

Reversing the Gaze: *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man*
on Europe and Western Civilization in the Interwar Years,
1933-1937

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

Three black journals (*Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man*) published in London during the interwar years are the focus of this thesis. Previously, they have been studied by historians for the light they shed on the activities of the organizations that sponsored them. In contrast, this thesis considers how those writing for the journals met their political needs and assisted Africans and people of African descent to engage with the white world that surrounded them by constructing images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization. This thesis illustrates the role of print in allowing blacks in Britain to reclaim a sense of power that was otherwise undermined by racial discrimination.

Acknowledgements

“For, what have we, that we have not been given.”¹

This thesis has benefitted from the love and encouragement of my family and friends and the insight and patience of two committed supervisors. From the beginning, I have had wonderful examples to follow: my dad’s work ethic, my mom’s passion for learning and the standard she set while earning her Masters of Social Work and, too, my brother’s resolve to always do the right thing the right way. I am forever indebted to my family and the love they continually share.

My supervisors, Dr. Bennett and Dr. Walker, helped me to harness my love for learning and channel it into a thesis. Dr. Bennett, a thoughtful and generous spirit, had to endure wordy and dense first drafts. She, too, always left her office door open for discussions about my thesis or anything interesting I may have read. (Unfortunately, I happen to think everything I read is interesting and yet she never turned me away.) Dr. Walker’s encouragement and passion for African American history was inspiring. Even while on sabbatical in Boston, Dr. Walker made herself available and her insight and careful reading helped bring out points that I had buried. Thank you to you both.

I would be amiss if I did not mention St. Lawrence University. While completing my undergraduate degree I met my mentor and a friend, Dr. Elizabeth Regosin, who taught (and still teaches) me about the gifts of learning and loving what you do. I also had the pleasure, and benefit, of getting to know Dr. Hansen, Jake Dillon, Joe Marsh, Dr. Gabriel, Dr. Exoo, Dr. Draper, Mare MacDougall and Chris Wells, all of whom are wonderful people and teachers. Coach Marsh, thank you for teaching me that it is okay to

¹ Jake Dillon, *Blasted Apes!!* (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books, 2003), vi.

be a nerd. Finally, it is at St. Lawrence University that I met Ben, my *amor fati*, who has supported and loved me through this thesis process. Thank you to you all.

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Introduction

Far from a homogenous grouping, Africans and people of African descent living within the British Empire in the interwar years were crosscut by “competing nationalisms, classes and ideologies.”² When they arrived in London, however, their diversity was often overlooked as West Indians and West Africans were identified as “black”, a designation that had a specific meaning within British society.³ Indeed, black workers, students, professionals and intellectuals in Britain lived against a backdrop of popular opinion that largely interpreted dark skin as a badge of inferiority and as grounds for a second-class citizenship.⁴ Undeterred by this racial discrimination blacks in Britain founded organizations and engaged in a myriad of social, cultural and political activities, many of which have been the subject of historical study.⁵

Crucial to these historical investigations have been the era’s black journals. Very few scholars, however, have engaged with London’s black print culture as a topic of study and, when they have, they have not conceptualized the journals’ pages as a

² Winston James writes that, “[t]he black presence in twentieth-century Britain was never homogenous or static” and was an identity further complicated by competing nationalisms, classes and ideologies. See Winston James, “The Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain,” in *Black Experience and the Empire*, ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 348.

³ *Ibid.*, 348.

⁴ Historian Jinny Prais’ work on the citizenship of black Britons reveals that, “a person born within the British Empire could be classified as a British Subject, a British protected person, or a Commonwealth citizen. The four countries in British West Africa were divided between a colonial area (usually near the coast) and protectorate areas. West Africans born in the colonial areas were British subjects. Their status as British subjects gave them the right to travel throughout the United Kingdom without a visa. West Africans born in the protectorate areas were British protected persons and could not travel to the U.K. without a visa. Most students who studied abroad were British subjects, though their status as British subjects did not entitle them to the same rights as British subjects born in the U.K. or the dominions.” See, Jinny Prais, “Imperial Travelers: The Formation of West African Urban Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in London and Accra, 1925-1935,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 18.

⁵ Hakim Adi, Winston James, David Killingray, Roderick Macdonald, Marc Matera, Jinny Prais and Anne Rush have each published on the lives of Africans and peoples of African descent, hailing from Britain’s colonies in the West Indies and West Africa, who spent formative years in interwar London before the outbreak of the Second World War.

