War Comforts Committee £25 for surgical dressings, £25 for St. John Ambulance Brigade Unit, £50 for Mrs. Churchill's special Red Cross fund to aid Russia, £50 for the RAF benevolent fund, and £50 to the St. Dunstan's Fund.
14. CSO: 1B/5/77/13 1941 Report of the Women's War Materials and Comforts Committee 20 September 1939–17 September 1940. St. Dunstan's Home in England was a charity chaired by Sir Ian Fraser in aid of British soldiers and sailors blinded in warfare. Jamaica contributed extensively to this fund. See *The Gleaner*, 18 January 1940, 3.
15. Poppy Day was Earl Haig's institution for helping the disabled in World War I. Locally, poppies were sold through the Victoria League and there was usually a service at the cenotaph and the laying of wreaths in memory of Jamaican who died in World Wars I and II. *The Pagoda*, 15 November 1952, 10.
16. CSO: 1B/5/77 #13 1941: Report of the Women's War Materials and Comforts Committee 20 September 1939–17 September 1940.
17. 4/108/1315 Forty Four letters of correspondence between Miss Farquarson and Mrs. Edith How-Martyn.
18. Miss Sheila Hutchinson and Miss Clare Verley were interviewed by Una Marson and spoke on the topic 'Great Work of Women in War Time'. See *The Gleaner*, 28 July 1941, 6.
19. Three rooms at the Myrtle Bank Hotel and the ballroom at Kings House were used to produce comforts by the Knitting and Hospital Garments Committees. See *The Gleaner*, 28 November 1940, 7.
20. These general measures included the extension of the cultivation of cereals, pulses, vegetables, the improvement of livestock, and the introduction of new varieties of food crops to supplement those already under cultivation. Lynn Bolles also informs us that the scarcity of some goods stimulated an edible oils industry, producing lard and margarine. See Bolles (1996, 25).

21. Under this scheme, passed July 1940, a West Indian Welfare Fund of £1,000,000 a year for twenty years was to be created and administered by a special comptroller of welfare services and devoted to such matters as education, health, housing and improvement of facilities on land-settlement schemes. See Post (1981, 90).
22. CSO: IB/5/77 # 141; Food production scheme—proposals for acquiring of land for the production of foodstuffs. The Land Settlement Scheme began before World War II as an attempt to establish peasant-owners instead of tenant farmers and to prevent urban migration by farmers from the rural areas by allowing them access to land on which they could become self supporting. However, it was intensified at a time where the government purchased large properties and leased or sold them to small cultivators for the growing of native foods such as yam, coco, cassava and vegetables. See Bean (1994, 57). There was also a separate scheme under the same name devised in 1924 to provide land for soldiers who had served in World War I. This is dealt with in CSO: IB/5/77 1926 no. 2 Land Settlement Scheme.
23. IB/5 Annual Report on the Work of the Labour Department 1944, 4.
24. IB/40 Annual Report on the Work of the Labour Department, 1942, 1 and Annual Report on Jamaica 1946 (London: HM Stationary Office, 1948), 12.
25. The Annual Report of 1945 on Jamaica noted that through farm work the island benefited from remittances of compulsory and voluntary savings to the tune of £8,270,000. This was often paid to the government, however, and not directly to the dependents of the men.
26. Rhoda Reddock also argues that in Trinidad and Tobago, as in Jamaica, the division of labour in plantation agriculture (particularly sugar production) changed considerably during the war as men were attracted to work on constructing military bases or other jobs made possible by the war. See Reddock (1994).
27. This situation was not exclusive to the United States, a similar vacancy was felt in Britain. Married women who already worked in factories and who had no family ties were called upon to go into industry. During the First World War 1,300,000 women found new jobs; about half a million of these were domestic servants. See *The Victory Book* (1945, 122).
28. The JDP was an upper middle-stratum political party, striving to occupy an ideological middle ground between socialism and capitalism, which characterised the PNP and JLP respectively. The party supported universal suffrage, a bicameral legislature and an Executive Committee as proposed by the Legislative Council majority Palmer (2014).
29. Named after noted politician J. A. G. Smith, who died in 1942, the party was independent of the JLP and PNP, while aligning ideologically to

- similar tenets of the PNP, including nationalism and self government. Douglas W. McCartney served as secretary and was Amy Garvey's chief partner in the development of the party. See Martin (2007).
30. The Charter for Women was part of its manifesto on the eve of the December elections. The charter was a scathing critique of the failure of the PNP, the Bustamante Trade Union and JLP to secure the rights of Jamaican women. The salient points of this included equal pay for equal work, removal of discriminatory laws, a widowhood grant and child maintenance benefit, safeguarding women's special interests, representation of women on national boards, permanent women's commission to press and equality of opportunity for both sexes. *The Gleaner*, 28 November 1944, 5.
  31. Annual Report on Jamaica 1946, 11.
  32. IB/5 Annual Report on the Work of the Labour Department 1944, 4.
  33. Census of Jamaica, 1943.
  34. CSO: IB/5/76#411 Rules for admission of women to the Civil Service of Jamaica.
  35. Some of these exceptions included: work necessary to preserve raw materials, nursing and caring for the sick, work carried on in a cinema or carried on by a pharmacist. See Women (employment of) Act 2 March 1942, *Laws of Jamaica*, xxvii.
  36. This conference was not exclusively devoted to issues related to women and war efforts. It aimed to inform women of their role in the public life of the island and prepare them for the new responsibilities that would come with universal adult suffrage. It was during this period that the first female JP was appointed, in the form of May Jeffrey-Smith.
  37. The changes in 1944 replaced the Crown Colony form of government by a representative system, which gradually conceded a large measure of responsibility for internal affairs to the elected representatives of the people. CO 137/834 #7: Memorandum on Constitutional Change.
  38. Later in the twentieth century women were in representational politics in increasing numbers. In 1948 Rose Leon became the first chairperson of the JLP, while in 1967 Miss Enid Bennett was one of the first women of Indian descent to be elected to the House of Representatives for Central St. Catherine. See Henry-Wilson (1989, 241).
  39. Jamaica Hansard House of Representatives 1 (1945), 311.
  40. This strategy was not successful however, as the PNP lost the general election to the Jamaica Labour Party, the latter receiving 22 seats with the PNP securing five. *Handbook of Jamaica* 1946, 31.

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## ‘We Were Soldiers’: Jamaican Women Enlist in World War II

In September 1943, the *SS Rimutaka* sailed from Jamaica to England with unusual passengers: twenty-four young Jamaican female soldiers in the British Army. These women constituted the first contingent of recruits to the Auxiliary Territorial Service from the West Indies, through they would not be the last. Over the course of World War II more than 600 women served in the arms of the British Army in Britain, Canada, the United States and in their respective island homes. Trained as soldiers, these women, though few in comparison to their male colonial counterparts, paradoxically epitomised the bonds of Empire while challenging gendered colonial paradigms of military service. Their motivations, experiences in service, triumphs, disappointments remains largely uncelebrated by native country and former colonial power alike, but their very existence serves to debunk the perception that the colonies offered only male bodies to the fight the Empire’s wars.

The road to recruitment, paved with racial tensions, sexism and imperial anxieties, will be addressed in this chapter, as well as an exploration of narratives of service from women themselves, through interviews and published memoirs. From accounts given by Beverley Marsh, Ena Collymore-Woodstock OD, Kitty Cox, Olga Shervington, Norma Wint, Doreen Rickards, Lillian Bader, Esther Armagon and Constant Mark, one can glean that combination of a deep sense of loyalty to King and country, the need for adventure, a search for opportunities to change the course of their otherwise predictable lives and a deliberate challenge to

the masculinised military enterprise motivated these women to abandon comfort zones for war zones.

These women's willingness test the limits of acceptable female engagement with the war should perhaps not come as a surprise in a country with a long history of women's involvement in wars of resistance. Contrary to the colonial ideals of peaceful and passive femininity, West Indian women refused to adhere to non-violent living, particularly where peace was synonymous with repressive systems of administration. Indigenous Kalinago women of the Eastern Caribbean were known to have skills with a bow and arrow and were involved in the preparation for battles. Similarly, women of African descent played active roles in protest movements during and after slavery. While some are well known, particularly Nanny of the Maroons, the quintessential rebel woman, and Cubah in Jamaica and Nanny Grigg of Barbados, countless women engaged in slave revolts and liberation wars in the Caribbean (Beckles 1989, 1999; Bush 1990; Mathurin Mair 2006; Shepherd 2007; Wilmot 2009).

As discussed in this work's introduction, the life of Mary Seacole gives the best example of the long tradition of para-military aspirations of Jamaican women. Imbued with a deep sense of loyalty to the British Empire and an even greater motivation to tend her military 'sons', Seacole created a space for unofficial but effective military nursing on the battlefields of Sebastopol and Tchernya in the Crimean war in the 1850s. Seacole's agency and bravery undoubtedly resonated in the minds of those who would offer service in World War II. Indeed, Constance Marks, who served the ATS for 10 years, was inspired by Seacole and was key in establishing the Friends of Mary Seacole Organisation in England (Kyriacou 1992). Seacole, Marks and other Jamaican women who later opted for military service in World War II, feminised a typically male enterprise, mounted a collective opposition to patriarchal militarism and challenged the conventional dichotomies associated with respectable womanhood and war.

### PRELUDE TO JAMAICAN WOMEN'S MILITARY SERVICE

It has been established that Jamaican women were expected to be involved in the war efforts of the British Empire. However, while the British government was appreciative of their work from home to provide supplies for export, it was not as willing to employ these women as

members of the army. While women were eventually allowed to join the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) and other auxiliaries of the army, this was after a long battle, of which these women were unaware, between the War Office and Colonial Office.

As has been established in Chap. 4, the War Office, guided by racist principles, was not eager to recruit black West Indians, regardless of gender. However, in the case of West Indian women, blatant sexism which buttressed virulent racism punctuated the debates as to whether West Indian women would be allowed to participate in defending the Empire. The issue elicited heated secret debates from Britain's top political and military figures, and it would be four years into the war before these women were able to serve in the army. The battle was waged on racial grounds, as the War Office insisted on upholding the colour bar, while the Colonial Office reminded their War Office colleagues that this position could ignite the West Indian people to insurgency just a few short years after the widespread workers' protest movement of 1938. The Colonial Office insisted that given the sensitive political climate of the West Indies, British acknowledgement of the patriotic stance of men and women in the colonies was necessary or this loyalty would quickly turn into dissent. As Lord Moyne warned,

the people of the West Indies are eager to take an effective part in the war effort, but so far it has not been possible to give them much opportunity, and there is a danger of the spread of a sense of frustration and un-wantedness. Anything that we can do to give West Indians a part in the war effort is of the utmost political value locally, quite apart from the direct value of their services in industry and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The quarrel between the War and Colonial Offices were nothing short of *déjà vu*, as the Colonial Office faced the same dilemma with allowing West Indian men to participate in World War I (Howe 2002; Smith 2004; Goldthree 2011). Once, again, the Colonial Office was not calling for the dismantling of the colour bar, neither should it be idealised as a lobbyist for the human rights of the African diaspora. The Colonial Office was merely interested in political expediency, trying desperately to perform its dual roles of controlling the Empire and ensuring that while fighting a war against a remarkably racist foe, Britain should not herself be accused of racist practices.

