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AFRICAN AND AFRO-CARIBBEAN REPATRIATION, 1919–1922

Black Voices

Jane L. Chapman

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ISBN 978-3-319-68812-1 ISBN 978-3-319-68813-8 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68813-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018946185

Cover illustration: © Melisa Hasan

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

This book is dedicated to those people, past and present, who fight or have fought discrimination in all its forms.

Acknowledgements

This study forms part of the author's research on ethnic empire participation in the First World War and the aftermaths, working with TREC (The Centre for Racial Equality) on the 'Hidden Histories' Centenary project, entitled 'African, Asian and Caribbean Empire Contributions to World War One' (2016–2017).

It is also supported by the 'Everyday Lives at War' Centenary Commemoration Centre, for which the author has been a Chief Investigator since 2014. Both networks are AHRC/HLF funded.

Thanks to Terry Barringer of Wolfson College Cambridge and the Royal Commonwealth Society for drawing my attention to Dr. Mandy Banton's paper on colonial archives, presented to the BALH and ICwS Workshop 28 February 2014, in which she refers to her Heritage Lottery Fund project, 2004–2007 'Your Caribbean Heritage' to catalogue Colonial Office correspondence.

Thanks also to the staff at The National Archives and Cambridge University Library for their help and to the Royal Commonwealth Society *Round Table* for hosting my paper on this project and on my previous research. Finally, my gratitude, as ever, to Emily Russell, Carmel Kennedy, and the editorial and production teams at Palgrave, to Lincoln University and to my long-suffering family for their continuing support.

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Interrogating Neglected Voices

Abstract This introductory chapter introduces three main arguments: first, that the sheer volume of racist expressions was accompanied by expansive articulations of black protest, underlining the importance of close reading of language in communications. Secondly, the centrality of economic factors is illustrated by human stories, in particular, lack of employment and appallingly financial hardship. Thirdly, there is a transnational flavour to the particular communications and events which resonated throughout Britain and elsewhere in its empire. Scholars have addressed this change of attitude towards black empire contributions in Britain by reference to the race riots, but have not analysed in any detail what happened afterwards, especially in terms of individual voices. This study emphasises use of language by acknowledging letters and petitions as works of non-fiction literature.

Keywords Racist expressions · British Empire · Black communities African and Afro-Caribbean · Repatriation · Protest

This study represents the first systematic attempt to analyse records of people of African and Afro-Caribbean origin who put into writing their circumstances and views in relation to repatriation during the aftermaths of the First World War in Britain. Personal stories provide historical evidence of post-conflict readjustment, and a change in attitude at the end of the war. Such information is timely within three different present

J. L. Chapman, *African and Afro-Caribbean Repatriation, 1919–1922*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68813-8_1

contexts: firstly the continuing imperative to rediscover and recuperate black history[1]; secondly because questions of repatriation and immigration continue to be an issue throughout the world; and thirdly because the attention of research and commemorations for the Centenary of the First World War[2] is now turning to the aftermaths of that conflict.

Furthermore, the three main arguments presented in the pages that follow all evoke comparison not just with existing scholarship but also with some present-day discourses worldwide. Firstly, the sheer volume of what we now refer to as racist expression simultaneously accompanied by expansive articulations of protest, underlines the importance of close reading of language in communications and archival study. Secondly, the centrality of economic factors is illustrated by human stories, in particular, lack of employment, appallingly financial hardship, and desperate living conditions. Thirdly, there is a transnational flavour to the particular communications and events in this study, resonating throughout Britain and elsewhere in its empire.

The analysis focuses on 1919–1922 as a specific period of history, which involved wide-ranging adjustments after the First World War, in this case centring exclusively on African and Afro-Caribbean experiences during the *aftermaths* of the 1919 race riots.[3] This study demonstrates not only how non-white soldiers, particularly those from the Caribbean and West African regions of the British Empire, experienced a profound change of attitude in Britain, but more importantly, in terms of the emphasis of the research presented, their reaction to it.

At present, there are no volumes that address in detail this specific topic in this specific manner, yet it has wider relevance in the light of post-war racial violence in the United States, as well as the social upheaval in Britain, the Caribbean and elsewhere during this period. Although fighting on the battlefields had ceased, the struggle for rights and representation intensified. This work provides a microstudy of the complexity of the new post-war First World War world, which was the most troubled period of peace that the world had hitherto seen (Cabanes 2014[4]).

Thus the findings in this study add to the body of research on the aftermaths of the First World War, black studies, and the origins of diaspora. Articulations featured here have implications for concepts of citizenship, adding an ethnic dimensions to the author's 2013 work on 'cultural citizenship'. In addition, communications in this book add to transnational memory studies as an emerging field in which the aftermaths of the First World War are under-explored.

Approach

Periodisation within specialised studies often moves from the Great War to the interwar years more generally, either nationally or transnationally (see, inter-alia: Mazón and Steingröver, ed. 2005; Wilder 2005; Makalani 2011; Adi 2013; Ezra 2000; Dewitte 2007; Chickering and Förster 2003; Matera and Kingsley Kent 2017[5]). This study argues for the aftermaths of war to be given more attention as a distinctly defined period of post-conflict adjustment in which individual voices need to be highlighted. African and Afro-Caribbean contributions towards the war effort were accepted (if not openly valued), their loyalty anticipated and their contribution acknowledged—at least by present day writers (Fryer 1984; Costello 2015; Olusoga 2014; Smith 2015a, b[6]). However, when the conflict ended ex-soldiers and merchant seamen were expected to return to their native islands, usually without financial support or much help. Scholars have addressed this change of attitude towards black empire contributions in Britain by reference to the race riots (Jenkinson 1987; Fryer, op.cit.[7]), but have not analysed in any detail what happened afterwards, especially in terms of individual voices.

One of the main purposes of this study is to emphasise the use of language, and in the process, to acknowledge letters and petitions as works of non-fiction literature.[8] Using individual appeals and records, research addresses: who were affected and how did they articulate their concerns in writing? A full examination of individual accounts provides first-hand insight into how physical and political oppression was specifically understood by members of the African Caribbean community. Written evidence will be scrutinised for aspects such as a sense of either empowerment or disempowerment, visibility, self-esteem, and economic struggles for survival. Through the highlighting of keywords, phrases and themes as qualitative critical discourse analysis, text-based understanding of the political/societal implications of writings is enhanced (after Fairclough 1995[9]). This technique is equally valid for analysis of the significance of language in news texts (after Fowler 1991[10]).

The articulated views of people of Africans and Afro-Caribbean origin have sometimes survived directly in the form of statements given to the authorities and letters of appeal against repatriation, which could involve separation of men from wives and families. Analysis of these texts addresses how intrinsic economic concerns were to the process of black articulation, providing examples of the inequality of imperial balances of

power, as defined by Catherine Hall in relation to the nineteenth century (2002: 8[11]). Clearly black voices in print act as forms of communication that reveal attitudes not only to the difficulties and traumas of the moment, but also to concepts and definitions of identity—in relation to self, family, country, race, and the environment in which writers found themselves. The implications for the study of identity, its nature, and definitions, are profound: prevailing notions of identity were challenged, undermined, and redefined, with various transnational influences and implications, as Chapters 3 and 4 discuss.

Thus narratives in the pages that follow are driven by an agenda that seeks to uncover hidden voices, emerging from records of correspondence. These are mostly focused on appellants requesting financial help, stating their hardship and reacting to procedures for repatriation. A variety of people were affected by repatriation, ranging from de-mobilised soldiers and prisoners of war (POWs), to black people imprisoned during the riots and seamen stranded in various ports. Many were returning Afro and Afro-Caribbean soldiers, and seamen. Their written voices are located in Colonial Office (henceforth C.O.) records at The National Archives, along with internal discussions amongst civil servants, reports and memos from other departments such as the Board of Trade, Foreign Office, Home Office, War Office, and the Ministry of Shipping. These responses by government departments are useful for context, and importantly, for additional third-party impressions and comment from individual civil servants and/or police who may have met the person, or discussed the circumstances with others in authority. Also included within this category of record are letters of support from interest groups representing black people, either collectively or individually, such as charities, churches, trade unions (in the West Indies, for instance) and other interest groups.

The research process has involved a dissection of a painful history of events, that is manifested through un-digitised records, located amongst a morass of government colonial archives, not catalogued specifically for individual voices of African or Afro-Caribbean origin (although some paper files are specifically categorised according to colonial territory). The personal stories which form the main focus of this book are frequently incomplete, but they still act as an uncomfortable reminder of Britain's historical record of repatriation—or more accurately in many cases, deportation. What precisely is the added value that derives from individual voices, even when records are incomplete and fragmented?

Quite simply, there is a need to address this neglected area of study, in which an innovative source of data is forwarded in order to engage with a neglected topic. Individuals wrote in their own hands, and in their own ways.[12] By today's standards of brevity, voices on paper from a hundred years ago can appear rambling, and in the case of many non-black contributors, somewhat patronising and frequently racist in their use of language.[13] In fact, it was frequently mentioned in African and Afro-Caribbean petitions and letters, and on one occasion was drawn to the attention of Lord Milner, Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Governor of Antigua, citing the view of Major Tough, who was in charge of the Second British West Indian Regiment (B.W.I.R.):

> The Commandant of the Local Forces informs me that the application of the term "Natives" or "Native Troops" to the British West Indian Regiment is bitterly resented by the Non-Commissioned Officers and men, and that he has received more than one letter of protest from returned soldiers on this subject. (C.O. 318/349[14])

This resentment was shared equally by those who experienced repatriation. Words such as 'nigger' formed part of common parlance, and were liberally applied by mainstream popular newspapers in their coverage of the 1919 riots, even the venerable radical Sunday weekly *Reynold's News* (founded by a Chartist and later owned by the National Cooperative Press): 'Here and there a nigger has brought all his trouble upon himself, but in many cases there have been wanton attacks on quite innocent and peaceable coloured men who came voluntarily to help the Empire in its hour of need' (H.O. 45/11017/377969[15]). Collecting the written record of neglected black voices can be controversial, for it raises the issue of interpretation. Leopold von Ranke, the nineteenth century pioneer of archive-based historical research considered that its method was not to judge the past, but to show what had happened. This study attempts to highlight texts, rather than judge them.

Racial Tension, Demobilisation, and Transnational Riots During 1919

By 1919, both problems and administrative burdens had increased: civil servants still had to deal with inadequate procedures for and delays in de-mobilisation on a daily basis, followed by race riots and the

day-to-day implications of executing adjustments to the policy aimed at encouraging repatriation. In the immediate aftermaths of conflict, initial discussions focused on the slow demobilisation of African and Afro-Caribbean soldiers. Many civil servants at the C.O. took the view that when it came to demobilisation, the armed forces were somehow escaping responsibility: 'Having used these men in the Army and having then demobilized them in this unfortunate country, the Military Authorities plead no jurisdiction' (C.O. 318/349[16]).

Some of the prevailing 'zeitgeist' emerges as an inescapable reality of attitudes towards race that were widely prevalent during this period. After the 1919 riots, government recognition of the economic grievances of people in the West Indies suggests that the protests of repatriated black soldiers and soldiers of the B.W.I.R. had a significance both locally and centrally within colonial government, for instance. Equally government attitudes towards miscegenation and family matters, and more generally towards race, challenges the myth that still exists today of civil service neutrality and impartiality.

Amongst the volumes of paperwork, one letter from a member of the armed forces to the C.O. is particularly distinctive for its offensive tone. Although it was circulated amongst officials for comment, they did not rise to the bait. Colonel Piers W. North of the 3rd Royal Berkshire Regiment, writing from Newton Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale on 6 January 1919, was forthright in complaining that 'some damned fool or fools enlisted a lot of West Indian blacks at New York for white regiments in the British army' (C.O. 318/349[17]). He claimed that numbers averaged twenty to thirty per battalion, and that 'they all get white women – the men won't be going on guard with a lot of niggers and the blacks themselves will be quite spoilt when they get back – now that demobilisation has started.' North wanted the Colonial Office to suggest that 'all West Indian blacks serving in British white regiments be demobilised at once….Wishing you a very happy new Year (sic) – Yours sincerely, Piers W. North' (ibid.). His hope was that his letter would accelerate procedures. Indeed, the letter went on to Downing Street, where the response was restrained: 'you have put your finger on a regrettable incident. It appears that the men you speak of were recruited by a Committee in New York, how far connected with our Government I really do not know, and I suspect that the pros and cons of this kind of recruitment were insufficiently considered' (C.O. 318/349[18]). North's letter was filed away ('put by' was the Whitehall expression):

> we cannot decide the policy or discuss it… the C.O. has no responsibility for these men and when they are demobilised, it is up to the military authorities to return them whence they came. The only possible answer to this letter is that the C.O. cannot intervene. (C.O. 318/349/414[19])

On 3 October 1919, the essence of many voices—especially those of black seamen at the time—was explained to the C.O. by the Governor of Jamaica, who wrote: 'They appear to be cherishing a grievance that their patriotic services in the Mercantile Marine during the war have been entirely disregarded,[20] and they contend that they have been repatriated in undeserved disgrace without means to support themselves, and without facilities to obtain employment' (C.O. 318/349[21]). Other C.O. administrators noted that this feeling was not confined to the Mercantile Marine, and North's feeling that black soldiers had been 'quite spoiled' by the war was shared by the police in the light of race riots of June 1919. One report from the Liverpool constabulary, forwarded to Scotland Yard on 13 November that year referred to friction during the 'racial riots', claiming that:

> This feeling has probably been engendered by the arrogant and overbearing conduct of the negro population towards the white, and by the white women who live or inhabit with the black man, boasting to other women of the superior qualities of the negroes (sic) as compared with those of the white man. (C.O. 318/349[22])

This concern came within the context of the seaport riots in Britain and also visits to the Caribbean by Pan African activists to encourage further radicalisation.[23] Typical of racial awareness shown in correspondence was a view on 4 December 1919 by the British Mission in New York, drawing the attention of the C.O. to evidence of 'a movement amongst negroes of this country to join with the more lawless American elements in fomenting a Race War in Africa' and requesting advice on how to obtain further information in confidence, since 'such correspondence should not pass through the hands of the native clerks at the different Secretariats' (C.O. 318/349[24]). An internal C.O. memorandum was circulated for discussion on 7 October 1919. On 22 October 1919 Gilbert Grindle, assistant Under-Secretary summarised the situation: 'It is quite true that racial feeling is rising in the W.I. (sic) as elsewhere. The causes are many – participation of coloured men in the war – slights and insults

received by them, mainly from Dominion troops on account of their colour – in the USA race troubles – Liverpool and Cardiff riots – and in addition the general unrest all over the world' (C.O. 318/352[25]).

Demobilisation had been followed by unrest in the West Indies. Individual governors and their staff wrote to London about riots by returning soldiers. On 25 July the Governor of British Honduras, signing off as 'Johnstone', described by telegram how businesses and private houses in Belize were being looted, whilst the Police were incapable of dealing with the situation. Seven days later, the Governor of Barbados sent Downing Street a copy of a telegram from a government official in Trinidad, reporting 'the growth of feeling hostile to Europeans among the coloured population' and commented that 'there is a great deal of latent unrest throughout the world from which we are not free in Barbados' (C.O. 318/349[26]). Later, a feeling of relief—that colonial unrest could have been worse—emerges in a Jamaican memorandum reporting that, despite looting, 'The feelings, however, of the Citizens (sic) in general were with us' (C.O. 318/349[27]).

Equally, police in mainland Britain were responsive towards what they perceived as the feelings of the majority of the population. A police report from Liverpool Central Police Office, dated 10 June 1919, had already proposed compulsory repatriation: 'I am confident that, unless a drastic and quick clearance is made, disturbances leading to loss of life will result' (C.O. 318/349[28]). This use of the word 'clearance' in the light of subsequent twentieth and twenty-first century ethnic cleansing, introduces for today's reader uncomfortable connotations rather than simply being accepted as a quick solution to a problem, which was probably the intention of this use of language in correspondence. The police officer went on to suggest that trouble had been caused 'mainly on account of the blacks interfering with white women, capturing a portion of the labour market and West Indians having been demobilized here with plenty of cash assuming an aggressive attitude.'

This resentment over perceived attitudes of African, Afro-Caribbean and other non-white people was shared by the C.O.:

> These people can get money practically for the asking and won't leave the country while there is anything to be made by staying here. It is of no use buying them off: they simply spend the money and miss the boat on some pretext. When this happens the B.T. refuse to provide them with another passage and cut off the work dole. Then they call here and worry…..Only the rascals cause disturbances. (C.O. 323/810[29])

It seems that cash did not last long, then the reality was usually an urban existence characterised by deprivation, poverty, and hardship.[30] From Cardiff, solicitor Geo. F. Willett reported on 13 June 1919 that:

> Unfortunately owing to scarcity of houses in this city certain men who have returned from the army have taken umbrage against the coloured man having houses and filling their jobs as they say and taking their white women from them.