“complex world of inventions” where black writers expressed their power to represent what they saw around them.⁶ In his monograph, *Colonial Subjects: an African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas*, Philip Zachernuk argues that Africans wanted to define their place in the world and to assert what little authority they possessed.⁷ When it came to thinking about Africa, Zachernuk demonstrates that Africans did not simply accept or reject foreign ideas about the continent but, instead, they engaged “...with others’ ideas of Africa to invent their own.”⁸ Yet, as this thesis shows, Africans and people of African descent did not just engage with ideas about Africa: they were also active in interpreting and creating their own ideas of Western civilization. This point has been missed by those historians who have previously worked with London’s black print culture. In my analysis I demonstrate how authors in three black journals, published in London⁹ during the 1930s, constructed images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization that met their political needs and evidenced their power to make determinations concerning the world around them.

For black Britons, the interwar years were “pregnant with possibility as well as new dangers”¹⁰, mirroring the international situation after the First World War.¹¹

⁶ Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2000), 6.

⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁹ London’s significance as a center for black intellectuals and students will be discussed below, but it is important to note that the city was but one of a number of metropolitan centers that contributed to black thought and race pride in the interwar years. Two notable others were New York city, where the Harlem Renaissance reinvigorated black culture in the 1920s, and Paris, with its “negritude” which brought African Americans, Antilleans and Africans together under a movement of black internationalism. See Brent H. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁰ Marc Matera, “Black Internationalism and African and Caribbean Intellectuals In London, 1919-1950,” (PhD diss., Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2008), 104.

¹¹ The League of Nations, with its principle of collective security, aroused “hope that a system of mutual confidence and mutual fears might be constructed that would overawe any potential aggression”,

Britain's colonies had contributed much during the Great War to the mother country, by way of resources and human capital, and there was an expectation that Britain would acknowledge these efforts through the implementation of post-war reforms.¹² As the founder and president of the African Progress Union in London, J. R. Archer explained, "... if we are good enough to be brought to fight the wars of the country we are good enough to receive the benefits of the country."¹³ The war, which by its endpoint was ostensibly fought by the Allies for the principle of self-determination, aroused the desire for greater autonomy in the colonies and thus heightened British sensitivity to anti-colonial activity throughout the Empire.¹⁴

British concern over anti-colonial fervor in the colonies also prompted close attention to the activities of its black population at home.¹⁵ Africans and peoples of African descent had a long history of travelling from the colonies to the metropole. By the end of the First World War there were more blacks in London than ever before.¹⁶

preventing the possibility of another world war through a newfound spirit of internationalism. See Daniel Waley, *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War, 1935-6* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1975), 12. Such optimism was subdued by economic and political crises such as the Great Depression, the Manchuria Crisis, the emergence of Nazism in Germany and Italian aggression against Ethiopia. See Michael Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: the League of Nations and Africa, 1929-1946* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004): 1; Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European Internationalism History 1933-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹² David Killingray, "'A Good West Indian, A Good African, And, In Short, A Good Britisher': Black and British in a Colour-Conscious Empire, 1760-1950," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 3 (2008): 369.

¹³ J.A. Archer quoted in Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: the History of Black Peoples in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), 415. The African Progress Union was an organization formed to promote the well-being of Africans and people of African descent in London in 1918. See Fryer, 290-294.

¹⁴ India was the most successful in attaining its desired reforms and, while anti-colonial movements elsewhere in the empire did not reach full maturity until after the Second World War, Britain did have to put down colonial rebellions in its colonies. For instance, labour disputes broke out in the British West Indies. See Sahadeo Basdeo, "The 'Radical' Movement Towards Decolonization in the British Caribbean in the Thirties," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 22, no.44 (1997): 127-146.

¹⁵ Hakim Adi, "West African Students in Britain, 1900-60: The Politics of Exile," *Immigrants and Minorities* 12, no. 3 (1993): 114.

¹⁶ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 4. Hakim Adi writes that most (but not all) colonial subjects making the voyage to Britain came from wealthy, aristocratic or colonial elite families, which makes sense given

Indeed, by the 1930s, London had become an “imperial city”, a center of “organized black resistance to British colonialism and racism”, and an “intellectual organizer, allowing West Africans to talk with West Indians, North Americans from Harlem with black British, fashioning what can only be called an effervescently hybrid political culture.”¹⁷ Indeed, Bill Schwarz writes that London “generated the resources for the creation of a rich array of subaltern networks for the colonized.”¹⁸ Becoming immersed in a “hybrid political culture”, however, was not necessarily the aim of black Britons upon reaching the “mother country”, but disillusionment with Britain over de facto racism and discrimination had the effect of radicalizing many.¹⁹ Before arriving in London, black Britons widely believed that the prejudice and injustices that they faced in the colonies were the policies of the “man on the spot”, in other words, the colonial administrators and “not the officials at Whitehall.”²⁰ This perception changed with experience of life in Britain. Indeed, Marc Matera observes that, once in Britain, blacks were shocked by “the enormous disconnect between their idealized vision of the ‘mother country’ as the home

the expense of the journey and the cost of living in Britain. See Adi, “West African Students in Britain,” 107. It is also worth noting that, according to the historian Winston James, the largest segment of Britain’s black population was associated with seafaring and the port cities of Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool and London. See James, 349; Adi, “West African Students in Britain,” 107.