The Colonial Office would face difficulty in carrying out these mandates however, since racism and sexism were as much part of the War Office's guiding principles as was the defence of the realm. On the eve of war, the Army Order 89 of 1938 by the Army Council restricted entry into British armed forces to 'men of pure European descent' and the navy and air force soon followed suit (Sherwood 1985, 1). Influenced by the challenges associated with overwhelming expressions of unrequited colonial affection and military aspirations of West Indian men during World War I, the British Army sought to codify its exclusion of black and brown bodies from any future global conflict situation. However by 1939 with the outbreak of total war, a rekindled interest from West Indian men to serve, recent unrest in the colonies related to unemployment and other socio-economic vicissitudes of a failing colonial enterprise, and the prying eyes of British enemies and allies alike, the Colonial Office was forced to suggest lifting the colour bar; if only to improve the optics of Empire at a precarious time. Indeed, the War and Colonial Offices first came under pressure from thousands of blacks residing in Britain who were barred from service from the Officers Training Corps, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy because of their skin colour. Governors from the West Indies also mounted pressure on His Majesty's Government as they were bombarded by letters from men, eager to save Britain from a new and merciless German menace.

On 19 October 1939, Winston Churchill ordered the lifting of the colour bar for the duration of the war. The release from the Colonial Office read: 'British subjects from the colonies and British protected persons in this country, including those who are not of European descent, are now eligible for emergency commissions in His Majesty's Forces.' Lobbyists like Dr. Harold Moody, founder of the League of Coloured Peoples, expressed dissatisfaction with the wording of announcement. Moody took umbrage to the temporary lifting of the colour bar and said: 'we are thankful for this, but we do not want it only for the duration of the war. We want it for all time. If the principle is accepted now, surely it must be acceptable all the time' (Macdonald 1973). More than even the tone of the message, history has proven the statement to be a mere public relations stunt as the Foreign Office sent secret advisories to Consular Offices that read 'only offers of service from white British subjects should be considered' (Sherwood 1985, 5). The lifting of the colour bar was fiction. Black recruits were to be discouraged from applying for enlistment and/or rejected based on whatever reason could be plausibly

fabricated on a case-by-case basis. Failed medical examinations were routinely used as excuses as well as concerns over the shortage of transportation and poor skill-set of applicants. However, by 1940 numerous cases emerged of well-educated and capable black British, African and West Indian men being rejected from all branches of the army; many of whom publicly highlighted the fact that the army was contravening the lifting of the colour bar one year earlier. By 1940 also, the acute shortage of skilled men of pure European stock was being felt in Britain and forced the War Office to begrudgingly accept non-white recruits and labourers. As a result, between 1940 and 1945, 6000 West Indian men served with the RAF, with the majority (over 5000) serving as ground staff and 300 as aircrew and pilots. Thousands also served in munitions factories, in the merchant navy, as lumberjacks and skilled engineers. The move also paved the way for millions of African American and African servicemen to be stationed in Britain (Bourne 2012).

While the thorny issue of the colour bar was being debated, the unnamed sex bar for women of pure European stock also featured as a throbbing headache for the War Office. Allowing black women to be equal partners in the danger and glory of hetero-masculine military complex should not have been expected to be easy within the context of white British women's own struggles to serve in the army. The formal enlistment of British women in the army was a slow and painstaking process. Like most militaries of the day, The British Army resisted classifying women as soldiers in World War I. Guided by long-established connections between masculinity and the military, the War Office considered the presence of female combatants as a devaluation of the status of the institution. Initially, therefore, para-military female organisations were formed outside the ambit of the British Army and by collective efforts of women who yearned to serve. Long before 1914 however, British women had attached themselves to armies as camp followers. From the 1700s, these women served as cooks, nurses, and sexual partners; offering a range of essential services in a civilian capacity. In the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale epitomised military nursing, bridging the gap between female roles of caring and compassion within the masculine space of open warfare. However, it was the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) formed in 1907, which officially attempted to formalise military nursing efforts. FANY provided a critical site through which upper-class women were able to prove their patriotism and selflessness (Noakes 2006, 32). At the outbreak of World War I, their offer of

service was flatly rejected by the War Office and led them to concentrate their efforts on French and German armies. British Military authorities were more interested in utilising women on the home front, as facilitators for men's recruitment than as members of the military. This did not stymie the growth of numerous scattered voluntary organisations for women, including the Home Service Corps, Women's Auxiliary Force and the Women's Volunteer Reserve. Eventually, the need to formalise the numerous female para-military units resulted in the formation of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps in 1917. By the end of the war close to 40,000 women were involved in military service, although they remained designated as civilians/camp followers, with roles that typified peacetime female gender roles, such as cooking and clerical work.

The interwar years were characterised by disagreements between the War Office and female leaders about this demeaning designation of military women's status. But with war looming in the late 1930s came the formation of the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1938 attached to the army, the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS/WRENS) linked to the Navy and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) with obvious connections to the Royal Air Force. The WRNS and WAAF were formed in 1939 and concentrated on volunteers from the upper and middle echelons of British society, making them class-conscious units. Staffed by women with close family ties to men in the Territorial Army, the ATS became one of the few British women's organisations that accepted working-class women, though Princess, now Queen Elizabeth joined the ATS at her own insistence in 1944 and facilitated a subtle shift in the image of the Service. None the less, the ATS generally faced ridicule as a hotbed of promiscuity and idle pursuits. Considered the 'groundsheets of the army' (Noakes 2006, 2) the hostility towards women of the ATS was a microcosm of the distrust and unease that wider British society often exhibited to women in the military.

The lobbying by the women's services eventually bore fruit, and in 1941 they were incorporated into the Army Acts, conferring military status on all female auxiliary units. In the same year, the National Service (No. 2) Act was also passed, effectively conscripting young unmarried women for service in the face of the dire need to release all able-bodied men for active combat roles. In the midst of World War II therefore, the War Office was well engaged in the process of shifting the boundaries of military service from a white male enterprise to temporarily include white women and black and brown men from across the Empire. By 1939,

black men's and white women's integration into military service, though still problematic, was at least not novel. However black women remained the last frontier of exclusion on the eve of World War II, and having suffered a series of defeats in its position, the War Office was not eager to cave on this final issue. Even though British wartime propaganda would eventually include posters, print ads and action packed films highlighting unity in the Empire and the part being played British subjects across the world, the inherent racist underpinnings of Britain's association with her colonies in the Caribbean did not wane.

The War Office placed several obstacles in the way of the recruitment of West Indian women to the British Army, and the arguments which they employed to hold on to the last bastion of segregation constituted political subterfuge. Black West Indian women were eager to sign up to assist the British Empire to defeat a foe which considered them sub-human by virtue of their race without considering that their beloved mother country viewed their skin colour with similar (and perhaps only slightly diluted) disdain. Where women were to be recruited in the British ATS in Washington, the United States colour bar was used as an excuse to justify their own racist ideologies, claiming that it would offend the Americans to have black or coloured women serving there. A branch of the ATS was set up in 1941 and with American entry in the war in that same year, pressure mounted to increase the number of women from the token 30 that were originally stationed there. British women could not be spared and it fell to ATS director, Jean Knox to find suitable recruits. She looked to the West Indies as a viable option given the proximity of the region to the United States, under instruction to seek white women only. The American colour bar was used as a smoke-screen to divert attention from Britain's own racism. Cognisant that the West Indian response to such overt prejudice would spark outrage, several Governors expressed their anxiety over the policy. Sir Henry Bushe, governor of Barbados pleaded with the Secretary of State:

(the) possibility of recruiting women from Barbados for women's Auxiliary Territorial Service with British mission in the USA has been discussed here with the controller of the W.A.T.S visiting from Washington, who informed me her instructions were that only girls of purely European descent should be recruited... I fear recruitment on this basis will cause resentment and I think it would be helpful to us all if the War Office could find it possible to reconsider the policy.<sup>2</sup>

In response, the Colonial Office fed the War Office with pragmatic reasons to reverse this position through Norman Mayle, respected retired RAF serviceman. Brigadier Pigott of the War Office dismissed Mayle's insistence that the policy would spark racial antagonism in the colonies thus: 'special reasons render it inadvisable for coloured ATS to be employed in Washington itself. It might well cause embarrassment to the authorities and the commander advises very strongly against such course of action.'<sup>3</sup> However, communications relating to ATS recruitment in Britain around the same time, indicate the general tone of the War Office and proves that the American colour bar was hardly the issue. Brigadier Pigott's letter to the Colonial Office explained the position:

we are quite prepared to accept any suitable European women from the colonies for enrolment into the ATS and would hope that you would arrange with the treasury for their fares to be paid as is done for those who come from foreign countries... I must emphasise that this applies to European women only and that we cannot agree to accept coloured women for service in this country.<sup>4</sup>

Needless to say, 'this country' was in reference to England and not to the United States, and the level of care and attention being paid to the welfare of white women was in stark contrast to the disdain being privately meted out to black West Indians. Despite the obvious deceit involved in the ATS/Washington arrangement, The War Office was successful in upholding this colour bar, and as a result, all 200 women from the West Indies who were stationed in Washington were white. The Jamaican recruits were quietly sent off without the usual fanfare associated with Jamaican military service. Undoubtedly the prickly issue of the recruitment of an all-white regiment was not lost on even the pro-British print media. On 27 October 1943 *The Gleaner* included a total of seven lines on the 40 Jamaican recruits, noting their safe arrival in Florida, and travel to Canada for training before settling in the posting in Washington.

The decision relating to Washington was a victory for the War Office, but there was little time to celebrate as they now had to tackle the issue of what to do with black recruits, since white West Indians were accepted for service in America. A steady stream of letters from black West Indians were being sent to ATS officials expressing interest to join the ranks in Britain. The War Office discouraged any idea of black women being

transported to British soil and suggested that local service would be a better fit (Bousquet and Douglas 1991, 86). When this outlived its usefulness, the War Office hung on to the issue of Britain's cold climate for dear life, as well as the apparent inability of the Caribbean nationals to adapt to British customs. Coupled with the weather was the issue of the frailty of the women and susceptibility to illness. Lieutenant Colonel Williams, deputy Adjutant General was only too quick to mention the problems the first 23 recruits of 1943 faced at the Guilford training facility:

The women are reported to be very keen, beginning to be a bit home-sick but have very little stamina. 75% of them have reported sick at different times, some with very small ailments but a few have been in bed almost ever since they arrived in this country and some have got chronic coughs... it is doubtful whether these women can stand the climate here.<sup>5</sup>

The issue of shipping shortages was used to hinder recruitment as well, even after the scheme for recruiting women was eventually approved. James Grigg, as a last line of exasperated defence of the War Office position, exclaimed:

I don't at all like your West Indian ATS ideas... I think it is quite possible that the 30 will go back to their own place very sour just as most of the Indians at Oxford and Cambridge used to do and probably still do. Anyhow, shipping shortages will make the process of bringing them over a bit uncertain and you will have to allow for that from the start.<sup>6</sup>

The insistence of the War Office to keep black women away from the military and particularly the ATS is quite intriguing given the fact that the Service was the most unpopular among British women and was in greatest need for recruits. As Noakes (2006, 114) explains, the War Office target of 5000 recruits per week was often a far cry from the 1600 British women who actually joined the ranks weekly. The perception of the ATS being a company of prostitutes and the largely domestic and clerical work undertaken by the recruits were not overly attractive to British women. However, not even this reality was able to sway the War Office's views on black female recruits and the Colonial Office was only able to convince the War Office to slightly lift the colour bar after the recruitment of white West Indian women and incident of great embarrassment to do with a Bermudan woman, Miss Curtis.