He later recounted on a meeting that he was invited to, at which black people called on the government to protect them:

> …as Britishers (sic) because they have done their best during the war, and many of their relatives have been lost through enemy action of which they have not complained and very few have received compensation. ….Many of these people have resided in Cardiff for many years. They are married and keep respectable homes and they feel the treatment they are receiving at the hands of the rough elements of Cardiff very acutely. They ask that if the British government cannot protect them here that the government shall provide them with ships to go back to their own country and they are prepared to do so at very short notice. (C.O. 323/819[31])

Chapter Outlines

Although the British government repatriation scheme was in force before the riots commenced and was administered by the Board of Trade, it came into the spotlight as a government solution after the 1919 violent disturbances. Departmental responsibilities for the various aspects of de-mobilisation and repatriation were not always clear to appellants, and confusion over financial entitlement was often a major factor in the representations made by Africans and Afro-Caribbean people to departments of government. Chapter 2 analyses third-party voices in a specific way, as information relating to people of African and Afro-Caribbean origin to be discerned from the authorities' records. This involves an examination of attitudes that emerge in government texts. These were of their time, but have not previously been subjected to methodological scrutiny using qualitative discourse analysis.

There are a significant number of individuals mentioned in correspondence about whom there is some (but not usually extensive) information. These are people who either did not commit to composing their

own letters or views as protest, or if they did, such papers did not survive as archives. If would not be accurate to call such individuals a 'silent majority', because they had a voice and were not necessarily silent. Quite the contrary, in many cases where individuals made their presence felt in their dealings with the authorities: they filled in forms or presented themselves to intermediaries such as charities or a solicitor (especially for financial claims), or went in person to government offices where individual civil servants would interview them and complete the paperwork on their behalf. By and large, the African and Afro-Caribbean 'voices' that are featured in this chapter are individuals whose record exists and have been analysed in this chapter for third-party comment and the way that individual experiences shed light on the procedures or attitudes of the authorities.

A better understanding of administrator views helps to provide context and background information for the ordinary people's communications that follow. Somewhat tortuous government procedures for funded boat passage back to the country of origin, and a change in policy during the period under discussion added to the confusion of those concerned over entitlement to payments and allowances. This, in turn, provoked black 'voices' to speak up, through letters and collectively via petitions. These direct communications are both the subject of Chapter 3. On 22 October 1919, a draft report included an insight about this troubled period.

> I think the trouble is a fact to be faced, and that there is no special remedy for it. We can provide against disorder, improve conditions, and be careful over questions of race, but nothing we can do will alter the fact that the black man has begun to think and feel himself as good as the white. (C.O. 318/352[32])

Historical evidence has to be assessed within its own epoch, even if the reader (understandably) cannot escape post-colonial, twenty-first century outlooks. Today, the last sentence in the above quote would be interpreted as institutional racism within the heart of government, but at the time, it may well have been received by fellow civil servants and by their politicians as a frank assessment of a longer term trend enhanced by the nature of the black British Empire contribution to the First World War. According to Jenkinson, 'The existence of a well settled black population in Britain meant little to officialdom in comparison with the recent

riots and the ongoing problem of high unemployment in the merchant shipping industry' (2009: 172–173[33]). This generalised comment is tested in Chapter 2 in terms of the reactions of civil servants to individual human examples.

Chapter 3 focuses on direct written voices, in the form of letters of protest and/or appeal, as well as petitions as a collective voice. Groups of people and individuals wrote directly to the authorities, either in the United Kingdom, or in the territories of empire that the person originated from, and/or was repatriated to. Change in identity is demonstrated here within the context of specific post-war circumstances during the aftermaths of the conflict, in particular, the dismal employment situation in merchant shipping. This is graphically described by individuals who narrate their specific experiences. When individuals of Afro-Caribbean origin appealed, their writing provides clear evidence that they took strong offence to what appeared to be imperial rejection during the aftermaths of war. The chapter presents and discusses black voices as individual examples in more detail. Much of this evidence involves financial hardship and racial discrimination. These texts need to be recognised as constituting a historic, literary voice for individual black people, supporting Derrida's concept of 'traces' (1982, 1992[34]). Most of the information is incomplete, in that it is impossible to round off and conclude each story as a self-contained narrative, but the fragments that still exist will contribute empirically to family, and/or local histories, as well as to bigger thematic and theoretical studies.

Chapter 4 provides some conclusions, assessing the contribution to our further understanding of contextual post-war issues. In particular, Stuart Hall has referred to 'history as a minority event – the speaking of a past which previously had no language' (Hall in King, ed. 1997[35]). Thus the emphasis has to be on the needs of people directly affected, and on their expressions of identity (Hall 1990, 1996[36]). As he explains, 'diaspora[37] identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (1990: 235; see also Gilroy 1993: 193[38]). This diverse flow of black identity is demonstrated here by simultaneous flows of defence and attack: written communications were used as a means of self-defence, frequently to promote a collective voice, yet letter writing by black people also amounted to an attack or challenge based on idealism and visions of a better world, prompting discussion in this chapter of how central Hall's point is to the nature of black communications. Were reactions dystopian

or utopian? Primarily negative or tinted with idealism in the face of adversity? What challenges, if any, to the concept of empire emerge from these experiences?

Contexts

In reality, the ethnic composition of certain port areas had roots far earlier than demobilisation from the war. There were approximately 5000 black people in Liverpool, and distinct, communities in ports such as Cardiff, in what was referred to by the local white population, according to *The Times* newspaper as 'Nigger Town' (13 June 1919, p. 9), (C.O. 323/816).[39] Similarly, a report of a conference of representatives from all government departments who were affected by the riots noted that of the 700 black people held for their own safety in the Liverpool Bridewell during early June, 'They were most West Indian or West African and the former were the more troublesome of the two. There were no Indians. Some of the remainder had been established in this country for years' (C.O. 318/350[40]).

Written voices of those in need were referred to by the authorities as 'distressed negroes.' Most were unemployed sailors, clustered around ports that had expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century, such as Cardiff (with casual tramp steamer work), Bristol, North and South Shields, along Tyneside, Liverpool (with liner trade), and of course, London where the greatest number of transient black seamen congregated. However, in terms of context, it is worth remembering that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, British seaports were the most ethnically varied, and indeed internationally diverse in the country. As hubs for the shipping of the British Empire, and its global outreaches, they attracted a rich concentration of overseas labour—migration from what may have appeared to contemporaries in the metropolis as distant (and even exotic) lands. Yet before the First World War, West Indians, unlike Africans and Indians, lacked political representation in London, despite the fact that they formed the majority of black unemployed (Walvin 1973[41]).

Of course, discrimination was nothing new: during the First World War, 2500 black West Indian volunteers had found themselves banned from combat duty, and relegated to contributions such as labour gangs (op.cit., p. 205). After the conflict, blacks became persona non-grata,

an attitude that was blatantly manifested in the 1919 riots in Britain and elsewhere. Despite the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century and up until the outbreak of the First World War, the numbers of black people living in metropolitan Britain was tiny, the periodic response of the Colonial Office was repatriation. This policy was not without its administrative problems when some West Indian islands refused to readmit men of local origin. Winston James has estimated that up to three million people were repatriated, based on figures from the Metropolitan Police of people they approached on board ships prior to sailing (2004: 357[42]). However, records at The National Archives indicate a total of about 2000 people repatriated at government expense by the end of 1921 (Jenkinson 2009: 167[43]). For this study, it is not the statistics but the personal reactions in writing that matter. These contribute to a long view that repatriation was an established practice in British history. Thus Walvin indicates it was an explanatory factor in the Sierra Leone scheme of 1787, that it was used after the 1919 riots, and received powerful support as a concept during the 1960s: 'Whenever British society ran into social trouble with the black minorities it had created and exploited, repatriation was its first political response' (1973: 208[44]).

The personal narratives and experiences of individuals who were at the receiving end of attempts at repatriation following the outbreaks of racial violence in Britain after 1919 were set against a general backdrop of economic crisis, political and cultural contradiction, 'Hatred, certainly not lacking in the pre-war world, began to play a central role in public affairs everywhere' (Arendt 1951: 26[45]). Historians of immigration, diaspora and race have adopted a broadly empirical approach at continental and national levels (Schor 1985, 1996; Panayi 1993, 1994, 1999; Killingray, ed. 1994; Rich 1986[46]), and the post-war climate—one of exceptional violence and racial tensions in Britain—should be contextualised within the broader European backdrop (Gerwarth and Horne, eds. 2012[47]), as well as within the context of a troubled climate of rioting and social protest within Britain. Throughout the course of the war there had been widespread anti-German riots, as well as anti-Jewish riots in Leeds and London's East End in 1917 (Panayi 1991[48]). After the Armistice in November 1918, further riots were sparked by the desire for speedier de-mobilisation, exemplified by at least 3 episodes involving Canadian servicemen, and also by German prisoners of war in rural Lincolnshire,[49] all awaiting repatriation.

Accordingly, fragments of individual stories have to be pieced together against a background of immediate post-war economic crisis and race riots. No proper unemployment benefit or retraining was available to men returning to the Caribbean, and unemployment was high. Ordinary people's experience during this period build on existing published content by key figures in media history, the First World War, interwar history, and black diaspora studies, historical contexts—such as work by Hall, Gilroy, Jenkinson, and Killingray.

Although the First World War escalated the British need for black labour—in the armed forces, in shipping, and in the munitions and chemical factories of the North and Midlands (Walvin, op.cit., p. 205), this boom was temporary. Africans and Afro-Caribbean contributions to the war effort had been desperately encouraged, but in the aftermaths of the conflict, they were no longer wanted as recession set in, competition increased and industry contracted. Trade unions in the United Kingdom pressed for white working class job priority, with the result that blacks—often stranded in the metropolis and seaports—found themselves both unemployed and unemployable.

During the war there had been severe discontent over unequal treatment amongst non-white troops, especially in the B.W.I.R. during 1917. This continued into the aftermaths of war during the period of demobilisation. The question of entitlement for black people was certainly not new. On 27 July 1919, within a context earlier that year of indiscipline and unrest amongst the B.W.I.R., when colonial staff had been instructed to take precautions to maintain order during demobilisation, Governor of the Windward Islands Haddon Smith telegraphed London to request immediate clarification on entitlement of the regiments to 'out of work donation policy', whilst Government House, Trinidad pointed out to Lord Milner (secretary of State at the C.O.) as late as 22 December 1919 that in addition to the racial feeling outlined above, the main causes of discontent amongst soldiers were delay in supplying information about payments still owing and that 'the Colonial Government had not recognised their services to Empire by granting them a gratuity' (C.O. 318/349[50]).

Mass protests had often involved disillusioned ex-servicemen,[51] for instance in March 1919 in London, in Edinburgh in July 1919, and in Luton that month, when they burned down the Town Hall (Orr 1999, 2 (1), p. 17[52]). On 13 June 1919, the Cardiff City Chief Constable called in his reports for 'immediate steps to be taken for repatriation of

all unemployed coloured seamen.' In his report, he provided detailed information about the numbers of various nationalities in the city, the likelihood that different groups would accept repatriation, and the financial problems of boarding house owners who opposed repatriation because debts would not be reimbursed. Despite lobbying by the latter, he concluded that 'the views expressed are generally held by the community and they look to the Government to remove this menace' (H.O. 384/61[53]).

Civil servants recognised that the government's record of dealing with discrimination on the grounds of colour was not good. After the C.O. received police reports from Hull and South Shields on the riots there, they considered sending extracts to the Trinidad Returning Soldiers Association to refute this organisation's complaints of ill treatment during riots elsewhere in Britain. A (draft) suggestion was circulated amongst the office team for comment. Today this would be referred to as internal consultation about departmental public relations, or 'spin.' The general consensus was that during the riots, instigators came from both sides, prompting senior official Mr Grindle to write: 'It is disappointing. I had hoped we might be able to make up a good statement on the coloured riots, but the material is not promising.' In particular, the team had hoped to refute the story that white rioters had torn open the coffin of a deceased black man during the funeral procession, much discussed on the island of Trinidad, but on balance, and without sufficient conclusive evidence, decided that silence was the best option[54] (C.O. 323/819[55]).

The human environment, anxieties, and the racist compulsions made post-riot experiences during the window of 1919–1921 extremely poignant. Evidenced in towns and cities as diverse as London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Manchester, Barry, Newton, and Hull, some of the most moving records involve family appellants. There was much discussion about concerns over miscegenation. Equally, much of the writing of appellants is connected with family matters such as fears of separation. It is certainly true that white concern about miscegenation was widespread, and these are examined in more detail in the next chapter. Whereas famous examples of mixed marriages and partnerships, such as that of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Jessie Fleetwood, are relatively well documented,[56] the way prejudice against this phenomenon impacted upon less educated people, is not. As a generalisation, Walvin comments: 'Although difficult to prove, it would seem that interracial sexual relations and the hostile

response towards them constitute one of the most important ingredients in the slow generation of English racialism, from the sixteenth century to the twentieth' (op.cit., pp. 208–209).

In 1919, unemployment and dislocation during the aftermaths of conflict seemed to revive the issue. A report by the Chief Constable's office in South Shields, dated 17 November 1919, noted that:

> Apparently coloured men 'enticed white girls to their houses', describing in addition a complaint 'that Adenese had opened shops and cafes which was unfair while the whites had to perform their Military and Naval obligations (sic). The complaint is also that young girls are sought to act as assistants and waitresses in the shops and cafes and succumb to the advances of these men.' (C.O. 318/349[57])

Nevertheless, Walvin concludes that 'Oddly enough, the most common heard complaint – black relations with white women – had nothing to do with the economic situation of the rioters. This resentment was in fact not an articulated complaint but an inbred response' (op.cit., pp. 208–209). Unsurprisingly, the government took an initial view that coloured men who had married white women should not be offered the repatriation grant.

Transnational Appeals

Individual and group voices of Afro and Afro-Caribbean people emerged as an element of wider unrest in various parts of the British Empire and elsewhere during 1919. The C.O. recognised the increasing strategic importance of Jamaica, since the opening of the Panama Canal, as an increasingly important centre of trade. Unrest in the West Indies had first started on this island. The Officer Commanding Troops, Jamaica (sic, C.O. 137/735[58]) anticipated labour troubles for at least a year after the war, and local disturbances were seen by C.O. staff as inevitable, due to the demobilisation of the B.W.I.R. In March 1918 a small force had to be sent to Antigua, in August reports came in that in Trinidad, where the white population 'got cold feet,' whilst unrest was also: 'due to the presence of all these demobilised soldiers who do not feel inclined to work and who put forward preposterous demands' (op.cit.[59]). By November, reports from Trinidad were drawing attention to unequal treatment for allowances. Meanwhile, the garrison was strengthened in Jamaica,

despite the peacetime reductions in security. Unrest transnationally was the topic of much discussion within government circles, as officials struggled to cope with more limited resources, including armed forces and security since the end of the war.

Letters of complaint were frequently forwarded to the C.O. from other departments, such as the War Office, when they included allegations about local administration, as was the case of a lengthy missive from the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Council, Trinidad (3 December 1919), as a 'protest against the non-payment of the dues, pay, allowances and other allotments to which they are entitled' (C.O. 318/350[60]). Such examples are not isolated, but rather part of a transnational wave of discontent in which disenfranchised voices rose to the surface—this time without fear of penalty for mutiny. In fact, government officials, in their responses to individuals, were inevitably influenced by broader factors. Correspondence from and about individual men on the *Santille* ship, prompted by disturbances on the ship illustrates this point (see Chapter 3).

In 1919, telegrams from Kingston (Jamaica) recounted that 'disorder strikes 28th and 29th not serious but threatening. As precautionary measure troops patrolling city' (Kingston) (C.O. 137/735[61]). On 5 January 1920, Mr Grindle complained in a memo that the C.O. had not yet heard from the Governor on the matter, but that he assumed therefore that any problems had been dealt with before they escalated. Another C.O. official commented that Sir Leslie Probyn (Governor) would help to settle strikes and 'get wages raised to a reasonable level. But the problem may come later when the workmen want more than is reasonable' (ibid.). Opinions about racial tensions and potential unrest in C.O. correspondence were tempered now by the reality of limited security. Pragmatism in the face of limited resources was epitomised by a softer tone of realism in colonial communications, recognising the role of economic factors in accounting for unrest. This acknowledgement of the economic basis for unrest during the aftermaths of war touches upon broader scholarly differences in interpretation on the one hand, between what has been referred to as the 'race relations' approach, giving precedence in causality to issues of ethnicity, and on the other hand, the Marxist analysis, that gives precedence to economic factors.

In relation to the 1919 riots in British seaports, Jenkinson's in-depth study highlights the fact that racism alone is insufficient as an explanation, because it does not explain why the riots only took place in ports (and not elsewhere), nor why they happened in 1919, and not earlier

or later, when racism also existed.[62] During the aftermaths of war the weakened seaman's trade union in the United Kingdom adopted restrictive practices that effectively amounted to a colour bar. This organisation kept records (which it shared with the authorities) of the numbers of blacks in various ports, arguing for employment priority for their own (white) members, often returning from war service. The union was represented on various local committees dealing with repatriation. If economics provided a root cause, nevertheless racism worsened feelings. As Castles and Kosack state in their now classic analysis of immigrant workers in Europe: 'Prejudice hinders communication and prevents the development of class solidarity' (1973: 6–7[63]). Findings presented in the pages that follow may well lend renewed support to that well-established theory.