¹⁷ The historian Daniel Whittall refers to interwar London as “an imperial city” and perhaps even “the greatest imperial metropolis of modern times.” Winston James calls London the main center of “organized black resistance to British colonialism and racism” and observes that the city served as “the planet’s primary crossroads at which black people came to a greater sense of group consciousness.” See James, 351, 348; Daniel Whittall, “Creating Black Places in Imperial London: The League of Coloured Peoples and Aggrey House, 1931-1943,” *London Journal* 36, no. 3 (2001): 226.

¹⁸ Bill Schwarz, “Black Metropolis, White England,” in *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, ed. Mica Nava and Alan O’Shea (London: Routledge, 1996), 178.

¹⁹ Adi, “West African Students in Britain,” 110. In Britain, the unofficial policy of discrimination barring coloured people from employment, training opportunities and access to goods and services was known as the colour bar. For more on racism in Britain see, Prais, 364; Matera “Black Internationalism,” 43; Killingray, 364; Marc Matera, “Colonial Subjects: Black Intellectuals and the Development of Colonial Studies in Britain,” *Journal of British Studies* 49, no.2 (2010): 405.

²⁰ S.K.B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africans and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941* (London: Longman, 1977), 71. Asante explains that there was a general “perception of Britain as a benevolent state towards Africa; one that ended the slave trade for instance.” See Asante, 75.

of fair play, meritocracy, and gentlemanliness ... and the ignorance and racism which characterized most Briton's attitudes towards them."²¹ The racism and discrimination that blacks experienced acted as a catalyst for greater cooperation among blacks themselves and was the inspiration for the founding of black organizations.

The West African Students' Union²² (W.A.S.U.) and the League of Coloured Peoples²³ (L.C.P.) were organizations founded in London to challenge the colour bar and to combat the racial stereotypes that permeated British popular culture. For blacks in Britain these organizations created a sense of comfort in a novel and, at times, unfriendly setting while providing a "new means of voicing social commentary and political dissent" by publishing a journal.²⁴ W.A.S.U.'s publication was entitled *Wasu* and the L.C.P. published *The Keys*, both of which play a key role in this study. The third journal is Marcus Garvey's *The Black Man*, a publication that had, at best, only the most tenuous of connections to the Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.). Together, however, these three publications can be taken as representative of London's black print

²¹ Matera, 'Black Internationalism,' 75. The Colonial Office was increasingly concerned with the discrimination that blacks faced when coming to Britain because of the potential anti-British sentiment it could create in the colonies once sojourners returned. For this reason the Colonial Office and the Committee for the Welfare of Africans in Europe endeavored to "shield African students from untoward and or subversive influences." See Adi, "West African Students in Britain," 111.

²² The West African Students' Union was founded in 1925 under the inspiration of two West African men, Ladipo Solanke and Dr. Bankole-Bright. Underpinning the group was a desire to create a comprehensive organization to speak for West Africa. The Union's purpose was threefold: to provide a meeting place for intellectuals, a space for political consciousness to develop and a forum for expression. The W.A.S.U. will be discussed in detail in chapter one. See Philip Garigue, "The West African Students' Union. A Study in Culture Contact," *Journal of the International African Institute* 23, no. 1 (1953): 55-69.

²² Gabriel Olusanya, *The West African Students' Union and the Policies of Decolonization, 1925-1958* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1982).

²³ The League of Coloured Peoples was founded in 1931 by Harold A. Moody. From its inception the League was intended to be interracial in nature. Working alongside various Christian churches and organizations in London, the League desired to create a coloured version of the British imperial identity by invoking the notion of the black Briton. The L.C.P. will be discussed at length in chapter one. See Anne Rush, "Imperial Identity in Colonial Minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-50," *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 4 (2002): 356-383; David Vaughan, *Negro Victory: The Life Story of Dr. Harold Moody* (London: Independent Press, 1950).