Miss Curtis applied to the ATS and was given clearance to join provided that she passed a medical. However when the War Office ascertained that she was black, they attempted to overturn their own ruling to keep Curtis from joining the ATS. In a letter to the Colonial Office, Lieutenant-Colonel Williams explained the War Office's position: 'It was not apparent from Curtis' application that she was coloured otherwise her application would not have been accepted... We do not wish to accept Curtis and I suggest that the Governor should be informed that there is at present no suitable vacancy in the ATS in this country into which she could be accepted.' Despite Mayle pointing out that this blatant fabrication was unacceptable, Williams held firm to the view that the War Office 'cannot agree to accept coloured women for service in this country.'<sup>7</sup>

It was further suggested that the governor of Bermuda be told that the time between her application (December 1941) and their reply (1943) was too long and her case was dismissed as a result and that Bermuda was not in the West Indies and, as such no application from them was valid. The Colonial Office however surmised that any excuse would have been construed by the colonies as a direct attempt to keep Curtis out because of her colour (which indeed it was). Regarding Curtis, Oliver Stanley wrote:

Rightly or wrongly, this is bound to be represented as colour discrimination and to cause much local resentment... To scrap the whole scheme would be one way out, but from my point of view it would be a very bad way out. The other way would be to find employment for some of the coloured ATS in this country the numbers could be very small, all that matters is gesture.<sup>8</sup>

The Colonial Office was eager to use the introduction of the scheme for the recruitment of ATS in the West Indies as a way out of the 'troublesome case' of Miss Curtis. They implored the War Office that having a 'small practical' scheme in which Curtis could be included, would cover their racism and improve the optics of the case, which was so badly bundled. Eventually the War Office agreed to host a small number of women as a token act to cover the issue of the gaffe regarding Ms. Curtis. They effectively lost the battle regarding black women's exclusion from the British Army, and as a result, Curtis and 30 other West Indian women were allowed to join the ATS in the first instance in 1943.

The extent of the victory was largely unknown by the recruits as they were unable to mount a challenge for themselves, being largely unaware of how close the War Office came to dashing their hopes for assist their mother country in her time of greatest need. Also, while the Jamaican and West Indian women recruited in the army were quantitatively insignificant, the symbolic effect of their presence far exceeded their numbers. For the first time in Jamaican history, women were being formally trained for military service. This facilitated a shift the gendered profile of the military, and was impossible to undo in post-war years. While women were almost completely barred from front-line service, the pride at being engaged in a global phenomenon, and elevated sense of self-worth changed their own views on women's capacities and colonial gender norms. Finally, the educational and professional opportunities that came with service in the army, rewards previously set aside for men, opened new doors for the women who served and positively impacted Jamaica's social development.

### NARRATIVES OF SERVICE

In 1925, in a piece on women's potential for leadership, Amy Jacques Garvey said '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 battlefields' (Vassell 1993, 11). Her prophetic words rang true for the women who chose to join various arms of the British Army from Jamaica. While some recruits were unprepared to face cannons, their narratives of service speak to the rejection of tropes of frailty and passivity, though their social status was shaping them for doll-like realities.

In the main, Jamaican recruits for the ATS were well-educated middle-class women rather than the working class typically associated with British ATS women. Constance 'Connie' Mark for instance attended the prestigious Wolmer's High School for Girls and did training at a Commercial College in shorthand, typing and bookkeeping. She then ascertained from one of her teachers that expert shorthand typists were required at Up Park Camp, Jamaica's military headquarters. After taking the test and placing first in the cohort, she was accepted into secretarial work there. She served in the ATS for ten years as a medical secretary at the British Military Hospital. Beverly Marsh, who joined the Canadian

Women's Army Corps (CWACs), a non-combatant branch of the Canadian Army for women, established during the Second World War to release men from non-combatant roles, was also from a middle-class background. A resident of Morant Bay in St. Thomas, she also attended to Wolmer's High School for Girls. Marsh attested to her family's upper middle-class status, noting that her father could afford a large enough portion of land for the family of nine to live on. She said:

My father had thought, since he was having all these children, we should have some where to run around and he actually bought a house with 7 acres of land, and we had a cow. My mother was really the business woman on the property, he would go to work he had his business outside, and she ran the business.<sup>9</sup>

Ena Collymore-Woodstock, originally from Spanish Town, resided at the YWCA for a year before she joined the ATS in 1943. She attended St. Hugh's High School on an individual scholarship. Olga Shervington attended Alpha Academy, and did secretarial work before joining the ATS. Kitty Cox attended Happy Grove High and then St. Andrew High for Girls and, after leaving school, she attended commercial school. Similarly, Norma Wint, who would eventually marry renowned Jamaican sports man and RAF pilot Arthur Wint,<sup>10</sup> attended St. Andrew High for Girls and then Excelsior Commercial School. Doreen Rickards, a Bahamian who joined the ATS in Jamaica and subsequently made Jamaica her home, also did secretarial courses and also had a top-notch high school education. These women were well educated to the secondary level and had further qualifications of a commercial nature, and were being groomed for a life of professional service, housewifery and motherhood.

The social stratum of the women is also evidenced by their general disregard for the wages they would receive as soldiers. This is not to suggest that Caribbean ATS recruits women were not in need of salaries they received. However, for most of those who were interviewed, the issue of being paid wages to assist themselves or to remit to their families was not a major concern. When Marsh was asked if monetary concerns played any role in her decision to join the army, she laughed and said, 'No, I hadn't even thought about that.' Similarly, Shervington noted that she had a good job before leaving for England, so she had no real monetary concerns. Rickards echoed this view, although she did

remember that the ATS were better paid than local male soldiers noting, 'We got an allowance, they didn't really call it a salary it wasn't much but we got more than the local soldiers.' This was as a result of the decision that all ATS recruits should be paid on the same scale as British ATS members.<sup>11</sup>

Evident from the soldiers was that being British was deeply entrenched in their psyche and influenced their choice to take an active role in the war. As discussed in Chap. 2, loyalty to the British Empire pervaded the psyche of much of the Jamaican population. The period 1930–1962 in Jamaica signalled the emergence and development of 'Jamaicanism' and a shift from colonial leanings to inward yearnings (Palmer 2016). Nonetheless, the young middle-class women who participated as soldiers during the closing years of World War II exhibited the traditional acceptance of their British status. As women living in colonial Jamaica, their 'dual' ideology as Jamaican people and British subjects influenced their understanding of self and belonging. Perceptions of self were of being British first and Jamaican second.

These feelings were so well-established, that they saw defending their country as much as a defence of Jamaica as for Britain, and influenced those that joined the arm locally, or travelled to Canada or the United States to give service there. Rickards explained that when interviewed by the commanders as to why they wanted to join the army, the standard answer was: 'To help my King and country'. Collymore-Woodstock echoed this view noting, 'We felt that we were British. I think you would describe me as a person who was loyal, I was defiantly British, I felt that way.' Constance Marks expressed similar feelings about England 'England was our mother country. We were brought up to respect the Royal Family. I used to collect pictures of Princess Margaret and Princess Elizabeth. I adored them.'<sup>12</sup> Wint added to this sentiment, noting that she felt very strongly about the war, and wanted to be a part of it based on patriotism to Empire. While her family was not particularly pleased that she opted to travel to England during the war, she harboured no idea of fear of the dangerous situation she was entering and was 'hell bent on going to take part'.

Affinity to Britain therefore translated to a longing to assist King and country during World War II. In some cases, recruits exhibited an elevated sense of their importance; harbouring lofty thoughts of saving Britain through their service. As Marsh explained, many women joined the army 'To go and save the world, to save England.' Though

she laughed when saying this, hinting that in retrospect this idea was far-fetched, she was not the only one who felt this way. Connie Mark explained, 'I was very proud that I was in the army... it was punched into your brains that Britain is the mother country; your mother country had a problem so you were very proud that you could come to England and help your mother out of her problem.'<sup>13</sup> Camille Duboulay-Devaux, a St. Lucian also reminisced, 'I eventually ended up working in the War Office and I always say they never would have won the war if they hadn't had me there making all that tea to keep all those old colonels going.'<sup>14</sup> Connie Mark also commented that the recruiters 'would go into all the little corners of Jamaica and they would beg, literally beg you to come to fight for England... so we all felt obliged to come and everybody was very happy to come' (Kyriacou 1992, 1).

While it is impossible to ascertain the personal interactions between recruiters and eligible women, the fact that British authorities were loath to include black women in the army does offer some contradiction to Marks' recollection of 'begging'. While a more extensive call for recruits featured in Jamaican print media by 1944, the carefully worded release was far from the stirring 1914 'Appeal from the King'. The announcement indicated that Junior Commander Barbara Oakley would be seeing a 'limited number of recruits' for service overseas and in Jamaica and that 'only girls with good clerical experience or those with an educational standard school certificate would be considered.' Elementary educated young women were told not to apply; serving early notice that working-class women would not be considered for the ATS. A schedule of her proposed visits to key cities in the island was printed and it was made clear that the process would include an interview, rather than the mass recruitment drives Jamaicans had been accustomed to during World War I. All aspects of the release pointed to the creation of a middle-class task force to appease the colonies and give a restricted opportunity for service.

It was natural for these women to exhibit some measure of loyalty to Britain, as they were British subjects. However Bousquet and Douglas (1991) have found these sentiments paradoxical. They note that these women had not even travelled from one territory to another in the Caribbean region, but at the first sign of war they were willing to travel over 5000 miles, sometimes under arduous conditions, to defend a country they had only been taught about. However, the penchant of the

middle class to cling to things British, and the resulting willingness of these women to defend 'King and country', was only one of the reasons for joining the British Army. In fact, it may be argued that it was not the overriding factor for many. In some cases, the women were influenced by male family members or loved ones who were serving in the RAF, Merchant Navy and other branches of the military. When the call was open for women, they capitalised on the opportunity to be part of the action with little thought that the military was typically a masculine preserve. This, coupled with the need for adventure and the need to change the humdrum nature of colonial life, were strong motivating factors. With little expectation to see dangerous front-line action, most of the women expressed some level of excitement to travel for the first time, and face the great unknown. Olga Crawford-Shervington, expressed both sentiments saying 'it was fun and seemed to be an exciting opportunity to go to war. My brother had gone to England and it seemed natural that I should follow him there' (*The Gleaner*, 22 August 1993, 4). Prevailing ideologies of British loyalty were therefore entwined with conscious actions relating to familial ties and a youthful craving for adventure.

In addition, it was evident that recruits not only wanted to 'save' Britain, but had a real concern for the safety of Jamaica during the war. Doing their part to secure Jamaican liberty and freedom was also an influencing factor in their decision to enlist. The recruits were aware of the island's geopolitical positioning in a global war. Connie Mark aptly explained this:

we were very involved in the war effort... don't forget we were an island and if a boat was torpedoed when you were expecting oil, then the island would be short of oil... We were vulnerable because the Americans had a base in Jamaica at Sandy Gully and we were close to Cuba, which meant that we were a strategic target.<sup>15</sup>

The conflict was considered to be far beyond a European civil war—it was a threat to life and safety in Jamaica as well. When asked about the sentiments of her community to World War II, Beverly Marsh responded similarly, 'where I lived in Morant Bay you could look out to the sea, and you would see the ships passing and sometimes you would see what looked like a battleship. It was something that I think we had a lot of

concern about.’ Cox also recounted the ways in which the war affected her community and family in Morant Bay:

Well it was frightening, because there was rationing of every kind, we had blackouts, you had to do your homework by kerosene lamp, and it had to be the area where there was no light shining through, there was gasoline rationing, and my brothers worked with the government on travelling jobs they had to ration their gas. As a matter of fact when you were coming down a steep hill, instead of coming down in gear we had to coast down to conserve on gas.

Wint also explained that her family was affected by the shortages that were being faced during World War II. In her words: ‘Before I left Jamaica, my father had a small car and he had to use it very carefully because there was not enough petrol. I remember I got a bicycle; I was working at the Treasury at the time, and I rode to work.’