Notes

1. Africans have lived in Britain for centuries, see Kaufmann, M. (2017) *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*, Oneworld, London.
2. This study is supported by two of the AHRC funded Centenary Commemoration Centres: *Hidden Histories* and also *Everyday Lives at War*. http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/research/fundedthemesandprogrammes/worldwaroneanditslegacy/worldwaroneengagementcentres/; http://hiddenhistorieswwi.ac.uk/; https://everydaylivesinwar.herts.ac.uk/.
3. For more on the riots themselves, see Jenkinson, J. (2009) *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool; Fryer, P. (1984) *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, Pluto Press, London.
4. Cabanes, B. (2014) *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
5. Mazón. P. and Steingröver, R. (eds.) (2005) *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890–2000,* University of Rochester Press, Rochester; Wilder, G. (2005) *The French Imperial State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Makalani, M. (2011) *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill; Adi, H. (2013) *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and Diaspora, 1919–1939*, Africa World Press, Trenton; Ezra, E. (2000) *The Colonial Unconscious: Race and Culture in Interwar France*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London; Dewitte, P. (2007) *Les mouvements nègres en France, 1919–1939*, l'Harmatten, Paris; Chickering, R. and

Förster, S. (2003) *The Shadow of Total War: Europe, East Asia and the United States*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Matera, M. and Kingsley Kent, S. (2017) *The Global 1930s: The International Decade*, Taylor and Francis, New York.

6. Fryer, op.cit.; Costello, R. (2015) *Black Tommies*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool; Olusoga, D. (2014) *The World's War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire*, Head of Zeus, London; Smith, R. (2015a) 'The Impact of the First World War on Pan Africanism' in D.R. Cohen and D. Higbee, eds. *Options for Teaching Representations of the First World* War, Modern Languages Association, New York; Smith, R. (2015b) 'Colonial Soldiers: Race, Military Service and Masculinity During and Beyond WW1 and WW2' in K. Hagemann, D. Bonker, S. Dudink, and S. Rose, eds. *Gender, War and the Western World Since 1650*, Oxford University Press, New York.
7. Jenkinson, J. (1987) 'Repatriation to the West Indies: A Repercussion of the 1919 Race Riots in Britain', *Inter-Arts* (Spring), pp. 11–13.
8. For existing autobiographies, see McKay, C. (1929) *Banjo: A Story Without a Plot*, Harper Brothers Publishers, New York; Marke, E. (1975) *Old Man Trouble*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London.
9. Fairclough, N. (1995) *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, Routledge, London.
10. Fowler, R. (1991) *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, Routledge, London.
11. Hall, C. (2002) *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
12. Only rare voices of women exist on record. These tend to consist either of white women, in their roles as wives, partners or landladies of black men whose repatriation was under consideration, or mothers in the country of origin, in cases where they were called upon to confirm residential details, and that they were able to provide accommodation for their returning sons.
13. In cases of incorrect spelling and unconventional grammar, I have retained the original, but inserted 'sic' to alert the reader that this is authentic, and not a mistake! In many cases punctuation is totally absent. This lacuna has necessitated some minimal inserts of the coma, to facilitate the reading process, but I have tried to retain at least some suggestion that punctuation is missing. As regards spelling, 'Negros' is frequently written as 'negroes', which has been retained, using 'sic'.
14. The National Archives (henceforth TNA): 3rd July, 1919, Colonial Office (henceforth C.O.) 318/349/41–44.
15. TNA: 22 June 1919, Home Office (henceforth H.O.) 45/11017/377969/119.

16. TNA: 12 June 1919, C.O. 318/349/86.
17. TNA: C.O. 318/349/421.
18. TNA: C.O. 318/349/422.
19. TNA: C.O. 318/349/414.
20. Mr. D.T. Aleifasakure Toummanah, secretary of the Ethiopian Hall in Liverpool reminded readers of the *Liverpool Daily Post* (11 June, 1919) that during the war, when the Mauritania was due to sail, the white crew 'failed to put in an appearance. She was manned by 'niggers'. We ask for British justice, to be treated as true and loyal sons of Great Britain.' For this reason, he added, 'the African merchants in the city decided to spend £10,000 to erect a memorial to the coloured people for the part they took in the war'.
21. TNA: C.O. 318/349/87.
22. TNA: C.O. 318/349/85.
23. For more on individual influences and organisations see Chapman, J. (2019, forthcoming) *Black Internationalism and Citizenship*, Palgrave, Basingstoke.
24. THA: C.O. 318/349/419.
25. TNA: C.O. 318/352/14.
26. TNA: C.O. 318/349/78.
27. TNA: C.O. 318/349/575.
28. TNA: C.O. 318/349/27.
29. TNA: C.O. 323/810/78.
30. For more, see Lee (1998).
31. TNA: C.O. 323/819/ 681.
32. TNA: C.O. 318/352/1.
33. Jenkinson, J. (2009) *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.
34. Derrida, J. (1982) *Margins of Philosophy* (trans. Bass, A.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Derrida, J. (1992) *Acts of Literature*, Routledge, New York.
35. Hall, S. (1997) 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity' in Anthony D. King, ed., *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
36. Hall, S. (1990) 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Lawrence and Wishart, London; Hall, S. and du Gay, P (eds.) (1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Sage, London.
37. The word 'diaspora' should not be used in the context of 1919–1922, as its usage is more recent and therefore contemporary.
38. Hall, op.cit., 1990; Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Verso Books, London.

39. TNA: C.O. 323/816/330. Changes in the everyday use of words relating to race are also evident in academic writing. Words that may have been deemed acceptable in the past are now regarded as unacceptable—not simply out of political correctness, but because language is an expression of attitudes, which also change. Thus, for instance, an academic study dating from the early 1970s refers to 'the mating patterns of the Negros' (sic). (Walvin, J. (1973) *Black and White: The Negro and English Society 1555–1945*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, p. 208.)
40. TNA: C.O. 318/350/128.
41. Op.cit., p. 203.
42. James, W. (2004) 'The Black Experience in Twentieth Century Britain', in P.D. Morgan and S. Hawkins, eds., *Black Experience and the Empire* Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 347–386.
43. Op.cit., 2009, p. 167.
44. Op.cit., p. 208.
45. Arendt, H. (1951) *The Burden of Our Time. The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Secker and Warburg, London.
46. Schor, R. (1985) *L'Opinion Française et les Étrangers en France, 1919–1939*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris; Schor, R. (1996) *Histoire de l'immigration en France de la fin du XIXe siècle à nos jours*, Armand Colin, Paris; Panayi, P. (ed.) (1993) *Racial Violence in Britain 1815–1945*, Leicester University Press, Leicester; Panayi, P. (1994) *Immigration, Ethnicity and Racism in Britain, 1815–1945*, Manchester University Press, Manchester; Panayi, P. (1999) *Outsiders: A History of European Minorities*, Hambledon Press, London; Killingray, D. (ed.) (1994) *Africans in Britain*, Frank Cass, London; Rich, P.B. (1986) *Race and Empire in British Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
47. Gerwarth, R. and Horne, J. (eds.) (2012) *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe After the Great War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
48. Panayi, P. (1991) 'Germans in Britain During the First World War', *Historical Research*, 64 (153), pp. 63–76.
49. The subject of one of the author's research grants. See *Everyday Lives at War* Centenary Centre above.
50. TNA: C.O. 318/349/661.
51. For more on the hardships and attitudes of veterans, see Bourke (1996).
52. Orr, N.G. (1999) 'Keep the Home Fires Burning: Peace Day in Luton 1919', *Family and Community History*, 2 (1), pp. 17–32.
53. TNA: H.O. 384/61–62.
54. Newspaper reports of the he episode created a stir in the Caribbean, and was much alluded to by Marcus Garvey in his speeches and writings at the time (see Chapman 2019). The facts as reported by police in Cardiff were that rumours may have been referring to Peter Johnson of 54

Loudoun Square had passed away of heart disease the day before the riots started. His body was moved to No. 1 Foster Street, Cadoxton, Barry (near Cardiff) 'preparatory to burial'. Then the house was attacked by rioters, who were unaware that the corpse was there, but they did not interfere with the body, although house windows were broken. The funeral took place a few days later in an 'orderly and seemly manner.' The only funeral of a 'coloured' person as a result of riots was of an Arab named Mahomed Addullah, 'also carried out in a decorous manner' (C.O. 323/816/331–335, Chief Constable, Cardiff, 9 October, 1919, 'Colour Riots', headed 'Secret').

55. TNA: C.O. 323/819/429–434.
56. The couple met at the Royal College of Music (Coleridge-Taylor, J. (1943) *A Memory Sketch, or Personal Reminiscences of My Husband-Genius and Musician, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 1875–1912,* John Crowther, Bognor Regis, p. 20.
57. TNA: C.O. 318/349/298, 302.
58. Downing Street memo, 5 February, 1919 TNA: C.O. 137/735/455.
59. Commanding Officer of H.M.S. Dartmouth, 27 August, op.cit.
60. TNA: C.O. 318/350/697.
61. TNA: C.O. 137/735/869.
62. For a further critique of the 'race relations approach', see Lunn, K. (ed.) (1985) *Race and Labour in Twentieth Century Britain*, Frank Cass, London.
63. Castles, S. and Kosack, G. (1973) *Immigrants Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

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CHAPTER 2

Government Attitudes and Indirect Voices

Abstract This chapter presents information relating to individual African and Afro-Caribbean people from third party communications about them, analysing reactions by the authorities. What kind of comment was made about individual cases of repatriation, and what conclusions did officials draw? There was concern about mixed marriages, and the Lottie Bryan case reinforced administrative resolve to warn wives about potential hazards of life in Empire territories deemed to be unsuitable for Western women. Attitudes were even less helpful when couples were not legally married. Civil servants believed that ending maintenance money and repatriation bonus dampened 'the desire of married seamen to take a trip to the West Indies with their families.' The scheme served its purpose, evidenced by absence of riots in 1920.

Keywords Civil servants · Repatriation · African and Afro-Caribbean Shipping · Black communities · Mixed marriages

This chapter has two main purposes: firstly to interpret information relating to individual African and Afro-Caribbean people from third-party written communications and surviving records that relate to them, rather than by them; secondly to provide some analysis of relevant reactions by the authorities in such records. What kind of comment was made about individual cases of repatriation, and what conclusions did government

J. L. Chapman, *African and Afro-Caribbean Repatriation, 1919–1922*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68813-8_2

officials draw from their dealings with individuals, as evidenced in their internal correspondence? Analysis provides background to the testimonies presented in the next chapter.

Pragmatism, Processes, and Procedures

From 17 February 1919 to 9 January 1920 'distressed' colonial seamen received free passage home (that is, to countries of origin before the First World War) at the expense of the Imperial government. In a House of Commons debate (vol. 117, col. 327) on 26 June 1919, Home Secretary Mr. Shortt reassured the members of parliament present that every effort was being made to offer repatriation. Yet for the civil servants executing the policy, there were limits to how much they could do. Their help only extended to those who were willing to leave mainland Britain. The policy was not compulsory, but the official policy was that in the case of any: 'coloured men who are British subjects it is considered desirable that so far as possible all unemployed coloured men should be induced to return to their own countries as quickly as possible.' In the case of those who were not British subjects, in 'suitable cases' the Secretary of States was prepared to make compulsory deportation orders (C.O. 323/819[1]).

The Board of Trade funded shipping passage, and the Home Office was responsible for police and civil issues. Issues from other departments were commented on, and police reports are included in C.O. records. Civil servants liaised in writing and by telephone with other departments, shipping agents and shipping companies to ensure that the maximum number of boat reservations were allocated to black people: 'I presume you will have no difficulty in obtaining the necessary number of passengers from among the coloured men you have under your care – or in collecting them and seeing them safely on board,' one memo stated in no uncertain terms to a Mr. Caldwell of Liverpool police force (ibid.).

On 9 July 1919 a Ministry of Shipping circular was forwarded for information throughout the C.O., with a covering note headed 'Repatriation of Coloured Men,' explaining that local committees had been set up in London, Liverpool, Salford, Cardiff, Hull, South Shields, and Glasgow. By 19 June 1919, a government grant was introduced for 'coloured' men. This was the same as the existing Resettlement Gratuity for 'White Colonials,' viz. £5 on disembarkation from the steamer in which passage had been taken from England, with an additional voyage allowance of £1 payable as a 'gratuity' after the vessel left the quayside.

Initially, this offer was only open for a limited period of two months and was not open to wives or children, but low take-up prompted the government to further change repatriation arrangements by expanding them to include free passage for wives and children. C.O. officials also believed that families should not be separated (see later). Further changes meant that associated correspondence and reports on repatriation matters continued through to 1921 and 1922, although the C.O. terminated appeals early in 1920.

The idea for the £5 allowance as a further incentive had first come from the Liverpool black population after a delegation from the local Ethiopian Association met Mayor John Ritchie, to draw to his attention to the plight of some 600 of their brethren who were unemployed and in hardship in the city (C.O. 323/819[2]), letter from Ritchie to CO, 13 May, Ritchie's letter arguing for repatriation with a £5 allowance was circulated amongst civil servants: 'The difficulty is that they do not want to return without a penny in their pockets,' he reported. The government could then 'dispose of them as quickly as possible.' Other items of correspondence in government circles adopt similar language, such as 'getting rid' of black people. Ritchie continued: 'Recently, I had a deputation of about five thousand discharged soldiers and sailors residing in Liverpool, and who are out of employment. One of the strong points made by this deputation was the presence of black labour in our midst, a sentiment with which I thoroughly agree' (op.cit., 431). However, officials responded that the 'CO is willing to consider cases of distress owing to the war among West Indians with a view to their repatriation. But we can't bribe the unwilling to go with £5 apiece.'

Civil servants were tasked with processing appeals on a one to one basis. Rough handwritten drafts, as well as more formal reports, sometimes included a note on impressions. Normal practice when confidentiality was at stake was to dispatch coded ('cypher') telegrams, mostly commenting on individual people. C.O. civil servants were also required to gather the names and addresses of any persons who knew the applicant before consulting the Governor for his approval in principle to repatriation of the particular applicant. Verification was required of name, address, address in the country of origin, any benefit received, and proof of marriage for wives. Having confirmed that applicant details met the terms of the repatriation policy, permission was sought from the colonial government for wife and children to enter, and only after receiving this green light was the Board of Trade instructed to provide a passage.

A major problem faced by potential deportees in assessing whether to take up an offer of free passage as repatriation was the fact that economic conditions in their colonial territories of origin tended to be worse than in mainland Britain. C.O. officials made efforts to circulate information and opinions about the rhythms and nature of specific local economies and industrial landscapes. On the question of unequal wage levels throughout the Caribbean, one official noted in a draft report on 22 October 1919 (C.O. 318/352[3]), 'It would take too long to set out all the reasons W.I. (sic) planters allege for the impracticability of paying Cuban and American rates (for sugar growing). It is more to the purpose to point out that wages are in fact rising in the West Indies.' The writer then cites various examples of individual owners who have improved labour conditions, 'except as regards Barbados. My impression is that labour conditions are improving and must continue to do so.' In fact, Colonial Secretary Lord Milner had already issued a directive to all governors of British West Indian territories on 16 December 1919 asking them to take advantage of their influence vis a vis local industries to increase wage rates—and not wait for change to be prompted by 'serious agitation' (C.O. 318/352[4]).

Within the context of riots, police in Liverpool and other ports compiled a detailed inventory of four hundred and thirty-seven African and Afro-Caribbean men, with name, address, employment or unemployment, marital or single status, and details of state benefits and/or debts—the latter to landlords and to pawn shops. The Liverpool Inspector commented that the figures were incomplete, as during the recent riots seven hundred people took refuge with the police, but this did not these include those who were hiding in houses and were not 'found out.' He also noted on 28 June 1919 that there had been an exodus 'of negroes (sic) from the city to inland towns since the question of repatriation arose and those who have not left are probably in hiding' (C.O. 323/819[5]). Most of those who appeared on the record were seamen, of whom many were still hopeful of re-employment, or were still working, such as the one hundred and thirty eight 'negro seamen' who were living in the African Hostel in Stanhope St., and were employed constantly on the ships of Messrs Elder, Dempster and Co, of Africa House, Water St., a line that sailed regularly to and from West Africa. In addition, there were twelve 'negroes' in H.M. Navy at David Lewis Hostel who were still awaiting demobilisation.

As part of the above survey, the police asked each man if he was willing to be repatriated, and whether his wife, if he was married, was white or 'coloured.' Fifteen of the seventeen married West Indians interviewed had white wives and were willing to be repatriated. Statistically, the numbers of single West Africans was far greater: one hundred and eighteen single unemployed (of whom seventy-one were willing to be repatriated), fifty single employed, only ten married and employed and twelve married but unemployed. Of the West Indians, thirty-four names had already been forwarded to the Board of Trade, as applicants for a boat passage, but of the remainder, seventy-eight were single and unemployed, four single and employed, seventeen married and unemployed, and three married and employed. These statistics, despite their limitations, demonstrate that employed men were unlikely to agree to repatriation—most single West Africans refused, for example—whereas the unemployed were more amenable returning to their country of origin, especially if they had a white wife.