²⁴ Matera, "Colonial Subjects," 389.

culture during the period of investigation, 1933-1937²⁵, and as indicative of the efforts of black Britons to become “increasingly active as spokespeople for black interests.”²⁶

The importance of a print culture should not be underestimated. In the words of Stephen Vella, journals and newspapers offer “windows onto the intellectual culture that prevailed in a particular time, place or community.”²⁷ Events described in a journal and newspaper’s pages are contextualized, and interpreted against the backdrop of what was deemed significant and deserving of emphasis in the judgment of a contemporary journal/newspaper editor, journalist or correspondent. In this way, Vella argues, journals and newspapers were not passive conduits of information; they actively “shaped the news and views of their readers by employing a particular framework for understanding events and institutions.”²⁸ As will be shown, *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* had different aims as publications and they interpreted the world in diverse ways reflecting their assorted larger interests. Taken as a whole, however, the pages of all three journals evidence an effort to shape their readers conceptions of Britain, and western civilization as a whole, and in this way they reversed a gaze that, until this point, was predominantly cast by Britons on the peoples of the Empire. Indeed, Africans and people of African descent had a voice and their journals’ pages provided a space to articulate how they saw the world.

²⁵ Other black publications circulated and published in London during the 1930s are the *Negro Worker* (started in 1931), the *African Sentinel* (1937) and the *International African Opinion* (1938). See Roderick Macdonald, “‘The Wisers who are far away’: The Role of London’s Black Press in the 1930s and 1940s,” in *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain*, ed. Ian Duffield and Jagdish S. Gundara (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1992), 150-172.

²⁶ Zachernuk, 99.

²⁷ Stephen Vella, “Newspapers,” in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History*, ed. Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (London: Routledge, 2009), 192.

²⁸ Vella, 192.

In the 1930s, Britain's black print culture was instrumental in "...disseminating news and black internationalist thought around the Atlantic and throughout Britain's colonies in Africa and the Caribbean."²⁹ According to Brent Edwards, an English and Comparative Literature professor, a journal's content could be a nuisance to Britain's Colonial Office; "a threat above all because of the transnational and anti-imperialist linkages and alliances they practiced."³⁰ By pulling distant worlds together for their readers, black periodicals connected struggles for equality and justice from one British colony to another across the world.

Despite what *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man's* pages can offer in the way of a new perspective on the world historians, for the most part, have not focused on these journals as a subject of study. Instead, examinations of the publications (particularly *Wasu* and *The Keys*) have been subsumed in studies of London's black organizations, their prominent figures and, more recently, in investigations of British imperial identity, race relations and black internationalism.

David Vaughan appears to have been the first author to use London's black journals. In his monograph, *Negro Victory: the Life Story of Dr. Moody*, Vaughan uses *The Keys* to shed light on the work of Dr. Harold A. Moody, the League of Coloured Peoples' president.³¹ Vaughan notes that before publishing *The Keys* the L.C.P. had "no

²⁹ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 100. It is worth noting what is exactly meant by invoking the term "black internationalist." According to Michael West, William Martin and Fanon Che Wilkins, "[t]o qualify as black internationalist, those struggles, although situated mainly in specific localities, would have to be connected in some conscious way to an overarching notion of black liberation beyond any individual nation-state or colonial territory. That is to say, at the core of black internationalism is the ideal of universal emancipation, unbounded by national, imperial, continental, or oceanic boundaries – or even by racial ones." See William Martin, Michael West and Fanon Wilkins, eds. *From Toussaint to Tupac: the Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), xi.

³⁰ Edwards, 9.

³¹ Vaughan's volume, however, lacks both citations and a bibliography.

means of publicity, without which it was difficult to maintain the interests of its members and attract the attentions of others.”³² Three years after Vaughan’s monograph, Philip Garigue used black newspapers as a means to investigate the W.A.S.U. and its activities in London in his essay, “The West African Students’ Union. A Study of Cultural Contact.”³³ Garigue relies predominantly on *Wasu*, along with a mix of journals from British West Africa, to determine “the reasons why West African students organized themselves into the West African Students’ Union from 1926 onwards.”³⁴ Like Vaughan, however, Garigue’s essay relegates the organization’s journal to footnotes, offering no assessment of *Wasu* and its importance. Almost a decade after Vaughan and Garigue, David Edmond Cronon briefly discussed *The Black Man* in his biography of Marcus Garvey.³⁵ Cronon characterizes the journal as Garvey’s last attempt to regain the following of his Universal Negro Improvement Association and examines how the journal was constructed. He explains that it typically featured Garvey’s poetry, a current events section, and clippings on events that Garvey deemed of interests to blacks. These latter items, he pulled from various press accounts that he came across in his readings.³⁶ Cronon’s work with *The Black Man* mirrors that of Vaughan and Garigue with *The Keys* and *Wasu*; he, too, does not actually analyze individual issues of the journal.