These women expressed a willingness to get involved in the country’s effort because the war hit even closer to home if their friends or relatives were casualties in either World Wars I or II. Beverly Marsh reminisced that some past students of Wolmer’s lost their lives in a shipwreck. In her words, ‘...beneath it all we wanted to do something about the war, we didn’t just want to sit here.’ Mark had a similar experience and reminisced, ‘After I left my girl’s school, I went to a mixed school to do my commercial course and sat next to a young man who later went to England to join the RAF. I saw his name on the list of the war dead which was posted in Kingston.’ She recounted the story of a friend who went to England to take piano finals at the Royal College of Music and died when she was returning to Jamaica and her ship was torpedoed. Her job as a medical secretary included her typing the medical reports for men injured in battle. Images and reports of the toll the war was taking on the human body were part of her daily reality. As she said ‘having to type the medical reports really brought home the reality of war... you saw men leaving hale and hearty and you see them coming back on stretchers, you see them coming back in wheelchairs, some blind’ (Kyriacou 1992, 2).

It is estimated that at least one-third of West Indian volunteers in World War II were killed in action (Johnson 2014, 230) and Marks’s account of Jamaicans searching lists for wounded relatives also signifies just how much Jamaicans stark the realities of war were for the island:

'at Parade there were two lists—a list of men reported missing and a list of men reported dead. And that list would go on and on—sometimes you would go and you would see the name of your cousin; you'd go back a few days later and see your friend's brother reported dead.' These women were not unaccustomed to the death and destruction of warfare, and harboured a sense of guilt at sitting idly by instead of doing their part to see to its successful completion.

Perhaps the most striking sentiment from these interviews was the fact that these women held deeply personal reasons for enlisting in the army. In the forefront of their minds was not only what they could do for the war, but how the war could empower them. As Rampersad (1997, 17–19) notes with regard to Trinidadian and Tobagonian servicewomen, many were attracted to the war effort for various reasons, including, but not limited to patriotism and more importantly, the ability to improve their socio-economic and academic status. Being a part of the army overseas was seen as a way out of the Caribbean for many of the women, not necessarily as a permanent migratory condition, but one which would afford them a higher level of education which few could afford on their own. Sir Roy Augier, noted St. Lucian academician and former member of the RAF, confirmed this sentiment:

You cannot assume the motives of the numerous West Indians who went in the British West India Regiment... did it out of patriotism... one cannot assume that there weren't private motives... One could sum this up as 'let's get out'... the war is an opportunity for getting out of the Caribbean... don't assume that people who went into the war, had motives of loyalty or for fighting Nazis as their primary one, (though) some may have had that.

Indeed, most of the women interviewed exhibited clear reasons for participating in World War II beyond loyalty to Britain. Beverly Marsh recollected:

I decided I wanted to be a social worker. But you never had a university in those days and as the second of seven (children), there were all these others to look after. There was a friend of mine... she saw this article about joining up in the Canadian Army, and that would help you to go on and when you were discharged, you could go on and do studies. I joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps, the CWACs. The thing in the back of my mind was to get studies afterwards.

For Lillian Bader<sup>16</sup> being in the army was an act of personal agency to elevate her social position. Bader was a domestic worker and she saw work in the war as a way to change this. Orphaned at the age of 9, she was raised in a convent and was trained for domestic work. At the outbreak of war she joined the Navy, Army and Air Force Institute (NAAFI) as a deliberate means to reroute her life from domestic service. After seven weeks she was asked to leave because of her race, but joining the NAAFI set her on a new path, one which would eventually take her to the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) where she excelled and was awarded a first-class post. Esther Armagon on the other hand aspired to be a nurse and sought training through the military.<sup>17</sup>

Ena Collymore-Woodstock explained that the opportunity to go to university to study law was a major outcome of her wartime service. She said, 'I wouldn't have been able to (go to university), in those days you know you had to go to England to do law... I wouldn't have been able to afford it.' This was not only a concern for the women. The men who joined the RAF and other outfits in the British army had similar intentions. Marsh remembered the influx of students in a Toronto University after 1945:

When I went to Toronto, it was when the veterans came back, and the whole university was abuzz because of that... There were 600 in a class, and they were not accustomed to that, but it was because of the veterans coming back and going to University, because that was part of the package that they offered them.

It is not clear whether these men joined the army because of the option of having a free university education, or if they opted for it after leaving the army. However, for some, including Sir Roy Augier, who eventually attended St. Andrew's in 1946, the thought surfaced when joining the RAF. He noted:

By 1941 when I actually went into the RAF the war did create an opportunity for university education, which I would not otherwise have... In 1939 we were still under one scholarship which was competitive, London Matriculation... I did not expect that I would be a serious competitor in the close field to qualify to go to university, so in a way I was gambling with whether I would be alive or dead. The English parliament then passed a law that persons who were in the armed forces (if they were qualified to go into university) they should be admitted, and their tuition and expenses

were paid for, so that I went to university on that basis. So as it turned out this wild gamble worked out.

Women were no different. They expressed an eagerness to fight in World War II to be able to pursue studies afterwards. This was also evident in the case of Norma Wint who studied to be a chartered secretary at Balham University and her husband who opted to study medicine after his service. The Barbadian Odessa Gittens who became a Senator shared this sentiment: 'I heard they were recruiting people for the army and besides my love for Britain, I wanted to further my studies and I was not able to, because my father and mother had died. I thought this was a good opportunity to do my duty to Britain and myself.'<sup>18</sup> Kitty Cox also craved an opportunity for further education. While loyalty to Britain influenced her decision, her main reason for enlisting was to get professional training from the British government without paying for it. She explained; 'there was the ad in the paper about the Auxiliary Territorial Service and I had read where people who went overseas were able to further their education. And I had hoped to do nursing, and so I took the opportunity and applied.' Not only did the women join to access university education, but as Doreen Rickards explained, the ATS itself offered many educational courses. In her words 'if you wanted to learn your opportunity was there. We were able to do courses... those girls who could sew were offered machines, or they could attend a course, those who were secretarial minded could further their studies. I did that, I did an English course, I was always interested in English.'

As a collective, these soldiers embodied agency and a drive for self-empowerment through service. While this motivation was common between male and female soldiers, women's narratives also indicate an added intricacy facilitated by their sex. Rewards normally reserved for men in the military were squarely in focus for these young women whose very gender and aims subverted gender binaries and pushed the limits of female aspiration to a breaking point. Certainly, being in the army was one of the ways to prove that they could break out of a societal gender mould, even if they were participating in roles dubbed as feminine. The fact that they donned army uniforms was a major step forward for Jamaican girls on the road to gender equity, and in some cases was part of the impetus to enlist. As Collymore-Woodstock said 'I never felt that women should stay where they were. The first jobs that I applied for asked for a male clerk, they never had female clerk, but I didn't want

to do the things they said women should do.’ She was not the only one who felt this way. Esther Armagon also stated that army life gave her and other women freedom and independence to try out a variety of jobs that previously had been regarded as a man’s domain.<sup>19</sup> Army life and pay gave Connie Marks a level of unprecedented independence, she was able to extend financial assistance to her family much earlier than expected. She said ‘My first salary was 3 6s 8d a week and I was rich! I remember giving my brother in law a pound a week...and I gave my mother another pound and the rest of it could do for everything else’ (Bousquet and Douglas 1991, 113).

Motivations to serve in the army were therefore rich and multi-faceted. Female recruits exhibited seemingly contradictory ideologies in that they were unquestionably loyal to an Empire that institutionally placed limits on their gender and colour while taking steps to break out of these unacceptable colonial restrictions and discriminations. Their subtle activism was also shrewd; they utilised the very tools provided by an oppressive system to change the trajectory of their lived experiences, while joining a cause they considered to be just. Women’s bargaining with colonialism, facilitated by wartime opportunities, would change their lives forever. For these women, devotion to Britain, concern for their home country, proto-feminist activism and attention to their own self-interest were hardly mutually exclusive. All could be accomplished in an army uniform.

### WE WERE SOLDIERS!

Women’s experiences and jobs in the army were as varied as their reasons for participating. Esther Armagon did wireless operating, teleprinting and domestic work, including scrubbing floors. She did not seem to mind this, as she said it ‘made her a better housewife in some way’. Beverly Marsh worked with the directorate of Social Services in the CWACs. This job furthered her goal of becoming a social worker and was an eye-opening and rewarding experience for her. As she explained:

I was working with a male sergeant and guess what I was doing there? I was doing research on files of women in CWACs who had become pregnant... So I remember sitting there talking to this man about pregnancy, and in those days you didn’t talk about pregnancy. But it helped me... to look at the Jamaican situation... and I learned a lot about Social Services.

In Ottawa, she also worked with a group of women who lobbied to improve the reproductive choices and health of women, shaping her own views on reproductive health and women's rights long before this became part of the current human rights discourse. Mark worked as a medical secretary to the Assistant Director of the medical services at Up Park Camp in Jamaica. She was proud to be in the army and her main job was to collect and organise the documents of the wounded soldiers and other patients there. She was promoted after six months to Lance Corporal and then to Corporal one year after she first entered.

The women were beneficiaries of the active social lives the army afforded. Apart from the jobs she did, Rickards spoke at length about the exciting social life she led. She recollected:

We had social evenings, they had picnics for us, they taught us how to play hockey... we used to go out to Port Royal and play hockey out there, and out on yachts on Sundays... they would get transport for us... and they took us to other parts of the country. I knew more about Jamaica than the people with whom I lived. You got vacation, every three months you got 48 hours, (after) six months, you got two weeks and you were allowed to go home, once a year.

This sentiment was shared by Olga Shervington who spoke of their enjoyable exploits in the first days of their army lives. She said: 'We went up on a boat, it took quite a while... and we had a good time on the boat and everybody enjoyed themselves... because there were several guys there and we could dance and so on. We had a good time and went to England and we weren't afraid... we were given a good reception.'

However, these light moments did not overshadow the regimented and difficult life in the army. For those who were in England, bomb scares were always imminent. As Nellie Reid recalled, her first night was filled with the sounds of bombs while they were recording greetings at the BBC. As she said, 'while we reported through the BBC that we were fine, we were not fine at all. The bombs were going off over our heads and we were very nervous.' In addition, the training at Guilford in England, and Newcastle in Jamaica was difficult military training. This coupled with homesickness, the extreme cold of England and rainy weather of Newcastle, and the strict discipline was recounted by many of the women. As Figs. 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 vividly illustrate, women were active in drills and other activities that typified army life. Doreen

Rickards noted that apart from using guns, women engaged in similarly gruelling training as the men at Newcastle in Jamaica. There was no doubt in her mind that the women were indeed soldiers:

We went up to Newcastle for training, just like the men. We lived in barracks, we were taught how to make beds the army way, how to clean shoes the army way, how to clean your brass. We had to walk from where we were billeted to the square, and they taught us how to drill... At Newcastle you had to be quick with the eating or you got nothing, if they said breakfast is at 7, you had to be there at 7. The hours were hard, you had to get up early, and you had to be on parade, you had to be spick and span; your cap had to be at an angle you were not allowed to walk without your cap on the street. If you were not up to the training they put you out. It was intensive training. It wasn't easy it was rainy and cold. We did the same training as the men. We were soldiers!



**Fig. 7.1** The auxiliary territorial service in Jamaica 1944: Jamaica's first ATS unit at drill. *Source* Imperial War Museum



**Fig. 7.2** The auxiliary territorial service in Jamaica 1944: Women of Jamaica's first ATS unit arriving at their headquarters in an army lorry. *Source* Imperial War Museum

Norma Wint also recounted that life on English army camps was often rewarding, but gruelling and deleterious to their general health. As she said:

We went to Bicester in Oxfordshire. It is now a famous camp, but in those days the camp was just being built so we were really pioneers, and we have to live under primitive service conditions. For instance, sometimes there was no running water in the camp and some times, we had to take the snow and wipe off the plate, it was primitive conditions that we were living under. Some of the girls got quite ill with meningitis. The whole camp was under very bad conditions. But we did quite good work in all our different spheres.