An 'interim report' composed by the West India Dock Road police station estimated there were seven hundred unemployed coloured men, mostly seamen, in the Port of London, and that ninety percent of these were British subjects who wanted to continue as seamen, so 'make little, if any, effort to obtain employment in this country.' At the time of writing only five unemployed men had registered with this scheme, reflecting the dilemma:

> They pride themselves in the knowledge that, as British citizens, they have a right to be and to stay where they please within the Empire. It appears therefore, that at present they can only be induced to go of their own free will; but shipping facilities have thus far not been readily available even for those truly anxious for repatriation. (H.O. 45/11017[6])

Police reports continued to arrive at the C.O. outlining the hopeless situation in which the black unemployed found themselves. According to the Chief Constable of Cardiff, David Williams (writing on 9 October, 1919, with a heading 'Colour Riots,' and 'Secret') many were 'indolent and vicious unemployed coloured men' who 'subsist by gaming with cards and dice,' and lived off the immoral earnings of prostitutes, who would not 'betray' them to the police. He was of the opinion that the West Indian and West Africans 'who comprised the militant section of

the coloured population Cardiff' did not want repatriation. 'They were insistent in claiming as British subjects their right to equality of treatment and freedom to remain in this country. A few, however, expressed their willingness to be repatriated, but openly stated that it would only be for the object of creating racial feeling against members of the white race domiciled in their country' (C.O. 323/819[7]).

Faced with one appeal due to the riots by three men from the Gold Coast forwarded by the Town Clerk of Liverpool to Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, Viscount Milner, in October 1919, the latter refused to connect the issue of potential compensation for damages incurred during the riots with delays in the availability of boats for repatriation:

> Lord Milner proposes to reply that he cannot admit that delay in adopting measures to induce certain coloured subjects of His Majesty to leave Liverpool for West Africa imposes any moral liability on His Majesty's Government to provide compensation for damage inflicted during riots in Liverpool on certain other coloured subjects. (C.O. 323/819[8])

There were occasions on which the authorities in the colony only wanted to accept those who originated from their own territory. Thus Detective Inspector Gamble, in Demerara, had expressed severe reservations in July about nine men repatriated on the *S.S. Santille* (see Chapter 3), in the light of the on-board disturbances that had taken place: 'I am of opinion (sic) that it is undesirable, under present conditions, to have these men who are not natives foisted on us. They might be capable of much mischief, I think they had better be deported to their native colonies as soon as possible' (C.O. 318/349[9]).

Faults in the system prompted letters of complaint and/or petitions. When eight West African men (four from Nigeria, three from Sierra Leone and one from the Gold Coast) were, by mistake, sent to the West Indies on the *SS Orca*,[10] an internal CO memorandum dated 10 October 1919 claimed that the men misled officials about their nationality and bluntly stated: 'The Ministry of Labour have ….got us into trouble by 'expatriating' West Africans to the West Indies' (H.O. 45/11017/37769[11]). The group were subsequently transferred on the *SS Voronej* from the West Indies to West Africa, and discussion ensued among civil servants on exactly which payments and how much the men were entitled to.

W.H. Hinds, the ship's master and sixteen crew signatories, including officers of the *S.S. Santille* refused to continue the voyage from Barbados

without an armed guard, following violent unrest on the boat. In a petition, they stated that many of the rioters on board were leaders 'in the trouble reported in newspapers in Home Ports, and that they had freely expressed their resentment against white people while on board ship.' They also requested that the Ministry of Shipping should not send any further repatriated seamen for onwards passage to Jamaica unless absolutely unavoidable, suggesting various logistical arrangements that would make procedures smoother in future. There should be sufficient notice of passengers' arrival, and full information about advances and subsistence that had been paid or were to be administered: 'the presence of men in the frame of mind of the late arrivals, with no work to do is a source of possible mischief.' Unrest on the *S.S. Santille* was such that the C.O. later carried out an enquiry into the complaints of the passengers being repatriated, an indication that procedures left much to be desired (C.O. 318/349[12]). There appears to be some awareness in government records of the fact that civil servants were having to manage arrangements at a very late stage. The police had no legal power to disarm repatriated seamen, and in cases where they had arms and the Home Office took the initiative, the C.O. supported them by disregarding petitions and protests in cases of 'coloured men who petitioned about the loss of their revolvers' (C.O. 318/349[13]).

The numbers claiming destitution at the C.O. increased 'enormously' during the year 1919—prompting an estimate that one in four were misrepresenting their circumstances by claiming they had served in the army or had been prisoners of war. Departmental officials dealing with different parts of the empire commented on the issue within their sections, which all had responsibility for different parts of the empire. Thus written discussion began to centre on perceived national and cultural differences. In the case of the West Indies, Mr. Hamblin commented that nineteen out of twenty of those who were destitute 'are docile, if irritatingly stupid' (C.O. 323/810[14]) but defended them by saying that they were justified in their grievances towards ship owners 'who were glad enough to employ him (a seaman) during the submarine menace, now give him the cold shoulder' in favour of a range of other nationalities 'and all sorts of aliens whose claim to employment he considers far less deserving than his own.' The official dealing with Nigerians commented that he had had no trouble, except one man who was 'rather excited over his numerous grievances, but on realising that he would not be given any money and would probably be re-patriated, has quietened down' (op.cit., 77–81).

By the time that a second repatriation allowance scheme (or 'bounty' as one civil servant called it) was introduced, the Board of Trade had a long list of men who had stated that they desired repatriation, and had provided written consent. The Port of London repatriation committee registered a steady increase in the numbers of 'coloured' seamen, attributed to arrivals from other ports such as Cardiff and Swansea, and also to shipping masters who 'exercise a preference for white seafaring men' (H.O. 45/11017/377969[15]). From July 1919 onwards, a committee comprising police, relevant trade unions, Board of Trade, the National Maritime Board, port consultants, and the church met regularly in London to monitor repatriation and to review information collected on numbers, nationalities, countries of origin of 'coloured' men in the port, as well as information relating to the state of employment, and numbers wanting to be repatriated. The committee considered that legislation would be needed to ensure that seamen signed up for a return trip, and not simply one way to Britain, 'owing to conditions existing in British ports, that leave coloured seamen stranded here indefinitely' (op.cit., 257). The opinion was that it was unfair to bring seamen to the United Kingdom on a one-way ticket, and 'then turn them off.' A change of legislation to deal with this would 'effectively prevent the Port of London becoming congested with single-voyage coloured men' (op.cit., 262). A further weak point in the scheme was identified as being the fact that the authorities had no legal redress in situations where men drew the allowance by promising to be repatriated, but then broke their word, and refused to return home.

The British and Foreign Sailors' Society hostel in St. Ann's Street, Limehouse, housed 115 'coloured' men. A deputation of three men from these, led by William Connolly, a schoolmaster born in Grand Cayman, appeared before the Port of London Committee on 29 July 1919. Connolly demanded £50 cash as repatriation allowance and was backed by Mr. Taylor, a West African from the Society of Peoples of African Origin, who had also been invited to attend. The latter stated that his association was advising supporters requiring advice to accept the government offer. The deputation was told that there was no possibility of any increase in the government offer and was given leaflets explaining the scheme, for distribution. Taylor undertook to circulate more widely the terms of the repatriation scheme, whilst the Committee, for their part, articulated a strong feeling that the offer was not adequate to deal with the situation (op.cit., 261), stating that 'in the event of

refusal to accept the scheme under review – a not improbable case – the whole position may become so acute that drastic measures will have to be applied' (op.cit., 262).

Individual Challenges and Economic Consideration

A 'distressed' Jamaican seaman, Theophilus Savis, with a marriage certificate name of Travilos Salvis, and also referred to in some paperwork as 'Service,' managed to solicit correspondence that reveals in several different ways some of the implications of changing policy and administrative procedures (C.O. 318/349; C.O. 137/735[16]). He had left St. Andrew, Jamaica in 1899, and married Mary Louisa Colledge in Coventry in 1906. Ten years later, his ship, the Lotusmere, had been torpedoed and Savis had found employment in chemical and cotton works in Bristol. In June 1919, previous ad hoc arrangements for repatriation of white wives and families were ended, with the result that married men faced not only repatriation but also separation. However, black men with black wives were still eligible for joint repatriation, as and when shipping accommodation became available. On 1 September, policy on white wives and families reverted back to what it had been in February 1919, that is, each case was taken on its merits. Savis first applied in August, thus his application for repatriation with his white wife and family of 5 children was refused. In October, the change in policy meant that the CO could agree his application, subject to checks and approval by the governor of the colony (C.O. 318/350[17]). By December 1919, the Board of Trade made representations to the Ministry of Shipping to speed up the passage. During this period of delay and policy change, Savis and family had exhausted their entitlement to benefit. On 9 July the Ministry of Labour summarised the benefit that Savis had received: 156 days 'out of work donation' (up to the limit), plus seven shillings per week unemployment insurance benefit from 16 June until 17 July, when this allowance expired. Thereafter Savis and family were dependent on the charity of the Bristol City Mission, who wrote sympathetic letters to the authorities on their behalf (op.cit., n.d.).

Money factors were the prime motivator on *both* sides—appellant and government. All those who were out of work had waited a long time for benefit—the period with payment averaged only ten percent of the total time without a job. All of them owed money to landlords (up to £15 in some cases), and had possessions—usually clothes, sometimes also

watches—in pawn. Some were still waiting for outstanding gratuities that were owed, either due to their ship being torpedoed or because of discharge from the armed forces. A number of seamen had worked in that capacity, travelling to and from the United Kingdom before the outbreak of war. Most were firemen, some cooks and fitters, and a small number of those employed had managed to secure other manual employment, such as work in sugar factories. One such person was Nelson Kendal, aged thirty, who lived at 22 Upper Pitt St., Liverpool (C.O. 318/349[18]). He was born in Demerera, arrived in Britain in 1918, married a white woman and had one child. He served four months in the British army in Russia and had been discharged six months previously. He was presently employed at Fairrie's sugar works, had lived in Russia for a number of years, and sent in his application for a passport to return there (H.O. 45/11017/377969[19]). In contrast, Joseph Jones was born in the Burmudas, was aged forty-eight, and lived at 58 Beauford St. He had arrived in the United Kingdom in 1890 as a seaman, married in Liverpool to a coloured woman, had four children and was at the time of the survey employed by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board as a crane driver (op.cit., 208).

Departments were keen to constrain expenditure: on one occasion, the Accountant General of the Board of Trade seized at the opportunity to seek some reimbursement. Seaman Charles Lewis, a native of Jamaica, who had been 'found in distress in the United Kingdom' (in other words, with no money and probably starving), was repatriated. Upon reaching New York, en route for Jamaica, 'an opportunity was found by His Majesty's Consul General for shipping him in an American vessel thus terminating the expense of repatriation.' The accountant requested repayment of £4.12.1d that had been saved (C.O. 137/729[20]).

Without doubt, administrators went out of their way to assist Prisoners of War (POWs) or ex-POWS. In a letter to POW Henry Knight, who had been a cook on the S.S. Thoralf, the Central Prisoners of War Committee (backed by the British Red Cross and other organisations) wrote sympathetically: 'We feel very much with you in your anxiety with regard to your Mother and hope that before long we shall have some good news to give.' They were enquiring about the circumstances and welfare of Knight's mother, Mrs. Henrietta Campbell, of Black River, Jamaica, whilst the Mercantile Marine Office also provided Knight with contact details of the owners of his former ship, who appeared to owe him money—presumably required in order for Knight

to be reunited with his mother (C.O. 137/729[21]). Unfortunately, the outcome of individual cases is frequently unclear as available information is usually incomplete. Thomas George was aged 23, single, had been a prisoner of war in Ruhleben, Germany, then worked in Hamburg, and previously was a labourer in the Virgin Islands (C.O. 318/349[22]). The civil servant processing the application felt 'it seems useless to write to the man himself as he is stated to be totally illiterate,' and the 'Repatriated British Civilians Help Committee,' lacked documentary evidence of his precise date and island of birth. Their comment was, 'He is totally illiterate, but seems fairly intelligent' (op.cit., 64).

It is clear that administrators went to considerable trouble to make arrangements in circumstances where this was necessary. Private Ernest Archibald Nembhard, 3rd (reserve) battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry had been charged with a criminal offence in April 1919, but was later found to be 'insane' and ended up in Rampton Lunatic Asylum, Retford, Nottinghamshire. He was born in the West Indies, but had enlisted in New York on 9 August 1918, and had claimed repatriation to the United Sates prior to his trial. Army authorities did not know if he had any friends or relatives in that country, but the War Office made an approach to the American consul General to find out. Nembhard had a mother in Jamaica who was willing to care for him, but the War Office considered that his 'lunacy' was dangerous, so arranged for him to be placed in an asylum at Concord, Jamaica, where his mother could visit him. This move was prompted by a written exchange between the Home Office and the War Office, dated 2 December 1919 (C.O. 137/735[23]). Yet Thomas Stirling, aged 36 and of Jamaican origin, who also had a history of mental illness, was expected to work his passage. He was first sent to an asylum in 1908, when he was prone to bouts of violence, but according to the medical officer in Swansea, since his discharge to Tawe Lodge out-patient accommodation, he had proved himself a very willing worker. Accordingly, Stirling was recommended for Board of Trade funded passage as a 'distressed seaman, in the ordinary manner' (op.cit., 407).

One unsuccessful applicant for repatriation as early as 1918 had been John Morris. He failed to elicit sympathy. Investigations into his case took two years, for a number of reasons. From Jamaica originally, aged 'about' 42, and presently living at 17 High St., Bloomsbury, he was described as a 'burly, ruffianly (sic) looking man,' whose 'appearance bears out all that is alleged of him' (C.O. 137/729[24]), Morris presented

himself to the C.O., asking for an overcoat and stating that he was ill and would probably need to go to hospital. Enquiries as to whether he was 'worthy of assistance' revealed that he may also have used the name Charles Belmont and had had two stays in prison, stating he got into trouble 'through a woman.' Morris had been in England since 1914, with no regular trade or profession and had been out of work for seven months. He refused to fill in registration papers and disappeared before the police could look him up. Civil servants noted that it was difficult to compile a record of his past life: references from former landladies were 'of little value' as he was 'given a bad moral character' by people at two of the addresses he named. Miss Edith Neville, for instance, stated that the community had reported what they know to the police, 'as we are anxious to track some of the coloured men of bad influence in this Borough.' Police believed him 'possibly to be engaged in some sort of white slave traffic. He was deemed to be of such an unsatisfactory character 'that he was not suitable for help.' Therefore he should not receive assistance from colonial funds, and was referred instead to the poor law authorities (C.O. 137/729[25]).

In Liverpool, on 7 January 1920, the Home Office decided that police should ascertain from nine black prisoners serving sentences of nine months or less for offenses committed during the riots, whether they would respond to an offer of free repatriation, by way of remission of their term in gaol. The Secretary of State took the view that if these men had not been in custody they would probably have been repatriated under the approved scheme, and 'that as they are considered to be dangerous it is expedient to secure their departure from this country of offering them the inducement of a remission of sentence' (C.O. 318/349[26]).

Mixed Marriages

Some records are brief if the circumstances seemed straightforward. For example, James Morrison, aged 36, whose father was a farmer in Kingston, Jamaica, requested passage with his wife Phyllis Irene of Berwick St., London W.1, whom he married in April 1918, and her 7 year old child (C.O. 318/349[27]). The application was agreed provided he was able to produce his marriage certificate. Seamen J. Graham and E.I. Solomon were approved for repatriation to Jamaica with their wives and families along these same lines. In some cases, facts were difficult to ascertain

(op.cit., 421). Seaman John Martin and his white wife failed to respond to demands for further information, causing Cardiff City Police on 5 January 1920 to request that the chief Constable of Merthyr Tydfil chase the application, which still required the date and place of Martin's birth, his last address in the Leeward Islands and the name and address of his nearest relative now living in the colony, or of any person of standing in the colony who was acquainted with him (C.O. 318/349[28]). No records of the eventual outcome seem to have survived, but it is clear that there were several people with the same name. He was *not* a John Martin from Jamaica who received a 'not guilty' verdict in London as a result of arrest associated with the riots. This latter John Martin had a wife and children living in Jamaica and police noted in court that he had had no associations with white women (*East End News, London*, 6 June 1919, p. 5).

Colonial Office administrators were continuously concerned about what would happen to white wives who ventured overseas with their husbands. In written discussions, Mr. Grindle pointed out that in West Africa the situation was different from the West Indies. For example, in various Nigerian townships a white woman would be expected not to live in the 'native reservation' and a native not to live in the 'European reservation.' Apparently, there were two or three 'natives – or half castes – in Nigeria with white wives; but they are fairly well to do, and can maintain their wives in a more or less respectable manner' (C.O. 323/810[29]). However, there were several applicants who caused concern. Tom Toby, aged 26, was born in Sierra Leone, living in Liverpool and had come to the United Kingdom as a ship's fireman in 1914. He had a father in Forcados (Nigeria) and was married to an 'Englishwoman' with an eight-month-old child. According to the *Hull Daily News*, Toby had been arrested during the riots but was found not guilty after the judge accepted his plea of self-defence (21 June 1920, p. 1[30]). By June 1919, Toby had been out of work for 6 months and had received out of work pay for 3 months. His clothing was in pawn to the sum of £8.00 and he owed his landlady 16 shillings, but the main issue was perceived to be his wife. The view was that 'it is simply impossible to agree to send a white woman to live in that climate with a native who is at present destitute. She probably earned her living somehow before her marriage, and there is nothing to show that she can't do so again, whereas her husband ex hypothese (sic) can't earn his in England. Even if she does come on the rates, the rates will escape more lightly than if both man and wife go to the workhouse' (ibid.).

G. Toby, from Warri, had a French wife who had also requested repatriation. The suggestion was: 'we can't send him to Nigeria and her to France - if she is willing to go.' The official also mentioned two names from Lagos—Jack Dairudu and John Try, but the reaction from a colleague as notes were circulated was that the only married man on the list whose wife wanted to go with him was Ashun 'who says he is a Gold Coast native – of what town is not stated.' Another official interjected that it was unclear whether Dairudu was married or not, whilst his colleague concluded: 'I cannot face the consequences of letting an Englishwoman – of whatever social rank – go to W.A. (West Africa) as the wife of a black man' (ibid.). In a summary of this longhand exchange of handwritten thoughts, the senior administrator pointed out that as long as such marriages were legal:

> I do not see how we can actively intervene to part husband and wife when the latter is willing to accompany her husband. In cases where she is a consenting party to such a 'separation' there will be more justification for sending the man back alone, but you will have to reckon with the Poor Law Authorities here…. You cannot prevent a black man in the Gold Coast from marrying a white woman and living together in the colony – on what grounds do you prevent such a couple already married from returning (sic) to the colony? In the absence of a legal separation the woman's place is with her husband.

The final word in this particular written discussion, came on 14 August 1919, with only an initial 'HJR' as signature, consisted of a comment that:

> If a black man cannot earn his living in this country it is of no advantage to himself, his wife, or his family, that he should remain here …'I think therefore that in cases where the wife is willing to remain behind and the husband to go without her, we should repatriate the latter – but that in cases where they refuse to be separated we should decline to give any assistance. (ibid.)

The Lottie Bryan case prompted much discussion amongst civil servants, reinforcing their resolve to warn wives about the potential hazards of life in Empire territories that were deemed to be unsuitable for Western women. Lottie made representations to return to mainland Britain because of desertion, after repatriation to the West Indies (see Chapter 3).

Clearly, she acted as an example to civil servants of the inadvisability of encouraging white wives to settle in the West Indies. Thereafter, civil servants were expected to issue such a warning as part of policy proviso for all white wives intending to emigrate with their husbands.[31] Yet most wives who were interviewed showed determination to give life in the Caribbean a chance. A twenty-nine-year-old mother of one child, Frances Bates from Peckham Rye, for instance, told the Mercantile Marine Office that she was resolved to accompany her 28 year old seaman husband Gerald back to Bridgetown Barbados 'under any circumstances' (C.O. 318/349[32]). The government in London paid their passage, but the colonial government was responsible for subsistence allowance pending repatriation.

In the example of the Slaven family, there is no surviving evidence at the C.O. of Mrs. Ada Louisa Slaven's reaction to such a warning. Her husband, Charles Edward Slaven was a former seaman, born in Antigua, and aged 66. Ada hailed from Bayswater, London and was aged 50. They married in the United Kingdom in 1895 and by 1919 had a 23 year old daughter Edie and a 16 year old son, Albert. Mr. Slaven (Senior) had not worked as a seaman for twenty years and was unable to find employment. Mrs. Slaven had 'been made thoroughly aware of the conditions of life in a black colony and warned accordingly, and the colony had no objection to their repatriation' (C.O. 318/349[33]). The family waited 18 months for a ship. There is no record of what happened to the family in the longer term, but the delay in repatriation is clear from the records—probably due to a shortage of boats. The family first applied in January 1920 (the government announced cut-off date for family repatriations, by which time Slaven had lived 25 years in Britain), but arrived in Port of Spain on their journey, on 2 July 1921 (C.O. 318/349[34]).

Attitudes were even less helpful when couples were not legally married. Norton James and Saidi Battersby met in Cardiff; Battersby, who hailed from County Down, had been employed in service in a boarding house. They lived together for three and a half years prior to their request for repatriation. They had one child and were expecting another. Norton told the visiting police superintendent that if he, his partner and children were not allowed passage, he would send for them later when he had enough money. At the time of application, he had already drawn his last payment of 'out-of-work donation,' but preferred to continue working as a seaman, although the superintendent stated after his second meeting with Norton James that 'I fear his chances are not good' (C.O. 318/349[35]). James was born in the West Indies and his last address in

1908 was at Castries, St. Lucia. The Bristol-based inspector sent the ministry a press cutting from *The Times* (10 October 1919) 'from which it appears that Jamaica is not free from trouble' (C.O. 318/349[36]). Despite the fact that James had been in the Mercantile Marine since 1908, with at least 10 voyages and had been torpedoed twice—in 1915 on the 'Restormel' and after the end of the war in December 1918 in the 'Fiscus'—the Colonial Office rejected his application to return to St Lucia. The grounds given were the fact that it would be 'useless' to even consult the colonial government about his case, given the fact that 'the woman who desires to accompany the seaman Norton James[37] to the West Indies is not married to him.' Battersby was eight months pregnant at the time of this decision (C.O. 318/349[38]).

In October 1919, the Acting Governor of Jamaica appeared to 'pour oil on racial sensitivities' (C.O. 318/349[39]) by advising that the European wife of black seaman E. McCrae should not proceed with her move: 'she would 'probably find the conditions of life there among the coloured people extremely distasteful to her as a European and therefore of a different race.' The response presented a dilemma to Colonial Office civil servants in London, who considered that a move to the West Indies was 'most undesirable for their own interests.' One administrator wrote: 'I don't like encouraging these people to desert their wives.' The dilemma as articulated was: 'whether we ought to connive or assist the desertion of their wives and families.' Yet in the event, it was decided to give a free passage only to McCrae as the husband (C.O. 318/349[40]).

In contrast, the governor of British Guiana raised no objection to George Adams, his white wife and two children (aged two and a half and two months) returning. His mother lived in Georgetown, Demerara, but George and his wife had married in Lambeth during September 1916. Attitudes varied between governors and between islands—often due to local employment circumstances. In cases where the wife decided to stay in Britain, it was considered that the seaman should not be repatriated without her consent (C.O. 318/349[41]). In some cases, the applicant for repatriation specified that he would only go if his wife and family were allowed to accompany him. Such was the case with G. Steede who stated that he would only accept passage to Barbados, where his father Charles resided (in Bulgully, St. Michael), under these conditions. Steede had been part of a deputation consisting of five West Indians, and two Africans to the Hull repatriation committee in November 1919, to complain about victimisation by trade union officials and about treatment in

Britain more generally. Ironically, the men predicted that there would be similar treatment of white people in their colonies of origin. According to the Chief Constable of Hull, George Morley, writing to the C.O. on 25 November 1919:

> Steede made a particularly virulent speech, indicating that the repatriated West Indians would become centres of disaffection and that if this was to be a white man's country, the West Indies should be a Coloured (sic) man's country. He talked a good deal about the rights of man. I give you that for what it's worth – I do not attach much importance to it myself. I think a good deal of it is simply due to the delight which the half-educated coloured man takes in hearin (sic) his own voice pouring out long words. (C.O. 318/352[42])

Steede confirmed in writing his understanding that he would receive £1 after embarkation and £5 'on leaving the steamer at her destination.' Neither he nor a second applicant from Hull to Barbados, entitled R. Joseph, received any unemployment support from the Labour Exchange (C.O. 28/295[43]), whereas a third applicant, Joshua Edie (op.c.it., 409, 412), wanting to return to St. Michael's, was receiving 'maintenance money.' All three had white wives and a child each.

The record of former seaman Cyprian Robinson provides the most detailed example of information being made available to a white wife of likely economic conditions in the West Indies, should she decide to accompany her husband. Mrs. Robinson was warned personally about life in Saint Vincent but did not want to be separated from her husband. The explanation included the fact that Robinson's aged mother Jane Barrimore, in her eighties, was a pauper on poor relief 'without proper shelter and no proper home in St. Vincent, and living in the most squalid surroundings.' Robinson left the colony before 1900 and last contributed to her support ten years previously, when he visited for 3 weeks and gave her four shillings, but according to the law, he would probably be obliged to keep her and his wife—despite the fact that a labourer's wage ranged from one to 3 shillings a day. Colonial officials pointed out that Mrs. Robinson should 'not expect to receive any financial assistance from the government of St. Vincent,' although she was entitled to receive boat passage from the Imperial government. What happened to Mrs. Robinson is unclear, including whether she experienced the 'moral degradation' that officials predicted 'was likely to ensue' (C.O. 318/349[44]).

As the numbers of people taking up repatriation were small, and there were delays in procuring passages, especially births for families, the cost to the colonies were all much greater than the arrangement that existed from the autumn of 1914 to February 1919. Therefore by early January 1920, the minister had decided to terminate the scheme for white wives and children to have a free passage to the West Indies. One civil servant commented that this ended definitely the arrangement (since 17 February 1919) by which 'distressed' colonial seamen received free passages home at the expense of the Imperial Government. A memo explained:

> The general repatriation scheme was designed to relieve the congestion at British ports owing to the presence of large numbers of coloured seamen who had been attracted to this country during the war and were thrown out of employment by the cessation of hostilities. It has lately been considerably modified by the withdrawal of maintenance money and embarkation and voyage gratuities: and it is likely that it will be discontinued altogether at an early date…. It is no longer practicable to grant them passages at the cost of the Imperial government. (C.O. 318/352[45])

The Colonial Office believed that the ending of maintenance money and of repatriation bonus was having a 'dampening effect on the desire of married seamen to take a trip to the West Indies with their families' (C.O. 318/352[46]). This ironic wording suggests that repatriation was almost an optional excursion, whereas police surveys point to large debt, poverty, and extreme hardship.

Although the repatriation scheme was considered to have not been completely successful, the general belief in official circles was that it served its purpose, evidenced by the fact that, during the period of the aftermaths of war, there were no further riots in 1920. Hereafter the C.O. reverted to an earlier policy whereby the colonial government provided maintenance where a man was absolutely destitute, plus a working passage, and where this could not be found, passage at 'conveyance order' rates. Individual appeals and writings featured in the next chapter give a human face to these administrative procedures.

Notes

1. TNA: C.O. 323/819/433–434.
2. TNA: C.O. 323/819/429–434.

3. TNA: C.O. 318/352/350.
4. TNA: C.O. 318/352/350.
5. TNA: C.O. 323/819/161.
6. TNA: H.O. 45/11017/377960.
7. TNA: C.O. 323/819/331–335.
8. TNA: C.O. 323/819/266.
9. TNA: C.O. 318/349/112.
10. TNA records clearly state the name of this ship to be Orca (H.O. 45/11017/37769/284–280), whereas Jenkinson refers to it as 'Ocra' (Jenkinson, J. (2009) *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, pp. 165, 175). There was a 'mutiny' aboard by some of the 225 black seamen who were being repatriated. The men seized arms and threatened the other passengers, but the government had no legal authority to prosecute, stating that it was the responsibility of the ship owner to introduce a regulation covering the use of firearms on the boat.
11. TNA: H.O. 45/11017/37769/284–280.
12. TNA: C.O. 318/349/66–69.
13. TNA: C.O. 318/349/27, 112.
14. TNA: C.O. 323/810/80.
15. TNA: H.O. 45/11017/377969/260.
16. TNA: C.O. 318/349/417–420; C.O. 137/735/390–399.
17. TNA: C.O. 318/350/50.
18. TNA: C.O. 318/349/412.
19. TNA: H.O. 45/11017/377969/208.
20. TNA: C.O. 137/729/401.
21. TNA: C.O. 137/729/440.
22. TNA: C.O. 318/349/63.
23. TNA: C.O. 137/735/484, 504–507.
24. TNA: C.O. 137/729/216.
25. TNA: C.O. 137/729/219.
26. TNA: C.O. 318/349/287.
27. TNA: C.O. 318/349/413–416.
28. TNA: C.O. 318/349/398.
29. TNA: C.O. 323/810/55.
30. Ibid.
31. An example was Mrs. Myrie, wife of C.N. Myrie. The family were granted repatriation to the West Indies on the proviso that Mrs. Myrie should be warned of 'the conditions of life in the West Indies' (C.O. 318/349/434–437).
32. TNA: C.O. 318/349/457.
33. TNA: C.O. 318/349/364, 447–449.

34. TNA: C.O. 318/349/364.
35. TNA: C.O. 318/349/431.
36. TNA: C.O. 318/349/429.
37. Norton James insisted that his parents and brother were all named 'Huntsman' (C.O. 318/349/432).
38. TNA: C.O. 318/349/433.
39. TNA: C.O. 318/349/302.
40. TNA: C.O. 318/349/297–302.
41. TNA: C.O. 318/349/492.
42. TNA: C.O. 318/352/408.
43. TNA: C.O. 28/295/13.
44. TNA: C.O. 318/349/82.
45. TNA: C.O. 318/352/210.
46. TNA: C.O. 318/352/593–597.

CHAPTER 3

Reactions and Minority Voices

Abstract Individual voices as letters of protest and petitions both articulated shared sentiments. Frequently these were practical concerns, or an overwhelming desire for equal treatment and for individual respect irrespective of skin colour. Writers wanted acknowledgement of sacrifices made for King and empire during the Great War. Many written voices describe a change of attitude towards black empire citizens since the end of the hostilities—they felt that previous loyalty to the Crown was now being abused. In addition, emotionally charged concerns arose over the issue of mixed marriages. The transnational nature of communications is significant, as is the universal concern of poverty—whether in Britain, Africa, or the West Indies. Nevertheless, independence or self-rule were not sentiments that were expressed.

Keywords Racial awareness · Black identity · Written communications Petitions · Protest letters · Transnational

This chapter focuses on individual voices, as articulated in written records. Surviving evidence exists in the form of letters of protest and petitions. Some people signed a petition and also wrote individual letters; frequently writers of individual letters claimed to be writing on behalf of others, thus shared sentiments emerge in both forms of communications. Commonly expressed concerns were frequently practical ones, such as a desire for greater efficiency of arrangements relating to repatriation

J. L. Chapman, *African and Afro-Caribbean Repatriation, 1919–1922*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68813-8_3

(where that option had been chosen), opposition to it where this was not a chosen option, entitlements connected with demobilization—its logistics, practicalities and inefficiency—financial matters such as payments and allowances, and as well as compensation for material losses during the 1919 riots. Underpinning nearly all communications was an overwhelming desire for equal treatment, for individual respect irrespective of skin colour, and crucially, acknowledgement of contributions and sacrifices made for King and empire during the Great War. Finally, the most emotionally charged concerns often arose over the issue of mixed marriages.

Many written voices describe a change of attitude towards black empire citizens since the end of the hostilities: many African and Afro-Caribbean people in Britain felt that their previous loyalty to the Crown was now being abused. For instance, Mr. D.T. Aleifasakure Toummanah, secretary of the Ethiopian Hall in Liverpool reminded readers of the *Liverpool Daily Post* (11 June 1919) that during the war, when the Mauritania was due to sail, the white crew 'failed to put in an appearance. She was manned by 'niggers.' We ask for British justice, to be treated as true and loyal sons of Great Britain.' For this reason, he added, 'the African merchants in the city decided to spend £10,000 to erect a memorial to the coloured people for the part they took in the war.'

One of the most persuasive pieces of writing on record came from a sergeant in the West Indies Regiment (a regular unit of the British army, and not to be confused with the B.W.I.R. British West Indian Regiment) and was forwarded to the government by Cecil (no first name), Bishop of Jamaica. On the subject of wives and children of members of the regiment, Sergeant Grant draws attention to hardship caused by leaving these dependents in Liverpool. Writing on 17 November 1919, he refers to the wives and children of non-commissioned officers and men from Jamaica who had been West Africa, and now without sufficient means to equip themselves for the British winter:

> These women having to deal with an officer who is unmarried and do not really understand when a woman is in comfort or misery, is finding life very hard they are not in a position to purchase winter clothes….while the grass is growing the horse is starving…. It is true the Government is Boarding and messing them but that is not all. I personally not being satisfied with the Condition of things I obtained permission and brought my wife to London it being impossible to get suitable quarters at Winchester. I was also promised passage by 3 weeks, now I don't think I will get one before 3 months…(sic). (C.O. 137/735[1])

The C.O. forwarded both the Bishop's and Sergeant Grant's letters to the War Office, with a covering note that from its tone rather than its obvious wording, suggests Lord Milner considered that this communication should be taken seriously.