**Fig. 7.3** The auxiliary territorial service in Jamaica 1944: Sergeant Moore of the ATS holds an inspection of Jamaica's first ATS unit which she trained since her arrival from England. *Source* Imperial War Museum

However, this was not the case for all the recruits. For instance, Ena Collymore-Woodstock's army life was so comfortable that she was dissatisfied with her civilian-like existence during the global conflict. She recounted her dissatisfaction with the civilian-like conditions:

They kept us very sheltered, and we worked in the ordnance company. Ordnance, meaning that we were indoors doing clerical work, and we were well fed, and I didn't think this was the kind of thing we came for, I thought we were going to war. After a time I wrote a letter to the War Office, saying I didn't come here to do what I was doing at home. To my surprise I was getting four meals a day and, being a Girl Guide, knowing what it was to go to camp and rough it, this looked too easy.

The War Office responded favourably, and after taking an aptitude test, she was employed to do anti-aircraft radar operations. She became one of the few women of that first batch of ATS to do non-clerical work. She much preferred her new job in Belgium, because she felt that she was contributing more to the war effort.

I became a radar operator...we were in an enclosed vehicle... and there were four of us. We focused on planes, then we had an operator who enquired if the plane was enemy or friend all this was in code. If you were a friend we gave the code, and another person would give the order to shoot or not to shoot. This was the first time they were attacking planes that couldn't be seen.

Lilian Bader was similarly dissatisfied with not playing a major role in the war after expulsion from the NAAFI and decided to apply to the WAAFS. She was accepted, much to her delight. She explained:

Now my real service began, as Melksham was a huge sprawling camp, huts everywhere... my training was to lead to my being an Instrument Repairer II after a ten or twelve weeks' course. The course was intensive: lectures everyday in a classroom situation. We also did practical work, filing brass blocks to certain precise measurements using a micrometer... I was very interested in learning about the principles of the barometric working of aircraft instruments. (Bader 1989)

After training was complete she worked with airmen in Shawbury, Shropshire ensuring that their equipment was fit for combat. By 1941, she was climbing the ranks and took a test to become a Leading Aircraftwoman and eventually attained the rank of Acting Corporal before being discharged after becoming pregnant. Her husband, Ramsay Bader also served in the army.

Beverly Marsh also recounted a similar situation in Canada. Even though she did not want to be in combat, she too was dissatisfied with the first job she had in the CWACs. She said:

I was based in Ottawa and I complained that in the 6 weeks I typed one letter and I listened to an American girl and a Canadian, having one over some Colonel that they were both in love with. So I wrote and complained, in any case I felt that I was not contributing to any war effort

or anything, they just had me sitting down there. A Captain, a Major and Lieutenant, came to see me, to see this creature who was quarrelling about not doing any work, and it turned out that they were in the directorate of the Social Services of the Canadian army, so because of that I went to the directorate of Social Services.

However Beverly Marsh's and Ena Collymore-Woodstock's wish to have more active roles in the army was not shared by all the women. Shervington did secretarial work before she joined the army and she was pleased to continue that occupation in the ATS. When asked if she was not interested in taking a job closer to the 'action', she swiftly replied, 'No no no! I wouldn't want to be there and get shot down. I was quite comfortable where I was.' Doreen Rickards was also satisfied with her job at the ATS Head Office at Up Park Camp and did secretarial and organisational work. She and others supervised all the women recruited through Jamaica, and were in charge of keeping accurate records of the girls at Up Park Camp. Wint also engaged in clerical work and was specially commended for her excellent shorthand skills.

Despite the fond memories, the women did hint at their frustration with some aspects of their army life. The greatest source of disappointment was for those who did not get an opportunity to serve overseas. This was particularly true for Doreen Rickards and Connie Mark. Though proud to be in the army, Rickards recalled that even before leaving the Bahamas, her mother asked why she wanted to come to the 'poor country of Jamaica'. Though she eventually made Jamaica her home, part of her reason for coming to Jamaica was that it was the only medium for her to serve in England. She was not to go there during her service however, as the last group of girls to go to England was the batch before hers. As she put it: 'We just missed it! We were so disappointed. That's where we want to go you, we trained for that. You can imagine how disappointed we were.' Mark also applied to work in England but was not to get there until after 1945. As she said;

I did apply to come to England and I got kitted out with my winter gear and in the end my boss who was the head of the medical services in the North Caribbean area, refused to sign my form. He said medical secretaries are very difficult to train and the same thing I would be doing in England, I would be doing in Jamaica, so he wouldn't sign the paper for me to go.<sup>20</sup>

Then there was the inevitable racial discrimination that often reared its ugly head. Connie Mark referred to occasions when the ATS officers wanted local ATS girls to clean their houses. Ostensibly, this was neither specific to Jamaican servicewoman nor to the ATS, as Rampersad (1997, 28) has highlighted that a Trinidadian member of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRENS), Margaret Jardine was given menial tasks to perform, such as scrubbing floors. Connie Mark surmised that her own unwillingness to perform a similar task resulted in her being passed over for the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for service. As she explained 'my commander, Lieutenant Colonel Arondell put me up for it, and the ATS officers hated my guts so much that they were the ones that turned me down... I'm not going to anybody's home to clean their home when I'm paying somebody to clean mine.'<sup>21</sup> She also noted that racism was at the root of this belief that black ATS girls should clean their houses, because they did not expect the white girls to do domestic chores. While Constant Marks eventually received the MBE in 1992, and other members of the ATS such as Ena Collymore-Woodstock would also be awarded, it is evident that black Jamaican women who served in the army were not as readily memorialised through medals and accolades as their white and near-white counterparts who served as nurses and organisers of war work in 1914. World War I workers were far less threatening to the army establishment as they worked as civilians at home and gave voluntary service rather than embodying a problem to be solved by the War and Colonial Offices. Regardless of the high sense of self-worth that Marks and others held for themselves and their elevated status in relation to the Jamaican working class, they were second-class citizens within a British institution. Some ATS officers who were also aware of the general reluctance of the War Office to include black women among the ranks would also have been well prepared to remind them of their subaltern station. British-born Lilian Bader, asked to leave the NAAFI when it was ascertained that her father was of West Indian lineage. Similarly, Amelia King, also British-born to West Indian parents was refused entry to the Women's Land Army in 1943 despite the fact that her father was a merchant sailor and her brother was serving in the Royal Navy.

Being Jamaican was also a disadvantage even for the white women in the Washington branch of the ATS who were reported as being disgruntled with the fact that their British colleagues were receiving the majority of the promotions (Bousquet and Douglas 1991, 103). Jamaican whites

were therefore forced to reckon with their diminished status outside of their island home and were exposed for the first time to the hierarchies of nationality. A 'near-white' ATS recruit also experienced discrimination as she travelled through the United States. Private Avis Marzink complained of being 'assaulted' during her brief sojourn in Florida. She was particularly perturbed that as a servant of King and country, she was not guaranteed better treatment by officials in the army. She was subject 'to the deepest humiliation' due to her segregation from the army personnel. Having labelled her as coloured, the officials asked her to stay in a hotel for blacks. She considered this infra dig and reported, 'the British government deemed it fit to relegate me to the scum, the cut throats of southern America presumably because I was not English' (*The Gleaner*, 31 January 1946, 8).

Ironically, while some who served in Jamaica and the United States faced discrimination, most of the soldiers who served in Britain such as Olga Shervington, Ena Collymore-Woodstock and Doreen Rickards recalled good relations with their British colleagues. They were invited to visit their commanding officers in their homes both during and after World War II, and did not experience overt discrimination. Also, Doreen Rickards beamed with pride that she was promoted twice in the ATS and was given the prize as best junior NCO in her batch. In addition, Sergeant Phyllis Melbourne was the first Jamaican in the local services to be raised to the ranks of Senior NCO officer.

The issue of experiences of racial discrimination were individual and personal. For some the period of service was free from hostility but time spent in England in the post-war era got an unhealthy dose of racism. Norma Wint explained that the level of discrimination they faced in the post war period was so evident that it was only then that they truly realised the difference between being West Indian and English. For instance, her husband's room-mate in college moved out the day after he starting living there because he was not prepared to share a room with a black person. Having largely accepted their colonial status with open arms, the racism they faced in England was a sharp wake up call. As she said 'We only became West Indians when we came to England and saw the conditions there.' The experience of Connie Mark, who went to Britain in 1954 with her first husband who was a cricket professional at C. M. Harbour in Durham, is also poignant. Her account of the difficulty in renting a house embodies the level of dissolution she felt as a loyal British subject:

You respected the British so much and you respected the fact that you were British so much. We treat English people like kings and queens in the islands and when you came here you were treated. (There were) signs like 'room for rent: no coloureds, no Irish, no children no dogs.' I didn't mind being put with the Irish, but I thought it was a bit of a come down being put with the dogs.<sup>22</sup>

Mark also expressed her frustration that the British people she encountered after 1945 were unaware that Caribbean women were in the army and played important roles in the war effort. She also noted that when they were made aware of that fact, they often did not respond with a sense of gratitude, but one of shock and even disdain. In her own words, 'I get very annoyed that people don't want to accept and remain ignorant of the fact of how very much the West Indies were involved in the war' (Kyriacou 1992, 2).

While Jamaican colonials expressed a belonging to Britain, mainly through an understanding of self as a British citizen, this was often unrequited by Britain, particularly in the post World War II period. A unique manifestation of racism blossomed in post war Britain, because of deliberate or inadvertent amnesia relating to its colonial and imperial past. As a result of this, Britain was hardly a nurturing and loving 'mother country' to Caribbean migrants (Hall 1978). While Britain acknowledged that its colonial peoples were subjects of the Empire, these people were never characterised as belonging to the ideological and geographical space of England itself. Probably it was Webster (1998, 26) who articulated it best when she said:

In colonial discourse the colonized were often represented in a pattern of familial imagery where colonizers and the colonized were seen as members of one imperial family... These contractions of the colonized as a part of 'our people' depended on them being outside Britain – contained and controlled elsewhere.

These immigrant Jamaican women claimed a theoretical right to British citizenship and to suitable social space as a result of being a part of the imperial family, but some faced the harsh reality of their racial and ethnic inequality and 'alien' Jamaican identity upon settlement in Britain. Under these circumstances loyal subjects quickly became problematic 'immigrants'. For some ex-service women, being legally British and their

involvement as soldiers meant very little in terms of access to rights as citizens, which was determined by race, class and place of birth.

### RESULTS OF PARTICIPATION: WHAT WAS ACHIEVED FOR KING, COUNTRY AND SELF?

What then was the significance of service? The racism and sexism which almost robbed West Indian women from the opportunity to serve in the British army certainly remained a constant feature through their service, keeping many from typically celebrated military activity. In the aftermath of service, some also faced the stark reality that Britain had not only forgot their service, but would rather they not remain in the country, but remain to their island homes. Their relatively small numbers, subaltern 'feminised' posts they occupied and the almost complete collective amnesia of both the British and West Indian populace to the contribution of ex-servicewomen could make their contribution seem indiscernible in the grand scheme of the war. Though local wartime propaganda publications portrayed men and women from the colonies as giving invaluable support to Britain, the memory of this contribution evaporated almost as soon as war ended. Also the wave of decolonisation movements in the post-war slowly eroded previously powerful tropes of colonial belonging and rendered service and devotion to imperial nations passé.

Did the women really 'help the mother country out of her problem' as some of them envisioned as their roles? Many, if not all, war historians would say 'no' or even scoff at the legitimacy of the question. Their inclusion in the army was a gesture construed by the Colonial Office to appease the colonies without overly agitating the War Office rather than a concerted effort to include West Indian women in the defence of the realm. The War Office had no intention of putting them on the front lines, or remotely close to action, and while interviewees argued that it was to keep them safe, a more accurate rationale may be the racist and sexist ideas that were inextricably linked to the policies of the War Office. The Colonial Office, too, was more concerned with political expediency and having an outlet for West Indian patriotism, than lobbying for women to play major roles in the conflict. Many were prepared to go to the front lines, but for the most part, they were not allowed to do so. This was evident from other testimonies of women who wanted to drive

lorries and be involved with combat. Inez Bent, for instance asserted, 'I am strictly out to do something in this war. I wouldn't mind if they would allow me to handle one of those guns myself' (*The Gleaner*, 17 July 1943).

Where the contribution of the women is concerned, it is more accurate to see them as cogs in a huge machine, rather than the machine itself. They were certainly not the hinge on which victory rested, but they played important roles in the effort. Indeed, the tasks undertaken by these hundreds of women were critical to the organised prosecution of war. So called feminised and menial tasks were critical to ensuring proper record keeping, providing hospitality for significant decision makers, sending of key messages on which meant the difference of between life and death and to the structuring of social services in the army. Jobs that focused on instrument repair, radar operations, guidance systems and other auxiliary roles to the armed forces were obviously important as microcosms of a well-oiled machine. Naturally, the presence of Caribbean servicewomen in the army also released large numbers of men from non-combat duties to take up active fighting roles.

Indeed, if the response of the local print media is any indication, Jamaica's ego was boosted by the stellar contribution of its men and women. The duty performed by Jamaicans in England was reported as a noble deed, one in which they risked their lives so that Jamaicans could continue to be free people and continue to enjoy that democratic way of life (*The Gleaner*, 6 December 1949, 7). Pro-British print media held nothing back in describing the valiant, self-sacrificing deeds of its nationals who served in World War II. Publications such as the *Victory Book* were specifically geared towards celebrating the brave efforts of Jamaicans and included a spread on seven 'popular' (to mean white) Jamaican women who were recruited in nursing services, Air Raid Precaution Services (ARP) and the Women's Royal Air Force. Similar publications were produced by other territories for their ATS girls including *The Brave Eleven*, which highlighted the life and work of Bahamian women who joined the ATS through Jamaica. The pride which Jamaicans reportedly felt in having participants in World War II far outweighed any doubts as to whether they actually helped to win it. As one testimony noted 'Jamaica is proud of her fighting men and women—her loyal sons and daughters of every hue—who are doing their bit and playing their part for the victory' (*The Gleaner*, 6 December

1949, 7). Reports of the money and supplies collected graced the pages of newspapers and, ever so often, messages from the Governor and royalty in England, also signalled the gratitude for what the colonies in general did to assist in World War II. This included filling dire shortages in labour, which grew more severe as the war progressed.

Without question, the greatest result of participation was in terms of personal empowerment. Almost with one consenting voice, ex-service-women characterised their experiences in the army as invaluable and as an epoch-making moment in their lives. Many of those in Washington did not return to Jamaica, and opted to go into business there or further their studies, married other soldiers and made lives for themselves there (*The Gleaner*, 28 April 1944, 8). The women's testimonies are replete with positive reflections on the range of opportunities that were afforded them as individuals. As Beverly Marsh indicated, 'that's where I learned to be objective about a lot of things. I learned a lot about social services. In fact when I eventually went to the school of social work, I did a BA degree and then a Bachelor of Social Work. And it turned out that some of those lecturers were people I had worked with in the army.' She worked with revered neurosurgeons in Montreal, and also with anthropologists in Jamaica, and was exposed to a variety of areas in social work. She summed up her testimony by saying her time in the army improved the quality of her life because there was no other way she envisioned getting an education, as well as the exposure and independence the army afforded her.

Similarly, Ena Collymore-Woodstock who was endowed with a national award (Order of Distinction) for her unwavering service to the nation, credits her academic achievements to her involvement in World War II. After her service she attended Gray's Inn of Court in London, where she studied law. In Jamaica, she became the first female Clerk of Courts and the Deputy Crown Solicitor among many other achievements. The ability to study law in England would hardly have been afforded to her outside of her wartime service, and, as she put it, she would have 'got married and that would be the end of that'. Lilian Bader was on a trajectory to continue climbing the ranks in the WAAF, and while pregnancy resulted in compassionate discharge, her life chances were markedly improved by her wartime service. After raising two sons she continued her education to university level and became a teacher.

Though the immediate effects were felt mainly among the women who were members of the army, the opportunities they received rippled through the society as well. Without perhaps labelling themselves as feminists, many of the women exhibited strong traits of feminist activism to better the lives of women in their communities. While Marsh focused on reproductive health options for women, Collymore-Woodstock, among others, was able to make changes in the laws of Jamaica with respect to the status of women. She explained her role as part of the team of persons who worked in the 1960s and 70s to change oppressive and discriminatory laws:

A lot of us there, in England both in the war and as young students, played a big role in improving the status of women, because all of us were active in the women's clubs. We started the optimist, which focused on improving the status of women. We were responsible for things like getting rid of the word 'bastard' out of the law. We were also responsible for giving illegitimate children the same rights as legitimate children, called the Illegitimacy Act. We worked on that and we had a hard time getting the men attuned to the fact that children who were born out of wedlock should have the same rights. I myself did a lot of work on that, speaking around the island.

For Olga Shervington, being a soldier was not so much for purposes of garnering a university education, but for increased exposure and adventure. After 1945, she returned home and married her fiancée, and left the civil service for a job at a private firm. She said that the war did her well because of the exposure she got as a young woman and added, 'I didn't suffer in any way by having gone.' The positive effect of service on Doreen Rickards's life was also evident in her testimony. She noted that at the end of the Second World War she learned discipline, and many secretarial skills that prepared her for her job as secretary to Senator Douglas Judah for 25 years. She was even more convinced about what women's participation in the army did for their self-esteem and general development. In her estimation women became more independent as a result:

A lot of them were young and they left home, they didn't know much about being out there on their own so they left their homes, parents

and went out in the world. I would say, independence, was taught to a lot of them, to be independent of men, and not to depend on men for everything, have an education get a profession, so that you are your own boss. They were better-educated, they were offered different spheres to go into, women were able to strike out on their own, and not to become homemakers.

Her argument does not suggest that being a homemaker is ignoble, but that women who joined the army were given the option of becoming professional and better-educated before or instead of merely preparing for marriage. As married women, they were able to make more meaningful contributions to their families and not be totally dependent on a male breadwinner. Movements towards equity in these unions were therefore facilitated by wartime opportunities. The military training afforded by the British army also equipped the women with new skills that shifted the paradigm of the male dominated defence and military forces. For instance, in 1949, three women were appointed to the force for the first time, two of whom were appointed because of their service with the ATS, Sylvia Myres and Iris Tulloch (*The Pagoda*, 8 January 1949, 7).

The positive outcome of these women's participation in World War II, was in some instances an essential part of their reasons for joining, while for others, the benefits were inadvertent. As Beverly Marsh said, 'aside from working in the war effort to help, the women felt that they were getting some job satisfaction out of it. I know the ones in the ATS felt that way.' The effect of the recruitment of Jamaican (and by extension West Indian) women cannot be overstated. These women saw World War II as an opportunity to better their positions in life, in addition to truly supporting the Empire in a time of great need. In some cases, they grabbed opportunities that the military complex had to offer, in others, they carved out their own niches for empowerment and self-actualisation. They refused to be overlooked at worthy candidates for the responsibilities and rewards of militarism and, while their agency and bravery are often not part of the narrative of the evolution of Jamaican womanhood, their existence cannot be written out of history. Footprints of their army boots are evident in Jamaican women's march towards equality and indeed, while they may have been missing from the front lines of warfare, they were present at the front lines of the battle for meaningful social change.

## NOTES

1. LAB 18/83: Scheme for The Recruitment Of Unskilled Technicians From Jamaica: Letter from Lord Moyne, 3 September 1941 to Ernest Bevin, MP.
2. CO 968/81/4: *Recruitment of Women: West Indies*, 1943, Secret telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 January 1943.
3. CO 968/81/4: *Recruitment of Women: West Indies*, 1943: letter dated, 17 February 1943.
4. CO 968/81/4: *Recruitment of Women: West Indies*, 1943: letter dated, 11 March 1943.
5. CO 968/81/4: *Recruitment of Women: West Indies*, 1943: letter to B. D. Edmonds of the Colonial Office, 16 November 1943.
6. CO 968/81/4: *Recruitment of Women: West Indies*, 1943, letter to Oliver Stanley the Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1943.
7. CO 968/81/4: *Recruitment of Women: West Indies*, 1943.
8. CO 968/81/4: *Recruitment of Women: West Indies*, 1943, letter to James Grigg, 14 May 1943.
9. Beverley Marsh, Interview by author, May 2005. Unless otherwise stated, subsequent quotes will be taken from interviews conducted by Dalea Bean and their full references can be found in the reference list.
10. Wint served in the RAF as a pilot. He left the service in 1947 and became Jamaica's first Olympic gold medallist at the summer Olympics in London in 1948.
11. The War Office was forced to remunerate all ATS recruits at the same level after white recruits to Washington were offered the same pay as British ATS members. Fears over unrest if black and white women received different pay were stressed by the Colonial Office. See Bousquet and Douglas (1991, 96–97).
12. Imperial War Museum (IWM): Interview with Connie Goodridge-Mark no. 15286 reels 1 and 2.
13. IWM. Connie Mark interview, Number 15286 reel 1.
14. UWI Mona: Manuscript on West Indian Women at war: 1989 West Indian women at war typescript of interviews.
15. UWI Mona: Manuscript on West Indian Women at war: 1989 West Indian women at war typescript of interviews.
16. IWM Film: 'Caribbean Women in World War II: Four Black Women's Oral History of War Time Service.' Esther Armagon and Connie Mark: Jamaican, Norma Best: Belize and Lillian Bader: UK born to West Indian parents.
17. IWM Film: *Caribbean Women in World War II*.
18. Manuscript on West Indian Women at War.

19. IWM: Film *Caribbean Women in World War II*.
20. IWM: Connie Mark interview, Number 15286 reel 1.
21. Manuscript on West Indian Women at War.
22. Manuscript on West Indian Women at War.

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 Mrs. Olga Shervington, interview with Dalea Bean, 23 June 2005.  
 Mrs. Norma Wint, interview with Dalea Bean, 4 July 2005.  
 Professor Sir Roy Augier, interview with Dalea Bean, 1 November 2004.

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## Conclusion

Reflecting on her service to the British army between 1943 and 1945, Jamaican Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) soldier Norma Wint mused that her wartime experience was a watershed period in her life. In her words wartime service ‘made a big difference in your life, it was never the same. Your life was divided between before the war and after the war.’<sup>1</sup> This concept of change in Jamaicans women’s lives as a result of the world wars can be extended beyond those who served in the army. Predicated on the view that, historically, war has been a propellant of change, the foregoing chapters have explored the effects of World Wars I and II on the lives of Jamaican women and have analysed the interplay between wartime forces and other socio-economic and political developments in the island in the twentieth century which served to shift, if even slightly, gendered norms and practices in the colony of Jamaica. Undeniably, developments in Jamaican women’s lives can be divided into pre-World War I and post-World War II; for many, life was never the same.