Individual views with a common identity were well expressed in a letter from Fola Thomas. His was a protest on behalf of other blacks from West Africa about treatment during the riots, headed 'We beg to appeal Through your Colonial Secretaryship to the House of Common (sic).' Writing from 144 Crown St., Liverpool on 13 June 1919, he started with humility, 'I beg to fall unto yours Footstool (sic) most humbly and respectfully as a Coloured British subject,' but soon turned to the policy of interning blacks during the riots, for reasons of safety. The feeling of Thomas was that previously Queen Victoria had been honourable, and that was needed in the present situation: 'why can't we be treated with justice. Justice. Justice. We remember in the life days of our Most Excellent Gracious Sovereign Late Queen Victoria, that all her terms is Peace with Honour- Peace with Honour' (C.O. 318/352[2]). He wanted to know about the attitude of the present King: 'if the citizen hated we negroes, is His Most Excellent (sic) Majesty the King hate we also.' Now, since the war, attitudes had changed:

> Why now thes (sic) negroes became the British enemy. They are today three times worst in ill-treated, than does to our German enemy….are these men German subject, or British subject….these men have the right of obtaining their daily bread under the Flag they have the proud to belong. And who they have been fought for. Or, namely, because this our skin is Black, we believed that the God who made Whites, same one made Blacks.

Thomas did not make clear what he wanted, other than to be heard, register his opinions, and be treated with respect. Thomas did not ask for any financial assistance, but only for fairness of treatment and 'justice.' Nevertheless, Fola Thomas ended his letter by signing off as: 'Yours Obediently Servant, Fours (sic) Years nine months Service with Two wounded stripes and eighteen months Prison of War.' Fola Thomas's letter was sent to the Home Office and to the authorities in Liverpool, and 'put by' at the C.O., with a response, 'I do not see how we can interfere.' However, the civil servant also responded that the department were prepared to ask the West African colonies, who 'had contributed a lot to the Prince of Wales's Fund, which was now helping local committees with repatriation, whether they could help' (C.O. 318/352[3]).

Articulating on behalf of others as well as himself, William Samuel's correspondence contained a sting in the tail, although starting somewhat deceptively with humility:

> To the Colonial Secretary for the Colonies, I am fully aware of the greatness of the freedom which I take with you on the present occasion, a liberty which seemed scarcely allowable, when I reflect on that distinguished and dignified station in which you stand.

He signed off on behalf of others, 'I Beg to Remain Your Faithful Servant William Samuel For Negroes.' It is not clear what he wanted, other than to protest about 'the almost general prejudice which is so prevalent in all the world against those of my colour.' He went on to remind the minister that 'we are boycotted in this country by your race, by the same people whom less than a year ago our blood was shed on the battlefields for your safety.'

Samuel, a sailor from British Guiana, wrote first to the C.O. on 30 December 1918 from Sophia Street, Bute Town, Cardiff, outlining the desperate and demeaning circumstances for seeking work:

> Every morning we go down to shipping offices to find ourselves work as to make an honest bread and are bluntly refused on account of our colour. Whereas foreigners of all nationality get the preference. This is not only in Cardiff but throughout the United Kingdom. (C.O. 111/621; 318/349[4])

Writing again from the Sailors' Home at 22 St. Anns St., Limehouse, E.14, he drew attention to the fact that 'we were brutally and most barbarously attacked two nights during this week without reasonable occasion.' Significantly, Samuel did not consider himself and his African/Afro-Caribbean colleagues to be 'foreigners':

> We are few here comparing the foreigner and ourselves in this country still the foreign man gets on better than we do. Is it because he has tried to betray England even in the present war? If so we can do the same and do so with effect…. All we want is to ask Great Britain to allow us to get out of here to Japan or other countries where we have friends for England is our enemy, not our friend. (C.O. 318/352[5])

Samuel concluded 'it is only reasonable for you to see we are not wanted here, so please make an effort to get us out of here as quick (sic) as

possible.' The reaction by a C.O. official was to suggest repatriation and to comment that employment for coloured seamen was difficult, right from the time of the Armistice (C.O. 318/352[6]):

> I have seen the writer on several occasions. He is a burly negro, with an aggressive manner, not at all in keeping with the 'soft-sawder' (sic) of his opening sentence and not a bit appreciative of the fact that he is getting 4/- a day from this 'enemy' country and a free passage to B.Guiana (sic) when his time comes. (C.O. 318/349[7])

The C.O. reply also pointed out that passage could only be offered to the person's country of origin, not to a country elsewhere. After the offer, no further one could be made.

Challenging Procedures

Many correspondents, even relatively well-informed letter writers, were not fully aware of procedures: undoubtedly, changing regulations and entitlements posed a challenge for applicants to negotiate their way around, even for those fortunate enough to be fluent in letter writing. In July 1918, Colonial Office staff were once more obliged to liaise with the Home Office regarding an enquiry by a Mr. F. Farah, a Syrian Christian who was naturalised in Jamaica in 1897, but resident in West Didsbury, Manchester for some 8 years. Farah had his own import/export business between Kingston and the United Kingdom, and had hoped to take a holiday house for his family to Blackpool, but was prevented by police because he had no 'identity book.' His carefully handwritten and very literate letter to the Colonial Office states 'I am extremely anxious to have my naturalisation satisfied in this country, (and) I would be much obliged if you would inform me what steps I must take to carry this out' (C.O. 137/736[8]). His solicitor enquired to the Under Secretary of State whether, in the eyes of the law, Farah could be considered as a 'friendly alien' (C.O. 137/736[9]). The answer stating the legal situation was not helpful: Para 11 of the circular of 28 April 1915 specified that he would have to start again ('de novo') under section 2 of the Act, and would not be able to obtain an imperial certificate under section 6, but the C.O. undertook to ask the Home Office to tell him this (C.O. 137/736[10]). Clearly, naturalisation policy was also challenging for applicants at this time.

During late 1918, the most persistent individual appellant who set out to prove that the pen was mightier than the sword was Harry Downer. He committed to paper regularly in his battle with the authorities for assisted passage to Montreal, Canada, where he claimed that he had a partner and child. There is no record of administrators receiving proof that this was the case. Downer wanted to arrive in Canada before the St. Lawrence froze over, in order to save on transhipping costs. His letters are significant for the detail they provide on the struggles and frustrations of appellants. First, he attempted to procure employment in order to fund his passage, but the shore stewards of the various shipping companies said they could do nothing. 'Some said they couldn't take me because of my colour.' The C.O. had noted as early as 3 April 1918 Downer's comments about the 'unfair treatment of coloured men, hinting at an intention to have the question raised in Parliament,' but on his next visit to their offices in October, they provided him with a note asking if a working passage to Canada could be provided, if possible.

When the response was negative, Downer requested that the C.O.: 'please make out a conveyance order so that I pay so much and work so much' (C.O. 137/729[11]). However, the policy was only to repatriate to the country of origin, not to a different one, so this request was deemed to be a matter for the Canadian Immigration Department. Downer was given the name of an official and referred to the London office. His statement then had to be verified in Canada itself, causing a further delay. In a letter dated 21 October 1918, he recounted the details of his two-year history in Liverpool and London, trying to get a job on a boat, 'otherwise I should be too glad to leave this place.' He listed the names of people that he had approached for work, and their shipping lines, which included the Cunard Line and the C.P. Line, adding that 'Mr. Hamlin in the Arsenal couldn't give me a job because I was a West Indian.' Downer's conclusion about these experiences was 'I am very sorry to say I didn't make myself. Nature made me and change my colour (sic)…My young one have to be cared for' (C.O. 137/729[12]).

Two days later, he put pen to paper again, once more narrating the experience: 'the men said I could go to the ship and ask so then I went to the ship the reply I got, we want White men (sic)' (C.O. 137/729[13]). On 29 October, an official from the C.O. rang Colonel Obed Smith, a Canadian contact, who told him 'he did not think it advisable to send a West Indian to Montreal as they did not generally stand the rigours

of the winter climate but he thought that he had a right to go there if he had a wife and child in Montreal.' Colonel Obed Smith offered to see Harry Downer and to telegraph subsequently in order to have the man's statement verified. If they proved correct, he would assist him to Montreal (C.O. 137/729[14]). By 11 November 1918, Downer was still waiting for more news, and as each of his overtures hit administrative barriers and hence delay, the tone of his representations became more impatience. He visited the C.O. once more. There, a civil servant noted, 'this man should not have troubled us again yet' (376).

Downer was still in London, staying at 3 William St., Commercial Road, awaiting verification of his case from the Canadians. If only he had his passport, he stated 'I would go straight away and book my ticket to Montreal and the next sunset would not see my face.' He had sold some of his tools to fund his passage, and added some reflections:

> I think not so much of myself but of my family, especially the young one, and my heart bleeds to see how much I have been knocked about by Christian men of England….Every day I stay in London my child suffers. (C.O. 137/729[15])

On 18 November, a civil servant at the C.O. noted: 'Downer came here today and was inclined to be unpleasant. The messenger tells me that he hears that Downer was turned out of the Passport Office for making a disturbance and came here…I told him the Emigration Department were investigating his statement and that in the meantime we could take no further action in the matter.' The record was 'put by' (ibid.). As there are no further reports or letters on the case, it can only be assumed that he reached Canada eventually.

Financial Entitlement and Work

Returning soldiers from the B.W.I.R. promptly became aware of their entitlement to allowances and then to payment under the 'Out of Work Donation Policy,' and consequently wrote to the C.O. about non-receipt or delays payment. A well-versed example came from administrator Arthur Mahaffy, writing from River Street, Roseau, Dominica. He pointed out that he was a carpenter by trade. He returned seven weeks ago, and had been applying for work, including at the Inspectorate of Police, but 'the reply I received were no work at all' (sic).

He seemed fully knowledgeable on procedures: 'In reference to Army book 472 and my Protection Certificate Z 11 I am now applying to you for my Donation Policy which I should receive the said day I arrived in the Island' (C.O. 318/349[16]).

Wilfred N. McIntyre's expansive protest correspondence requested financial help. Most complaints and requests were economically motivated. McIntyre was based in Kingston, and writing on 4 September 1919, he claimed he was ill-treated and forcibly deported, or repatriated, on the S.S. 'Grantilly' via Barbados to Jamaica, and 'have never got a penny from this British Government, although my ill-treatment was no fault of mine, but all because I am not white.' He points to passengers from the S.S. 'Cambrian' receiving sympathetic consideration in comparison:

> 'Why should this Government make flesh of one class of His Most Gracious Britannic Majesty's subjects and bone of others?' He only received 2/- from the Superintendent of the Sailors' Home and lost all his belongings 'because I had to quickly march off without reason when I left England forcibly I was told that even on the trip I would get 4/- a day until I reached my destination. To think that all solemn words given to me in England (British) have not been kept is the greatest breach of faith between the British Government and the Colonists.' He noticed that the Barbabians 'got £5 right away from their Government yet I and the others got nothing from our Jamaica government.'

McIntyre claimed that he should have received £9 in total. 'I did not expect that I should ever be forcibly deported or repatriated from the United Kingdom British soil never committing any offence. I thought there was sacred spot and my rights and property were on sacred soil' (C.O. 318/350[17]).

It is unclear whether he ever received his money, but his resentment was clearly shared by other black people. H.M.S. Cambrian, to which he refers, had sailed from Liverpool to Barbados and on to Jamaica with 85 'deported coloured seamen.' A petition signed by the men claimed compensation for lost clothing and effects during the riots in Cardiff and Liverpool. According to the acting Governor of Jamaica, 'they are greatly dissatisfied and this could lead to disturbance.' Petitioners wanted to have 'this most important political matter properly adjusted in the interest of Empire' (C.O. 318/350[18]).

In some cases, the politics referred to above was highlighted by the fact that individual circumstances were not always compatible with policy initiatives. James Gillespie was a case in point. He had a fish and chip shop in Barry that was destroyed during the riots. He was born in Jamaica, had an English wife and one stepchild, who accompanied him back to Jamaica on his repatriation, paid for by the Board of Trade. Jamaican Gillespie had resided in the United Kingdom since 1896, going to sea and serving twenty years on British ships, until he married a white woman in 1916. He then opened a fish and chip shop in Barry Dock, South Wales, but was forced to close it on 11 June 1919, following the outbreak of riots. He had one stepdaughter aged eight years and one stepson aged twenty-three, who was at sea. When James applied for repatriation, he and his family were living from savings acquired from the business. He asked for special consideration because the Repatriation Committee Scheme in Cardiff was not able to help coloured men who were married to white women. Gillespie wrote: 'Sir, I am a native of Jamaica, British West Indies, been a seaman by profession sailing out of Barry Dock from 1896 to 1917, when I stoped (sic) ashore to go in Government work from 29 September 1917 to the 1st of June 1918, the work was finished (Granaries). I started a little business in the refreshment department (fish and chips) till the last racial riot 12th June when my home was destroyed by the rioters. I applied for repatriation for myself and my family several times, to the Home Office, Colonial Office, and the West Indian Committee. I filled a form in, like wise (sic) a letter from my creditors giving me permission to leave the country' (C.O. 318/350; 137/735/769[19]).

Gillespie had originally requested compensation for damage to his property during the riots, but had been advised to take legal assistance. This must have proved to be too difficult or expensive, because he then applied for repatriation. He asked to be able to take his wife and stepdaughter, and to be given 2 months advance notice of sailing (to clear his household effects), and for the same gratuity of £5 to be given to his wife and child, making a total of £15, plus an additional payment for the time needed to establish himself in Jamaica. He had explained that the standard £5 for initial resettlement would be insufficient, as he would have to totally re-establish himself after so long away. Colonial Office officials were sympathetic: they felt it would be unreasonable to ask the colony to treat him as a distressed seaman. Senior civil servant Mr. Hamblin suggested to his assistant Mr. Darnley on 22 September 1919

that Gillespie's case could be dealt with 'under the new instructions issued to Mercantile Marine Offices covering the cases of coloured seamen with white wives' (C.O. 318/350; 137/735[20]). The following month the Colonial Office informed the Board of Trade that they had no objection to the passage of Gillespie, wife and child, and arrangements were made for departure, although his departure with family was delayed due to the need to check his birth (1874) place claims, in Cornwall County, Jamaica.

Eric Bourne, a repatriated seaman professed his loyalty to the Crown despite loss of property at 25 Tredegar St. during the Cardiff riots. Bourne wrote to the Governor of Barbados from his mother's house near Woodbourne, St. Philip, after he returned to the island as 'one of those who was mal-treated and suffered severe losses of clothes and other belongings' (C.O. 318/349[21]). This had left him, 'with the only suit I am now wearing' and requested £36.9s.6d: 'what I would like is that if you can render me any assistance by searching up the matter I would be very gracious to you.' A cheque for £13 was duly forwarded to his Cardiff solicitor.

Not all applicants for repatriation were victims of the riots—but most were prompted by the need for work. One of the lucky ones was Newton Jamieson, with a white wife from London and a 14-month old baby. He applied to return to Jamaica, but later managed to obtain employment in the United Kingdom and withdrew his application (C.O. 318/349[22]). In contrast, Oliver Goldsmith, an unemployed cattleman who had come to Britain in that capacity on a cattle boat. After consultation with the colony, the C.O. decided that he and his family should be refused free passage back to Jamaica on the grounds that he was not a special case and would be a 'burden on the community' in Jamaica. Goldsmith had been referred to the Reverend George F. Dempster by the West India Committee in London, who had compiled his details for submission to the authorities on a 'form of particulars' entitled 'Distressed Colonial Seamen Applying for Repatriation.' Amongst the details, in a section on 'Distressed person's state of health and capacity for further employment,' it was noted 'Good health. Quite strong' (ibid.).

There was also considerable sympathy at the Colonial Office in September 1919 for Albert Alexander, from St. Vincent in the West Indies. He served as a fireman on British ships from October 1911 to February 1918, and continued to work during the submarine campaign until he was prevented from doing so by ill health. He was discharged

at Port Said, but travelled to Edinburgh to attend Colinton Sanatorium for a year, where he was later pronounced 'consumptive' by a Mr. Elder, the Deputy Tuberculosis Officer. From the Board of Trade's administrative point of view, Alexander did not, therefore, have continual sea service since 1 October 1918—which was a requirement to qualify for free passage. However, the Colonial Office was so upset by the decision as it affected a 'bona fide' seaman and 'unfortunate man' whose case clearly came within 'the spirit of the repatriation scheme' that the minister in charge, Viscount Milner, requested they reconsider (C.O. 318/350[23]).