While the wars were not the only deciding factors of the trajectory of Jamaicans lives, the importance global conflicts to social development in Jamaica has typically been underplayed. World wars pulled Jamaican society into a global conflict and impacted on various aspects of the county’s society, politics, economy and human resources. As part of the British Empire, Jamaica was situated squarely in contemporary geo-political events. The tendency of the colony’s population to leap to the aid of the mother country was far from spontaneous, as loyalty

was carefully concocted over centuries through carefully crafted policies geared towards elevating the British over African and foreign over creole. Certainly, the mobilisation of Jamaican resources was overwhelming in both wars and the colony emerged as the frontrunner in the West Indies; offering gifts, cash, refuge, moral support and warm bodies to Britain. Much to the chagrin of Amy Bailey and other Jamaican-centric social workers, much energy was expended on supporting the Empire's war efforts while a blind eye was turned to deteriorating conditions at home. However, Jamaicans' reactions to wars were nuanced and reflective of a colony teetering on the edge of longstanding colonial affinity and deep stirrings of Black Nationalism. Homogeneity and group-think would be difficult to find in early twentieth-century Jamaica as the population embodied the incongruous appeals of belonging to the British Empire, local aspirations for self-determination and alignment with the interests of the new world power, the United States of America. Intermingled with these exogenous endogenous forces were persistent racism, classism and shadism alongside race consciousness, a fiery focus on workers' rights and a growing rejection of Imperial mores.

Wartime conditions and ideologies served to mould and shape these contradictions; facilitating both an inward and outward gaze by all Jamaicans who would soon determine their future as an independent populace. Robust service to empire was often met with disappointment and led to fresh questions about the place of the black body in the white Imperial construct. In the aftermath of World War I, ex-servicemen, imbued with a new consciousness of self, were dissatisfied with their post-war treatment and were instrumental in forming trade unions and lobbying for improved labour relations, working conditions and remuneration. They are largely credited with the wave of protest movements that swept the British-colonised Caribbean in the late 1930s. Wartime economic conditions reinforced the need for self-sufficiency as well as a shift away from the old mother country to a nascent benefactor and partner in the form of the United States. Rewards for wartime service would not only expand the franchise beyond the remit of rich white men, but also develop the human capital of the colony through educational opportunities which were often capitalised on.

In the midst of this cauldron were gendered understandings of colony and nation that were perhaps easy to overlook, but in hindsight, are impossible to ignore. Gendered discourses shaped global and local power dynamics, determined access to resources and decided on rights

and responsibilities to the colony. Men's and women's bodies were gendered differently and by extension, so too were the colony and colonial powers. World Wars I and II tested the boundaries of these norms and facilitated a paradoxical reinforcement and challenging of archetypal gender roles. In a general sense 'wartime is a period in which the contours of gender roles can be seen extremely clearly. Men go away to fight; women remain at home' Noakes (2006, 2). However, the realities of war often contradict the efficacy of this rule. Globally, the wars facilitated shifts in the functions of women and forced an examination of discourses of masculinity previously taken for granted. Undoubtedly, warfare, and particularly World Wars I and II, have been instruments of change, both positively and negatively, for various groups in the societies that were affected by the conflicts. The belligerent nations would naturally be foremost among those that were affected. These mainly European and North American countries employed their women in the war economies in unprecedented numbers and this resulted in significant changes in the roles and status of these women. In many instances, wars facilitated unparalleled entry into the 'public sphere', so much so that even in instances where official policies retarded the gains made in female employment in the post war years, women often refused to regress to their former roles. In this way, World Wars I and II facilitated the destabilisation of pre-war sex and gender systems. While it has been argued that the wars did not result in revolutionised gender roles, as countries worked assiduously to rejuvenate the gendered status quo ante in post-war reconstruction, there is overwhelming evidence in the Jamaican case to suggest that the wars did have a lasting impact on the ways citizens were gendered. If nothing else, by providing a nuanced view of women and their relationship to warfare, this work has indicated that the contribution of Jamaican women to the war efforts, and the impact on their lives is worthy of investigation.

The reaction of Jamaican women to the wars contradicts traditional views that women are inherently ambivalent to warfare or naturally pacifist. The colony's women were anything but indifferent and did not publicly express anti-war sentiments. In the inter-war years Judith DeCordova facilitated the signing of an international disarmament petition, but as soon as war was declared all pacifist leanings crumbled under the weight of loyalty to the British Empire. Many women crafted deliberate responses to the conflicts and highlighted their interest in publicly responding to the effect that the wars had on their lives. As civilians,

military nurses, soldiers, proud partners and mothers of servicemen, and even as destitute dependents of soldiers, women's lives were inevitably impacted by both world wars. Women were among those in urban areas who engaged in open criticism of Britain during the wars. The low standard of living of much of the country's poor, and various forms of exploitation, led to dissatisfaction with British rule during and after the wars. This was particularly evident among those who were hesitant to allow their male loved ones to enlist as soldiers in World War I. Working-class women were also very active in the post-World War I protest movements staged by the ex-BWIR men to lobby for improvements in their economic status. Still, there were others who were extremely loyal to empire and worked assiduously to play their part in securing victory in the wars. Many prepared war supplies, commonly called 'comforts', while some found their voice in the print media as organisers of such work. While some were interested in offering their services as civilians, others followed Mary Seacole's example and expressed an eagerness to participate in the wars as soldiers.

Women contributed to the World War I effort in four key gender-appropriate modalities: production of war materials, fundraising, food production and encouraging men to join the armed forces. The leisurely pace at which the women's war-work began accelerated as the war progressed, and the war-work experience drove the first national mobilisation for an international conflict in Jamaican history. While Jamaican working-class women were typically represented in employment in the pre-war era, middle- and upper-strata 'women of leisure', who operated mainly in a world of invisible domestication, experienced reengineering of their social roles and expectations. The nature of war work in Jamaica facilitated participation by middle and upper class women in greater numbers than their working class counterparts. Near-white and Jewish women of prominence were the leaders of women's organised war-work in Jamaica and these benefited from the immediate positive spin-offs. 'Ladies Bountiful' continued in their pre-war tradition of leading charitable organisations by rallying women for war-work from 1914. Judith DeCordova, A. E. Briscoe, Annie Douglas and Dorothy Trefusis were synonymous with women's organised war-work between 1914 and 1918 and again between 1938 and 1945. These and other elite women became the face of the local Jamaican war effort and while they may be rightfully criticised as practising classism by excluding working-class women from war-work and largely overlooking the numerous needs of

the poor in the society, the results of their efforts for the British Empire had undeniable consequences for Jamaican womanhood as a whole.

Their impressive organisational skills and increased visibility shifted the public discourse on the capabilities of womanhood. In many instances, the women themselves were surprised to learn that their skill sets extended beyond social escapades and party planning. The level of consistent organising to galvanise meaningful wartime support served as a wake-up call not only to the women engaged in the activities, but to the men of their class who had previously regarded them as ornamental necessities. While not in need of upward social mobility, these women carved out spaces for upward civic mobility which initiated movements towards increased participation in male dominated spheres of public policy. Writing and speaking on public platforms evolved from being a rarity to routine for many women. Typically feminised domestic chores such as sewing and knitting took on new transnational importance as part of the necessities of the military machine. Production of warm clothing and other comforts were not only tangible gifts to empire but were constructed as metaphorical tools for protecting Jamaican women's bodies from attack. Through work groups, women produced war supplies on a massive scale, transforming small networks of housewives into an island-wide assembly line of mass production. These and other realities, facilitated by the wars but purposefully shaped by Jamaican women, ushered them into the world of recognisable citizenship at a time when this was, without much exception, constructed as a coveted male birthright. Though charitable work was a feature of Jamaican society from the 1800s, the wars unequivocally initiated the first widespread occurrence of women's leadership of public bodies in the country. Matters of public importance were no longer inherently masculinised; women had much to say and the public was beginning to listen.

During World War II, women's organisation to produce comforts was twinned with other responsibilities to ensure self-sufficiency in the colony. Women were targeted for local food production and were encouraged to transform their private kitchen gardens into surplus-producing entities as much as possible. This was part of a wider scheme to ensure that the country was as self sufficient as possible to curb the need for imports at a time when shipping was precarious at best. As a result, a wider cross-section of women was involved with the war effort, since this scheme did not specially target 'women of leisure'. Peasants were encouraged to expand subsistence food production with help from larger

landowners, and, as a result, working-class women were included in the country's plans to weather the storm of World War II.

If women's production of wartime care packages for export did not facilitate a shift in public perception of their aptitude for greater civic responsibility, then recruitment of men for the BWIR certainly did. Recruitment of men for military service intensified conversations around gender in the colony. The population was reminded that men's bodies were raced and gendered, as black and brown male volunteers were accorded with hierarchical responsibilities to protect the British Empire and the colony from the enemy and, more so, from the shame of conscription or conscientious objection. Gendered rhetoric used in recruitment drives to feminise men who hesitated to serve reaped great rewards by reinforcing a sense of valiant masculine duty in those robbed of the power and prestige normally accorded with their sex by their subaltern position in a racist colonial social order. In addition, while male bodies were responsible for protection, female bodies and the empire were symbols of vulnerability. Idioms that called on men to do their duty to protect the 'womenandchildren' of the island and the British Empire were utilised to great effect. Recruiters borrowed from a well-established international nationalistic-militaristic narrative constructed to encourage men to enlist to avoid being labelled as cowards. But this construction did not result in passive Jamaican femininity. Not only was the power of women's persuasion high on the list of the recruitment strategies to get men to join the army, but women themselves became active in framing enlistment discourse, and were the most effective recruiters at war demonstrations. When women branded unlisted men as female, for instance, they asserted that cowardice was no longer the remit of women but that of powerless, feminised men. When mothers rebranded themselves from child-bearers and home-makers to soldier-bearers and empire-builders, they reaffirmed that sacrifice of sons was a distinctly female privilege. Therefore, while not eradicating pre-war gendered norms, World War I facilitated the expansion of elite women's civic roles and working-class women's value to the colonial order as liaisons between men's bodies and the British Empire's needs.

Indeed, the opinion of women in this regard was seen as the greatest help or hindrance to the movement. Direct pressure was placed on all classes and races of women to influence their men to make the right choice relating to enlistment. They were lauded when they encouraged their men to fight, and were harshly chastised when they hindered their

participation. Female leaders and speakers entered into a bargain with working-class women and encouraged them to follow the example to do their by allowing their men to fight. Obligations were framed within the context of race and class delineations; influential women should organise and speak on platforms and working-class women should listen and pass on the message to their men. The gender card was rebranded during the war from the prototypical pre-war philanthropic exercise where elite women lifted as they climbed. Working-class women were now being invited into an ideological partnership with the 'Who's Who' in a war-induced sisterhood to recruit troops.

Chief among the effects of World War I on women was political enfranchisement. This signified the gradual movement towards incorporating women into the colony as citizens with equal rights. It had inextricable links to women's war-work but it did more to cement the ties of the elite class than foster solidarity among the island's women. However, this racially charged political development had long-term effects that slowly chipped away at the patriarchal status quo, weakening the pre-eminence of the white male voter archetype and emboldening black women's lobbying for more inclusive citizenship later in the twentieth century. If one could draw a straight line through history, one could see the direct link between the enfranchisement of women in 1919 and the election of the island's first female representative twenty years later in the form of Mary Morris Knibb. Though initiated and supported by men like H. A. L. Simpson and H. G. DeLisser to reward some women for their work during World War I, the campaign was eventually taken over by a politically aware and erudite group of women, including Nellie Latrielle and Judith DeCordova, who campaigned their way to the vote and to greater legislative changes towards women's empowerment in the twentieth century. Imbued with a sense of outrage by the callous swipes at their character from those who opposed the vote, many women awoke from their political hibernation to publicly support the cause. In addition, many women realised that social services in the country were not being addressed by the men in power and made their move to work on social services while securing political rights for themselves. This was the result of astute political consciousness and went a long way to altering the views that women were aloof in public matters and unable to speak on a national stage.