Petitions

Sometimes men submitted petitions on their return to the Caribbean. Petitions and letters from men of African and Afro-Caribbean origin indicate widespread bitterness, resentment over and even surprise about the change of attitude towards them in the mainland United Kingdom during the aftermaths of war. Collective communication became easier with shared experience in a restricted location, such as a boat. Jenkinson has pointed out that the experience of spending several weeks on a sea journey with similarly repatriated people was a likely environment for the creation of a collective memory of the United Kingdom riots, 'after the interchanging of anecdotes and the piecing together of sequences of events that are likely to have gone on during the voyage to the Caribbean' (2009: 82[24]). Detective Inspector J.S. Gamble from Demerara referred to this phenomenon in his Minute of 23.7.19 to the C.O. about the *S.S. Santille* when it arrived in his colony with nine repatriated men:

> The agents of the *S.S. Santille* have had no advices about these men, and there seems to be little known about them except their own versions. This is to the effect that persons of colour are not wanted in England now that the war is over and that they were all picked up and sent to Cardiff and shipped to the West Indies. The majority are seamen (firemen, &c.) or have done a voyage or two. They tell extraordinary stories about the treatment of coloured people in the United Kingdom and seem steeped in racial prejudice. They also have the gift of the gab, particularly a Barbadian named Derrick, who is Americanised (sic). (C.O. 318/349[25])

Government House, Trinidad also reported a petition from eleven seamen on the *S.S. Santille*, claiming an allowance of four shillings a day

from 27 June to 17 July, but a sum of four pounds and twelve shillings had already been paid to them by the Barbadian government as the balance of the six pound gratuity (C.O. 318/349[26]). Almost every example of a petition by both Africans and Afro-Caribbean people was either composed in, or connected with, such situations. Boat petitions often combined complaints about economic/financial aspects with reference to maltreatment as well. Chapter 2 has referred to civil service internal attitudes of interdepartmental blame, but reports of and records of reaction to disturbances and unrest on repatriation ships was much more significant. In retrospect, they present a concentrated picture of extremes. Whereas the government's main concern was to avoid unrest in the colonies, the principal concern of appellants was to make themselves heard in the hope of achieving—somehow, somewhere, and by any means—an improvement in their dire economic circumstances, which was experienced by some as a life or death matter.

Chapter 2 also referred to civil service mistakes, in particular sending a group of men on the *SS Orca* to the West Indies instead of West Africa. Although the men continued to receive 20p (fours shillings) a day whilst in Jamaica, there was unrest aboard the *SS Orca*. Five 'desperate prisoners' were removed from the ship at Barbados before it travelled on to Jamaica (C.O. 318/349[27]). On arrival at Jamaica, a number of repatriated workers immediately petitioned the acting Governor, objecting to deductions made from their £5 allowance for goods redeemed from pawn shops in Britain. They also demanded compensation for property lost in the riots. Then on 10 October, some of these same men participated in a riot that broke out in Kingston, Jamaica, in which white owned businesses were targeted. Fifteen people were arrested.

Joseph Tull was one of the seamen who was repatriated on the *S.S. Orca*. He submitted a claim in October 1919 for retrospective payment. As chief carpenter for M.M. Reserve and formerly H.M.S. Eaglet Tull had been discharged in Liverpool, arriving back in Barbados on 23.10.19 with his family, where they took up residence at the Stream, Christ Church. He claimed that he was informed before sailing home from Cardiff that he was due a gratuity of £6, payable to naval ratings. He stated that he had lost all his belongings.

> I did not expect that I should ever be forcibly deported or repatriated from the United Kingdom British soil never committing any offence. I thought there was sacred spot and my rights and property were on sacred soil.

> Great God to think of this eh? Give me justice and equity in accordance with time honoured customs and usages of British jurisprudence. I cannot be allowed to go begging and starving stealing next door the blame will be the Government's and you are the Executive and Chief Magistrate (sic). (C.O. 318/349[28])

After hearing that he could not be paid this gratuity, Tull still persisted, writing from Bridgetown 'I am stranded here and badly in want of money as I was sent here with the last batch of soldiers in the troopship *Orca* with the understanding that I would be paid here' (C.O. 318/349[29]). This was identified by civil servants as the Unemployment Donation Policy, but he had not taken out a policy. There was no system of unemployment benefit in the colony. There is no further record of what happened to Tull.

Disturbances by 85 black seamen broke out in Barbados, and on the repatriation ship the *SS Santille*, during their journey to Jamaica and other islands, when ship's fittings and food rations were destroyed, forcing the crew to demand an armed guard. The men claimed they were entitled to 4 more days allowance for their stop over there. They continued the journey to Jamaica on the S.S. Grantilly Castle. The Colonial Office later conducted an enquiry into grievances, outlined in a petition addressed to the acting Governor of Jamaica, and signed by James William, James Williams, Eugene Gale, Wilfred McIntire, William Griffith, C. Englam, Fred Brown, Isaac Williams. Joseph Ellis and Simon Hemmings. The men claimed that during their six days in Barbados they were promised an allowance, payable by the Jamaican government, but on arrival there, were kept in a sailors' home for two days, then asked to leave, with a one shilling gratuity.

> We are glad to bring to His Excellency knowledge that we are British subject (sic), and our dignity and honour we have retain (sic) during our stay in Europe. We want His Excellency to realize the fact that we were not being sent home as criminals….the fact of this would be to the knowledge of the public long ago, but the neglect owing to the Editor of the *Gleaner* who regret to publish our letters. (C.O. 318/352[30])

On 28 October 1919 the governor of Antigua and the Leeward Islands forwarded a petition from some residents of St. Kitts to the Colonial Office. They protested against 'the inhuman and barbarous treatment

accorded to the men of colour in Great Britain recently.' The St. Kitts Universal Benevolent Association made the representations on behalf of 40 people. When asked for evidence to support the statement, the organisers referred to soldiers of the British West Indian Regiment being ill-used and humiliated (C.O. 318/349/578[31]).

By far the longest petition, in terms of 7 pages of wording and 23 points, came from some 45 signatories in Jamaica (C.O. 318/350[32]) about ill-treatment in Cardiff during the 1919 riots. Petitioners requested certain payments in compensation for damages sustained, but also articulated their understanding of entitlement as 'British subjects.' A lengthy, expansively worded petition, written on 29 August 1919 to His Excellency Colonel Bryan C.M.G., Acting Governor of the island, and sent to the C.O. as part of the Jamaican dispatch in October 1919 (thus clearly not considered to be urgent), referred to:

> it being our inalienable right as British Subjects to petition the Throne in the language of Truth (sic); to redress our grievances and to impartially with even-handed balance dispense to us according to the time honoured immemorial custom and usages of the Realm – that Justice and Equity according to the dignified British Jurisprudence may be done us so that the honour and prestige of the Empire may be upheld Constitutionally as freed from class legislation, racial hatred and prejudice in order that throughout the whole British Empire there may dwell harmony, friendship and peace amongst all the varied mixed races under His Majesty's Imperial sway, adding lustre to our glorious Empire and that Negroes may fully appreciate and honour the British Constitution under which they are governed, to which we forever owe allegiance, and which we demonstrated our unswerving loyalty in the late War, daring to lay down our lives in the battlefield side by side with the Europeans to uphold and preserve forever the dignity and honour to our Glorious Empire, an Empire upon which the sun never sets.

The petition requests that sympathy be extended for ill-treatment in the United Kingdom during the 1919 riots: 'we thought we were perfectly safe and on sacred ground free from attack.' Petitioners asked that 'our grievances be fully redressed in the interests of colonial expansion and that of Empire.' They requested certain payments in compensation for damages sustained, but also articulated their understanding of entitlement as British subjects. This point concurs with the view of black seamen who complained very bitterly that 'foreigners' were permitted

to sign on for work on British ships, in preference to themselves, who claimed British citizenship.

Petitioners also stressed their pressing economic needs in points 14 and 15 of their grievances:

> 14. That we have no monies; we are in a state of almost want and destitution, having to move away so quickly all our belongings goods and chatels (sic) were left behind all we have to subsist on is 28/- (shillings) which was given to us by this Jamaican Government and this is a mere trifle as the high price of food stuffs and the high cost of living food clothing etc. make it hard it live on.
>
> 15. That we need clothes as the laws of sanitation require this and in our present state deprived of our belongings etc etc we do beseech Your Excellency as a wise administrator to grant us ample compensation for what we suffered as British Subjects (sic) in the United Kingdom all because we were negroes which we could not help.

The question of black identity arose, in the light of what petitioners considered to be humane and constitutional: 'what had we done to merit our treatment? The answer is a "Nothing" but because the Almighty made us negroes (sic).' The final point of the petition, number 23, explains that the men had taken their grievances to Alfred A. Mends, Vice President of the Jamaican Federation of Labour, and a journalist. Their views were based on advice from him, that many of them had been trade unionists in Britain and that the Jamaican organisation 'is working on English lines.' They intended to take their case to the newspapers and to the Jamaican public. In the meantime, they expected His Excellency the Governor to communicate with the Right Honourable Lord Milner, Secretary of State (C.O. 318/350[33]).

The petition was widely circulated within the C.O. and to Town Halls in towns and cities affected by the riots. There was some internal discussion about the financial allowances to which the signatories were entitled, and a suggestion was made that, as the boat stopped first at Barbados before Jamaica, it was likely that payments were made early in the journey, and the money spent by the time the passengers arrived in Jamaica. Civil servants also commented that repatriation was voluntary, and not forced on people. Having reviewed three points from the petition: 'the authority under which these men were "expelled", the allowances payable to them, and their claim to compensation for losses during

the riots', the conclusion in long hand and draft by senior civil servant Mr. Grindle) was: 'I fail to see what we can do to allay the discontent caused by riots and loss of goods in this country, and lack of employment in Jamaica' (ibid.).

In fact, lack of employment more generally in the West Indies directly influenced petitions that were not prompted exclusively by the British riots. On 17 July 1919, the War Office wrote to the British Consul in Panama through a cypher telegram, stating that a repatriation ship, the S.S. Oriana, 'is now calling at Trinidad instead of Jamaica, but in view of difficult labour situation throughout West Indies I see no alternative to landing all the men in Panama.' There were ten officers and 874 'Coloured Other Ranks' on board. On 15 July 1918, a previous group of petitioners had written from Cristobel Port Office in the Isthmus of Panama, 'we are as sheep in the wilderness without a shepherd' (C.O. 318/350[34]). That feeling must have been enhanced by sentiments of frustration and anger by other West Indians who were stranded in Panama after falling victim to an employment scam carried out by the 'Enterprise Employment Agency.' This bogus organisation failed to honour an agreement made with over 600 labourers who wished to go to Cuba, paying ten US dollars each for passport and transport preparation. According to the British legation (8 July 1918, ibid.) this was one of many previous deceptions practiced on West Indians in Panama. The men's petition to the British government explained that the four men in charge (named 'Dr. Millard, Wm.Kidd (sic), V.G. Desiez and Brown' had promised that:

> In the early part of May 1918 the boat will come from Cuba to take us over. Sir, we waited to the end of May, no boat arrived and nothing was said….We therefore said to them if there is no boat to take us please refund our money back to us, and they refused doing so. (sic) (ibid.)

Mixed Marriages

Fola Thomas, whose heartfelt writing was analysed earlier, believed that on the question of mixed race partnerships, the issue had two sides and that both should live without jealousy. In a letter of protest written from Liverpool at the time of the riots, 'Concerning the women. I beg to ask, who are the father of those Halfcast estimated to be over 13,000 Molatoes in 1908. In Seven Colonies, out of His Majesty's Colonies in

West Coast of Africa. Wasn't their fathers are whites, and their Mother Blacks. Aren't the negroes in Africa have their own feelings, as the whites here today, or why no jealousy aroused (sic)' (C.O. 318/352[35]).

Yet the principle of peaceful coexistence that Thomas advocated, was constantly challenged by problems of cultural and environmental difference (also a concern for civil servants, analysed in the previous chapter). Lottie Bryan, who experienced this first hand, was one of the few female voices that appear in records one this matter. Only 2 or 3 months after arriving in Jamaica with her 15-month old baby, she asked to be helped to return to Sheffield where she had met and married her husband Charles, then a munitions worker (C.O. 318/349[36]). In Jamaica, the Inspector General of Police interviewed her husband, and the latter agreed that Lottie should return. He was working on the government railway (Port Antonio line) for 30/- per week. The main issue that had prompted Lottie's request was the discovery that her husband had several other children also needing support and that he was 'deserting me and not supporting me' (C.O. 318/349[37]). She continued: 'Since my arrival in Jamaica, I have found out that he has several children already, and that on account of the parents of these children he is deserting me.' In Sheffield, Lottie's father was also interviewed by the police to check that he and his wife were happy to support mother and child (C.O. 318/352[38]). The obvious concern of civil servants that women should be provided for can be construed today as a protective attitude, in terms of traditional male chivalry, but except for in a few rare cases such as Lottie Bryan's, the detailed reaction of wives to this warning was not recorded. Occasionally the determination of a wife to take on the challenge despite attempts to dissuade her, are noted. Several of the colonial governments had already warned about the 'hardship and degradation to which such women are exposed' (C.O. 318/352[39]) and the general policy—underlined by Lottie's example. Her passage back to England was paid for by the Jamaican government, who took the view that 'while there is no objection, on principle (sic), to white wives of coloured seamen being admitted to Jamaica, such a course is most undesirable in the interests of the wives.'

In the case of the Russell family, a further complication added an additional layer of potential prejudice: David Russell's wife was German. The governor of Jamaica did not want the Russell family to return there in case they were a burden on the community. Although Russell was anxious to work, he was illiterate and restricted by injuries

from frostbite uncured during internment in Germany. He expressed his views through a letter written in German by his wife. Russell had left Jamaica at the turn of the century and spent two or three years at sea. After working in a travelling show in Austria he settled in Leipzig in 1905, and married a German woman there. As a British subject he was interned as an enemy alien from 1914 to 1916. In those days a woman automatically took the nationality of her husband, and in January 1915 Russell's wife and their five children were deported to the United Kingdom. They landed at Hull, speaking no English and knowing no one, and were admitted to the workhouse. In 1916, Russell was exchanged due to sickness, sent to England and reunited with his family, supported by the Social Welfare Association. They were all accommodated by the Church Army in Hull. He had three stays in hospital, losing all of his toes through blood poisoning. In the summer of 1917, he walked to London to request repatriation to Jamaica, pawning his clothes on the way. The Colonial Office told the governor of Jamaica that although Russell was eligible for repatriation it was thought better to find him work in England: as an official commented, 'I cannot think we should ask Jamaica to pay the passage of a German wife and a half German family' (C.O. 137/729[40]). Employment was obtained at Vickers factory in Erith, and Russell was told that if he stuck to the job it might be possible to bring his family to join him. But by the summer of 1918, they were all in Gainsborough, from whence the family made several representations.

The first record is of a handwritten letter in German, penned on 13 December 1918 in her husband's name by Mrs. Russell and stating 'It is not possible for me to provide for my family here.' The second representation came from the clerk of the Urban District Council who wrote to the Colonial Office asking if they might be sent to Jamaica, and the third came from Decimus M. Robbs (solicitor) on behalf of the Gainsborough Union, threatening to make representations to the Member of Parliament and to the press, stating that 'The fact of the wife's being a German woman and the man a negro, raises every hand against him and it's is one of the worst cases as a result of the War, which I have known' (sic) (C.O. 137/729[41]). The Gainsborough authorities felt that although Russell was willing to be repatriated alone, it was not feasible to leave his wife and children 'on the rates' (C.O. 137/729[42]). Very little seems to have happened, despite one C.O. written comment

that 'it might be preferable to ask the colony to repatriate the whole lot and avoid having an appeal made through the Press here.'

By the summer of 1919, the family was in Nottingham, supported by the Poor Law Guardians. Then in October 1922, the Colonial Office received letters about them from the West India Committee and the Board of Guardians at Poplar, stating that Russell had again walked to London. By now he had six children, according to the West Indian Committee in London. Russell pointed out that Jamaica was where 'all my brothers, sisters and relatives live…,' but amongst the voluminous government records about the case there is no mention of any enquiry into the circumstances of Russell's Jamaican family—a brother named John Russell and a sister called Mrs. Rebecca Dewar—and the possibility of assistance from them, as happened in other cases. The eventual outcome of the family's plight is unknown.

Conclusion

Amongst letter writers, the most widespread sentiments are disappointment and hurt at treatment given, mixed with surprise that this should be the case—not during the war, but after it. In peacetime they expected better from the mother country. It is important to note the sense of collective feeling that emerges: most of the individual letters of protest are written on behalf of others perceived to be in the same situation as the writer—a sentiment that is a strong feature of the letter writing by Fola Thomas and William Samuel. This tendency, when combined as evidence with actual petitions carrying a number of signatures, speaks to a group awareness amongst black voices. This would have been acquired, despite being in a numerical minority in many situations, at work or in queues for employment (where it existed), in hostels, at church (sometimes religious and caring charities wrote on behalf of individuals), on boats (returning soldiers and repatriated people), and of course, previously at war.

The transnational nature of protest communications is significant. Almost all written statements mentioned poverty—whether this was in Britain, Africa or the West Indies. Yet these same communications usually also expressed vehement loyalty to empire, with no mention of or desire for any form of constitutional change. Independence or self-rule were never sentiments expressed.