Also, after some women acquired political enfranchisement, affirming their rights to active citizenship in the country, radical changes was

inevitable. In this way, the events of the war years facilitated a new type of relationship between women and the colonial state. While Jamaican women had always found ways to exert political influence through various forms of activism, after 1919, women were able to move towards participating in the formal representational politics of the island. It became increasingly difficult to withhold other political rights simply on account of gender. The view that voting was an innately masculinised activity was being eroded. Black women such as Mary Morris Knibb, Edith Dalton James, and Iris Collins, among others, built on political gains from which they were initially excluded and pressed for changes to improve the political status of women in the colony. Eventually, women were appointed as Justices of the Peace, jurors and political representatives, and changes were seen in employment laws as gender discrimination was slowly eclipsed by increased opportunities for women. While all these changes cannot be credited to wartime events, the war-induced political spark ignited women, and the resulting shift in their views contributed greatly to bringing about radical changes later in the twentieth century.

While women's organisation and works were similar during both wars, there were three notable points of departure in relation to the wars' effects on women. Firstly, during World War I, women were entrusted with greater responsibility for the recruitment of men for service. Secondly, the World War II era was a period of thorough examination of women's place in the labour force. Finally, World War II ushered in the first opportunity for military service by women in the colony.

In terms of employment, men were afforded far more opportunities for local and overseas wartime employment than women. Even the efforts of Amy Ashwood Garvey to carve out employment niches in the war economy of the United States for Jamaican women were largely unsuccessful. As a result, local working-class women were among those who suffered most from the hardships that war unleashed. Faced with rising prices of basic commodities as a result of the Great Depression and World War II exigencies, many women sought employment locally. While the world wars did not lead to a complete revolution in the employment of local women, they affected the labour market to the advantage of women's employment. Women were employed in great numbers in local industries at this time, though they were often paid less than men, a tradition which could be traced back to the nineteenth century. Added to this was the concerted effort during World War II to marginalise the

labour of women, relegate them to low-paying jobs and reinstate them to a wage-less housewife status as much as possible. Though not wholly successful, there was a deliberate attempt on the part of colonial authorities to exploit the labour of women during the war years, to maximise profits and ensure that women's work outside the home was limited. This was not only true for the agricultural and garment industries, which employed the large majority of women, but also for the civil service, where married women were denied employment.

In the midst of this colonial gender policy related to 'housewifeisation' and women's labour was war-work, which had contradictory effects on Jamaican womanhood. Gendered expectations during the war did buttress 'housewifeisation' to the extent that acceptable war-work was largely domesticated jobs of knitting, sewing and voluntary work from the home. However, like work done between 1914 and 1918, war-work in World War II brought increased organisation of and visibility to women. The need to specifically target female labour or voluntary efforts during the war eroded the belief that women could not function outside the home and eclipsed the idea that the home could not function without her constant presence. The cumulative effect, therefore, was that official policies related to housewifeisation were unable to take root in the midst of wartime, which promoted the visibility and political advancement of many Jamaican women.

Wholesale housewifeisation was also impossible when Jamaican women were joining the British Army for the first time in history. In the first instance, 24 Jamaican women travelled to England to work with the ATS and other branches of the British army. Over time, many more women joined the forces and some worked in the ATS locally. Their motivations were usually three-tiered: a sense of duty to King and country, the need for adventure and exposure, and the improvement of the quality of their lives through improved access to academic and occupational pursuits. When deciding to join the army many of these women struck a delicate balance between love of country and empire and seeking opportunity for themselves. Nonetheless, it is difficult to quantify the contribution of these women to the allied victory. Undoubtedly, any contribution great or small to the effort played some part in the allied success. However, no one could safely argue that the weight of victory in World War II could be placed squarely on a few hundred West Indian women's shoulders. As civilians, Jamaican women were seen as playing second fiddle to their British counterparts who took over men's jobs

and engaged in maintaining the war economy of Britain. As soldiers, they were not seen as crucial to the military machinery of the belligerent nations. Sexist and racist overtones marred their recruitment, which began as a mere gesture rather than a concerted effort to include these women in the defence strategies of Britain. In addition, while Jamaican war publications portrayed its men and women as giving invaluable support during the war, the British memory of this contribution evaporated as soon as war ended. Many of these women are yet to receive any official commendation.

To add insult to post-war injury, some who attempted to integrate themselves into Britain in the late 1940s, faced racism, poverty and discrimination. This was not unique to ex-servicewomen however, as ex-servicemen and civilians who found themselves migrating to Britain in the late 1940s had similar experiences.<sup>2</sup> The white women who were recruited in Canada and the United States and chose to remain in those countries experienced a greater ease in their settlement. For some black women the 'mother country', was mistakenly viewed as a home away from home. Being subjects of Britain did not automatically translate to equal rights as citizens or protect these persons from the deep-rooted racism and xenophobia in Britain.

Despite this portrait of a post-war nadir for ex-servicewomen, they certainly did not emerge from their wartime service empty-handed. Importantly, the soldiers do not share the view that their roles represented tokenism, neither do they dismiss their military service as irrelevant. So called feminised and menial tasks were critical to ensuring proper record keeping, providing hospitality for significant decision-makers, sending key messages which meant the difference between life and death, and to the structuring of social services in the army. Those that worked in instrument repair, radar operations and on guidance systems, exuded pride at taking an active close-to-front-line role. Naturally, the presence of Caribbean servicewomen in the army also released men from non-combat duties to take up active fighting roles. In some cases the women grabbed opportunities that the military complex had to offer, in others, they carved out their own niches for empowerment and self-actualisation. Those who served in its army in various parts of the British Empire and qualified for free university education. The women interviewed for this work, and countless others, capitalised on this opportunity particularly in the United States, Canada and Britain. Indeed, the most meaningful outcome of service can be found in what the women

achieved for themselves as a direct result of their wartime service. The print media of the day tended to portray those in the army as loyalists fighting for victory. It was replete with references of women who were 'keen and happy to be offered the opportunity to go to England to play their own little parts in the winning of this war' (*The Gleaner*, 17 July 1943, 1). While the women were imbued with a love of Britain, their testimonies indicate that they were also participating to achieve personal benefits.

Also, while the Jamaican and West Indian women recruited in the army were perhaps quantitatively insignificant when compared to the millions of men drafted for service, the symbolic effect of their presence far exceeded their numbers. For the first time in Jamaican history, women were formally trained for military service. This led to a shift the gender profile of the military, which proved impossible to undo in post war years. The World War I rhetoric of men fighting for women's honour and safety was put under severe pressure during World War II where women were marching in army uniform. The optics of black Jamaican women's active participation in a previously white male institution disrupted the gendered military model and created space for women's enrolment in the Jamaica Constabulary Force in the late 1940s and in the Jamaica Defence Force in the 1970s. While women were almost completely barred from front-line service, the pride at being engaged in a global phenomenon, and elevated sense of self-worth, changed their own views on women's capacities and colonial gender norms. Therefore, while their contribution to Allied victory in World War II might be debatable, the impact of the war on servicewomen's lives is indisputable. This effect has been generally accepted as one of the chief positive outcomes of the conflict. As an article in *The People* (1942) noted:

Many Civil Servants joined up. Their experiences abroad only increased their determination for self improvement. Scholarships there were in abundance. The civil service grabbed them and used them. In every department there was feverish activity in the direction of more and better knowledge. The war and difficulty of travel made imported help next to impossible to obtain. The young Jamaicans fell to the task and did a good job.

World Wars I and II, typically constructed as masculine affairs waged by men on other men, were replete with complex gender ideologies. These wars had consequences for men and women and drove changes for both

sexes. The claim is not that the world wars revolutionised every Jamaican woman's life. While some pre-war gender norms were destabilised, for the most part the European ideal of womanhood, as expressed via media such as the *Planters' Punch*, was still prevalent late in the twentieth century. Though women were accorded some measure of importance in empire- and nation-building, this was constructed as an extension of their roles as wives and mothers. Working-class women were still paid less for jobs than their male counterparts, and it was men who were the beneficiaries of lucrative overseas employment. Consequently, there is some truth to the claim that a few war years could not totally eclipse deeply entrenched gender stereotypes. In addition, the claim is not that World Wars I and II accounted for all the major changes that occurred relating to women in the twentieth century and beyond. However, the opportunities created by the wars did assist in advancement for women in the political and social spheres. Women actively capitalised on the openings that the wars created for them and, as such, the progress that they were able to make was not merely a negligible, inadvertent result of the conflict.

It is clear that any investigation of women's experiences in Jamaica should not overlook the impact of the wars. Women who carried out war-work honed their organisational skills and proved to themselves and others that they could function in the public and the private sphere. Previously unknown women were transformed almost overnight into public speakers, political strategists, writers and leaders of women. Aroused to public work by a sense of duty and patriotism, these Jamaican women capitalised on their increased visibility not only to assist in their country's response to war, but to also improve their own status. Upper- and middle-class women in particular emerged from the war victorious in their own right. While they were historically accorded a high social status by virtue of their colour and class and relation to prominent men in the society, they were previously relegated to duties that rarely extended outside the domestic sphere. But from the humble beginnings of knitting groups, work groups and small recruitment movements, these women effectively carved out a niche in society for themselves. Many acquired the confidence to speak on public platforms, write in the leading newspapers, and express their thoughts to the public on various matters that concerned them. Also, through charitable war efforts, working-class women were assisted, since a few of the work groups employed their

services as seamstresses. Though less in the forefront of war-work during World War I, working-class women were also pulled along with this general tide of female empowerment in the post-war years. They were also accorded importance because they were key intermediaries between recruiters and the men targeted for enlistment.

Jamaica became a space that afforded some measure of upward social mobility in the post-war years. Gordon (1996, 77–78) for instance, asserted that women made considerable gains in the immediate post war period in the area of upward social mobility and rates of employment. While not directly attributing these phenomena to World War II, he explored the measurement of upward social mobility and female incorporation in the workforce in the post war period. He found that women more than doubled their numbers in the classifiable labour force from 183,455 in 1943 to 418,010 in 1984. Not only did women increase their levels of employment dramatically in the 40 years after the World War II, but there were significant changes in the types of jobs they held. They experienced an expansion in the employment opportunities afforded to them, particularly in white-collar work, clerical work and formal service occupations.

Women's involvement in war impacted on the lives of those who actually participated and had indirect results on those not associated with the movements. The response of women to both wars invariably influenced their social future in the island and extended beyond those who knitted, prepared preserves or sewed clothes as a part of women's war committees. The impact of warfare on people extends beyond the traditional rhetoric of military history. The full story of the impact of World Wars I and II on Jamaica has perhaps not yet been told. However, a substantial part of the story of Jamaican women's experiences during the conflicts has now been unearthed. The impact of the wars created ripple effects that are still being felt today, even if they are not noticed or easily identifiable. Although many of the women who worked for King, country and self are no longer with us, their work and legacy resonate through the ages. Their bravery in challenging entrenched gender norms caused Jamaica to sit up and take notice of its female population in unprecedented ways. Many were lauded, others were criticised, but overall, women became harder to ignore, and while they may not have won the wars for Britain they should never be forgotten for the small victories they were able to win for King, country, and particularly themselves.

## NOTES

1. Mrs. Norma Wint, interview with Dalea Bean, 4 July 2005.
2. This was particularly evident with the wave of migrants after 1948, the first set of 493 arriving on the *Empire Windrush*. Most of those on board had served in the British armed forces during the war and were returning. For details of their experiences and the legacy of black migration in Post war Britain see Phillips (1998), Walker and Elcock (1998) and Mead (2009).

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