Notes

1. TNA: C.O. 137/735/850.
2. TNA: C.O. 318/352/13.
3. TNA: C.O. 318/352/13.
4. TNA: C.O. 111/621; 318/349/445.
5. TNA: C.O. 318/352/58.
6. TNA: C.O. 318/352/62.
7. TNA: C.O. 318/349/444.
8. TNA: C.O. 137/736/220.
9. TNA: C.O. 137/736/533.
10. TNA: C.O. 137/736/219.
11. TNA: C.O.137/729/371.
12. TNA: C.O. 137/729/374.
13. TNA: C.O. 137/729/376.
14. TNA: C.O. 137/729/377.
15. TNA: C.O. 137/729/379.
16. TNA: C.O. 318/349/134.
17. TNA: C.O. 318/350/330.
18. TNA: C.O. 318/350/318.
19. TNA: C.O. 318/350/399–401; 137/735/312; 137/735/769.
20. TNA: C.O. 318/350/399–402; 137/735/771.
21. TNA: C.O. 318/349/338.
22. TNA: C.O. 318/349/439.
23. TNA: C.O. 318/350/403–407.
24. Jenkinson, J. (2009) *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.
25. TNA: C.O. 318/349/112.
26. TNA: C.O. 318/349/145.
27. TNA: C.O. 318/349/286.
28. TNA: C.O. 318/349/541.
29. TNA: C.O. 318/349/543.
30. TNA: C.O. 318/352/17.
31. TNA: C.O. 318/349/578.
32. TNA: C.O. 318/350/14–17.
33. TNA: C.O. 318/350/14–17.
34. TNA: C.O. 318/350/81.
35. TNA: C.O. 318/352/13.
36. TNA: C.O. 318/349/74.
37. TNA: C.O. 318/349/593–596.
38. TNA: C.O. 318/352/23.
39. TNA: C.O. 318/352/460.

40. TNA: C.O. 137/729/524.
41. TNA: C.O. 137/729/476.
42. TNA: C.O. 137/729/524.

Reference

Jenkinson, J. (2009). *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

CHAPTER 4

Repatriation Testimonies as Uncomfortable History

Abstract Uncomfortable history tends to be neglected history: yet literary voices provide evidence of enhanced racial awareness, even when they exist only as 'traces.' Yet incomplete personal stories can still add a human dimension to economic and political issues. Changes in perceived identity emerged during 1919–1922, in the context of the dismal employment situation in merchant shipping. Almost all written statements mentioned poverty—whether in Britain, Africa, or the West Indies. Written communications were used as a means of self-defence but also as an attack: 'Why should this Government make flesh of one class of His Most Gracious Britannic Majesty's subjects and bone of others?', asked William McIntyre. When it came to mixed marriages, white wives remained fiercely loyal to their husbands.

Keywords Hidden heritage · Written communications · Black Racial awareness · Afro and Afro-Caribbean history · Identity

1919–1922 is a neglected period of study in which an innovative source of data has been forwarded here in order to engage with a neglected topic. Black voices mainly exist as 'traces' from the past, a phenomenon identified by Derrida (1982, 1992[1]) in other contexts. However incomplete and changing, scholarship still needs to engage with the complexities, as Hall so eloquently stated (1990, 1996, 1997[2]). Yet the findings are clearly troubling—a phenomenon that other scholars have

J. L. Chapman, *African and Afro-Caribbean Repatriation, 1919–1922*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68813-8_4

experienced: 'The excitement of historical discovery has been dulled by both the long-term and the immediate implications of the facts uncovered' (Walvin 1973: 218[3]). Whilst both the long term and the more immediate implications of the experiences related in this study should not be underestimated, such a judgement may appear here as a perspective taken from the wrong end of the telescope. The fact is that uncomfortable history tends to also be neglected history, and there is an obligation to record and assess it, especially if it involves underrepresented voices. Although the period 1919–1922 only constitutes a short period in the past settlement of African and Afro-Caribbean peoples in Britain, nevertheless findings prompt the argument that the aftermaths of war need to be given more attention as a distinctly defined period of post-conflict adjustment, in which individual voices can be highlighted. Personal stories, even when evidence is incomplete and fragmented, nevertheless add a human dimension to economic and political issues.

The British government repatriation scheme was in force before the riots commenced and was administered by the Board of Trade, but it came into the spotlight as a government solution after the 1919 violent disturbances. Collective communication becomes easier with shared experience, and also in a restricted location such as a boat. The experience of spending several weeks on a sea journey with similarly repatriated people provided a likely environment for written protest. Sometimes men submitted petitions on their return to the Caribbean. Petitions and letters from men of African and Afro-Caribbean origin indicate widespread bitterness, resentment over and even surprise at the change of attitude towards them in the mainland United Kingdom during the aftermaths of war. Some people signed a petition and also wrote individual letters; frequently writers of individual letters claimed to be writing on behalf of others, thus shared sentiments emerge in both forms of communications. Many written voices describe a change of attitude towards black empire citizens since the end of the hostilities. Identity is constantly referred to—in relation to self, family, country, race, and the environment in which writers found themselves. Stuart Hall has referred to 'history as a minority event—the speaking of a past which previously had no language' (Hall 1997, op.cit). He argues that 'diaspora[4] identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference' (1990: 235, op.cit; see also Gilroy 1993: 193[5]). Certainly changes in perceived identity emerged within the context of specific post-war circumstances during the

aftermaths of the conflict, in particular, the dismal employment situation in merchant shipping. Written communications were used as a means of self-defence, yet letter writing by black people also amounted to an attack.

The post-war climate—one of exceptional violence and racial tensions in Britain—should be contextualised within the broader European backdrop (Gerwarth and Horne, eds. 2012[6]), as well as within the context of the demanding logistics of demobilisation, a troubled climate of rioting, and social protest within Britain. The articulations of Africans and Afro-Caribbean people obviously reflected a minority stance within Britain as a whole during the aftermaths of conflict, and as such one of the corollaries—discrimination—was clearly widespread. Previous research has identified examples of police mistreatment, although there was some disparity between the behaviour of authorities between different ports at the time of the riots—with more severe treatment of blacks in Cardiff and better chances of a fairer deal in London. The problem can be viewed as part of a wider social and economic oppression.

Commonly expressed concerns were often practical ones. For instance, Sergeant Grant's letter featured in Chapter Three referring to the wives and children of non-commissioned officers and men from Jamaica who were previously in West Africa, and now without sufficient means to equip themselves for the British winter, provided a salutary reminder of human concerns. Equally, Fola Thomas's claim (also in Chapter 3) that black people: 'Are today three times worst in ill-treated, than does to our German enemy…' is troubling. His call for 'fairness of treatment and justice' is clear, as is William Samuel's statement referring to: 'the almost general prejudice which is so prevalent in all the world against those of my colour.' In his letter, he reminded the minister that 'we are boycotted in this country by your race, by the same people whom less than a year ago our blood was shed on the battlefields for your safety.'

This resentment was shared by most of those who experienced repatriation. Amongst letter writers there are widespread sentiments of disappointment and hurt at treatment given, mixed with surprise that this should be the case—not during the war, but after it. In peacetime, they expected better from the mother country. It is important to note the sense of collective feeling that emerges: most individual letters of protest are written on behalf of others perceived to be in the same situation as the writer—a sentiment that is a strong feature of the letter writing

by Fola Thomas and William Samuel. This tendency, when combined as evidence with actual petitions carrying a number of signatures, speaks to a group awareness amongst black voices. Collective awareness would have been acquired, despite being in a numerical minority in many situations, at work or in queues for employment (where it existed), in hostels, at church (sometimes religious and caring charities wrote on behalf of individuals), on boats (returning soldiers and repatriated people), and of course, previously at war.

The human environment, anxieties and the racist compulsions make post-riot experiences during the window of 1919–1921 extremely poignant. These texts need to be recognised as constituting a historic, literary voice for individual black people as part of an enhanced racial awareness that existed transnationally during the aftermaths of war. Use of language was sometimes graphic, but in the context of a culture of expression where words such as 'nigger' formed part of common parlance. Although there appear to be no instances on record of civil servants using the word 'nigger,' attitudes towards black people taken by civil servants, analysed in Chapter 2, and as expressed in their written discussions, are probably indicative of broader attitudes at the time. This was underlined by the use of language which today would appear offensive, such as talk of 'clearance' of ethnic communities.

Black reactions in writing were also distinguished by an expressive use of language. 'Why should this Government make flesh of one class of His Most Gracious Britannic Majesty's subjects and bone of others? (sic),' asked William McIntyre. His disappointment was obvious: 'I did not expect that I should ever be forcibly deported or repatriated from the United Kingdom British soil never committing any offence. I thought there was sacred spot and my rights and property were on sacred soil' (C.O. 318/350[7]).

Financial matters, entitlements connected with demobilization, payments and allowances, as well as compensation for material losses during the 1919 riots were all common subject matter. Underpinning nearly all communications was an overwhelming desire for equal treatment, for individual respect irrespective of skin colour, and crucially, acknowledgement of contributions and sacrifices made for King and empire during the Great War. Not all applicants for repatriation were victims of the riots—but most were prompted by the need for work. White working class job priority often resulted in black people being stranded in the metropolis and seaports.

Thus economic concerns were intrinsic to the process of black articulation. On the more positive side, black protest in the West Indies led to wage increases—encouraged by the C.O.—in some islands. Nevertheless, this same government department, and others seemed to tolerate destitution amongst the unemployed Africans and Afro-Caribbean population (despite the representations of charities), as long as these people were waiting for return ships. Such experiences, and the inherent frustrations involved, are eloquently expressed in many of the letters and petitions analysed in previous chapters. Money factors were the prime motivator on *both* sides—appellant and government. One memo indicated:

> Lord Milner proposes to reply that he cannot admit that delay in adopting measures to induce certain coloured subjects of His Majesty to leave Liverpool for West Africa imposes any moral liability on His Majesty's Government to provide compensation for damage inflicted during riots in Liverpool on certain other coloured subjects. (C.O. 323/819[8])

Departments were keen to constrain expenditure, but by 1919 both problems and administrative burdens had increased. Civil servants still had to deal with inadequate procedures for and delays in demobilisation on a daily basis, followed by race riots and the day-to-day implications of executing adjustments to the policy aimed at encouraging repatriation. Their tasks were challenging. Civil servants had no legal redress in situations where men drew the allowance by promising to be repatriated, but then broke their word, and refused to return home. An estimated one in four people who approached them were misrepresenting their circumstances by claiming they had served in the army or had been prisoners of war (C.O. 323/819[9]). To their credit, administrators went out of their way to assist Prisoners of War (POWs) or ex-POWs—but procedures and dissemination of information to the public could have been better. Certainly, by today's standards, they were sadly lacking. Boat crews asked for there to be sufficient notice of passengers' arrival, and full information about advances and subsistence that had been paid or were to be administered. This is not to say that officials did not reflect on changes needed. C.O. opinion was that it was unfair to bring seamen to the United Kingdom on a one-way ticket, and take no further responsibility. There was even a call for legislation to deal with this, which would 'effectively prevent the Port of London becoming congested with single-voyage coloured men' (ibid.).

An additional problem that emerges from the evidence of appeals is that individual circumstances were not always compatible with policy initiatives. Furthermore, faults in the system prompted letters of complaint and/or petitions. Many correspondents, even relatively well-informed letter writers, were not fully aware of procedures: undoubtedly, changing regulations and entitlements posed a challenge for applicants to negotiate their way around. For instance, the policy was only to repatriate to the country of origin, not to a different one.

Colonial Office administrators were continuously concerned about the potential dangers for white wives who ventured overseas with their husbands. Yet most wives who were interviewed showed determination to give life in the Caribbean a chance. One administrator wrote: 'I don't like encouraging these people to desert their wives.' The obvious concern of civil servants that women should be provided for by their husbands can be construed today as a protective attitude in terms of traditional male chivalry, but except for a few rare cases such as Lottie Bryan's, the detailed reaction of wives was not recorded. The 'hardship and degradation to which such women are exposed' was commonly referred to, but not elaborated on (C.O. 318/352[10]). Sadly, women's own voices are mostly absent, but according to civil servant comments, most white wives remained fiercely loyal to their husbands.

At the time, repatriation was considered a success, in that there was no repetition of the scale of the 1919 riots. The general belief in official circles was that it served its purpose, evidenced by the fact that, during the period of the aftermaths of war, there were no further riots in 1920. Other considerations, such as the prior existence of some stable and longer term black communities were considered less important than the shorter term unemployment situation in the mercantile marine. Such priorities came at a human cost.

What challenges to the concept of empire emerge from these experiences? The protests of repatriated black soldiers and soldiers of the B.W.I.R. had a significance both locally and centrally within colonial government. In an ironic reversal of circumstances, some black people became aggressors during the West Indian riots in which British owned businesses and white British sailors were attacked. Some of the troops returning to the West Indies were also involved in these Caribbean riots (Jenkinson 2009: 182[11]). A few of the correspondents who expressed their willingness to be repatriated openly stated, according to the C.O., that it would only be 'for the object of creating racial feeling

against members of the white race domiciled in their country' (C.O. 323/819[12]). However, there were many more, especially families, who were in genuine need and hoped that repatriation would mean a fresh start.

The transnational nature of protest communications is significant. If global inter-connections need to be underlined, were these accompanied by a systemic failure in 1919–1921 to defend the interests of empire? C.O. reaction was somewhat defeatist: one conclusion in longhand and draft form by senior civil servant Mr. Grindle commented: 'I fail to see what we can do to allay the discontent caused by riots and loss of goods in this country, and lack of employment in Jamaica' (C.O. 318/350[13]). Yet black people took strong offence to what appeared to be imperial rejection during the aftermaths of war. Petitioners asked that 'our grievances be fully redressed in the interests of colonial expansion and that of Empire' (ibid.). This point concurs with the view of black seamen who complained very bitterly that 'foreigners' were permitted to sign on for work on British ships, in preference to themselves, who claimed British citizenship. Almost all written statements mentioned poverty—whether this was in Britain, Africa, or the West Indies. Yet these same communications usually also expressed vehement loyalty to empire, even when dissatisfaction existed.

Repatriation from Britain of some 2000 black people after 1919, numerically, did not outweigh the number of new arrivals in Britain. In fact, immigration increased the size of black communities during the period between the two world wars. Citizenship still remained an issue: for instance, the Aliens Order of 1925 was interpreted by police in some parts of the country as an excuse to make black British citizens register their papers. This placed a burden on them to directly prove citizenship, which many were unable to do. Unemployment and discrimination continued to hamper equality, a problem that was now further enhanced by the existence of a new generation of black British, born in the metropolis. Unfortunately, struggles relating to race, class, and equality clearly constitute what professional journalists have always referred to as 'a running story.' In fact, issues identified in this study appear disturbingly relevant in the twenty-first century.

There is certainly a longer term significance to the letters and writings in this study. Many made reference to the First World War and to the subsequent change in attitudes. In Rothberg (2009[14]) literary references to the Holocaust are traced in the works of black writers and activists to

show how Holocaust consciousness contributed to the politics of decolonization. Black communication references to 1914–1918 can also be seen as part of a similar project of political group activism. Experiences during this period of history, with all their associated vicissitudes, such as pressures for repatriation, economic suffering, changing post-war attitudes, and consequential changing identity through challenges to citizenship—all represent a milestone on the road to further racial and political freedom from the constraints of empires. The narrative of oppression that is evident in repatriation appeals during the aftermaths of war amounts to a significant contribution towards the bigger narrative of twentieth-century liberation.

Notes

1. Derrida, J. (1982) *Margins of Philosophy* (trans. Bass, A.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Derrida, J. (1992) *Acts of Literature,* Routledge, New York.
2. Hall, S. (1990) 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Lawrence and Wishart, London; Hall, S. and du Gay, P. (eds.) (1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Sage, London; Hall, S. (1997) 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity' in Anthony D. King ed., *Culture, Globalization and the World System*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota.
3. Walvin, J. (1973) *Black and White: The Negro and English Society 1555–1945*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London.
4. The word 'diaspora' should not be used in the context of 1919–1922, as its usage is more recent and therefore contemporary.
5. Gilroy, P. (1993) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Verso Books, London.
6. Gerwarth, Robert, Horne, John (eds.) (2012) *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe After the Great War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
7. TNA: C.O. 318/350/330.
8. TNA: C.O. 323/819/266.
9. TNA: C.O. 323/819/262.
10. TNA: C.O. 318/352/460.
11. Jenkinson, J. (2009) *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.
12. TNA: C.O. 323/819/331–335.
13. TNA: C.O. 318/350/14–17.
14. Rothberg, M. (2009) *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust During the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

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C.O. 323/810.
C.O. 323/828.
C.O. 323/819.
C.O. 137/724.
C.O. 137/729.
C.O. 137/735.
C.O. 137/736.
C.O. 137/765.
C.O. 28/295.
C.O. 854/170.
C.O. 554/44.
C.O. 554/49.
C.O. 554/54.
C.O. 28/295.
W.O. 162/341.
H.O. 384/61.
H.O. 45/10990/11765.

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68813-8

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