Roderick J. Macdonald, however, did differentiate himself from the historians who preceded him in that he focused on London’s black journals in his essay, “The

³² Vaughan, 59.

³³ Philip Garigue, “The West African Students’ Union. A Study in Culture Contact,” *Journal of the International African Institute* 23, no. 1 (1953): 55-69.

³⁴ Garigue, 55.

³⁵ Edmund D. Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962).

³⁶ Cronon, 158.

wisers who are far away': the Role of London's Black Press in the 1930s and 1940s."³⁷ Roderick's essay is important for presenting a chronological survey of London's black print culture. His investigation, however, draws a narrow conclusion about the journals' usefulness. He writes that the journals are simply "a valuable source for understanding the roles played by Blacks in Britain" during the 1930s and 1940s.³⁸ Thus, while Macdonald provides insight into London's black press, his investigation overlooks the fact that the journals present new lenses through which to see the world. When it comes to the journals themselves, however, Macdonald does make some perceptive observations. For example, he writes that *Wasu's* pages contained articles that were not only relevant to the issues of the day, but which also "reflected the views of a sizeable proportion of those men who were destined to come to political prominence in the 1950s and 1960s in both Nigeria and Ghana."³⁹ He highlights the work of *The Keys* on issues of discrimination, especially where it touched upon matters of employment and the means by which the publication informed its readers about pertinent matters impacting blacks worldwide.⁴⁰ Finally, of *The Black Man*, Macdonald's agrees with Ian Duffield's assessment that the journal illustrates Marcus Garvey's conservatism and wish to appease peoples living in Britain and the United States.⁴¹ In fact, Macdonald asserts that by the

³⁷ Roderick Macdonald, "'The Wisers who are far away': the Role of London's Black Press in the 1930s and 1940s," in *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain*, ed. Ian Duffield and Jagdish S. Gundara (Aldershot, England: Avebury, 1992). Macdonald also edited a collection of *The Keys*. See Roderick J. Macdonald, ed. *The Keys. The Official Organ of the League of Coloured Peoples, vols. 1-7* with an introductory essay by R. Macdonald. (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson Organization, Ltd., 1976), 5-22.

³⁸ Macdonald, 151. Evidence of this perspective can be found in Macdonald's essay, "Dr. Harold Arundel Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-1937: A Retrospective View," *Race* XIV, 3 (1973): 291-307. In his investigation, Macdonald uses *The Keys* only as a source for the opinions and views of Dr. Moody and the L.C.P., and not as a subject worthy of investigation on its own.

³⁹ Macdonald, 153.

⁴⁰ Macdonald, 155-156.

⁴¹ Macdonald, 157. Ian Duffield reviewed Macdonald's published collection of volumes of *The Keys* and Robert Hill's collection of volumes of *The Black Man*, observing that *The Keys* was significant for

1930s, Garvey was “pretty much a spent force”, indicating how far Garvey’s influence had fallen from prominence in the 1920s.⁴² Taking all the journals together, Macdonald observes that London’s black press in the 1930s and 1940s was linked by an “urgent need to educate, organize and involve the masses.”⁴³ He concludes that the courage of the journals’ authors “to confront and expose problems and apply themselves to the hard task of analysis should remain an inspiration” to peoples today.⁴⁴ Macdonald rightly notes that, in a world that discriminated against peoples of colour, the work of writing and publishing a journal was significant.

In line with the dominant historiography, which focuses on London’s black organizations and its leaders, Gabriel Olusanya used *Wasu* in his in-depth examination of the West African Students’ Union.⁴⁵ Olusanya’s study argues that the Union played “a crucial role in the evolution of independent English-speaking West Africa” and that its location in London allowed it to “exert constant and effective pressure on the colonial office.”⁴⁶ Olusanya explains that *Wasu* provided a means for the Union to translate its goals into reality.⁴⁷ In fact, he writes that the journal “became the real spirit and life of the Union and contributed substantially to the awakening of racial pride and political

illuminating “the unemployment, police harassment and general deprivation suffered by black workers in Britain,” but noting that because of the L.C.P.’s predominant middle-class membership, the paper was the “organ of a well-intentioned but distant elite.” Of *The Black Man*, Duffield rather dismissively commented that its value was “to give insight into Garvey’s often wearisomely repetitious later views.” See Ian Duffield, review of *The Keys* and *The Black Man*, *Journal of African History* 19, no.3 (1978): 475.

⁴² Macdonald, 156.

⁴³ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁵ Gabriel Olusanya, *The West African Students’ Union and the Policies of Decolonization, 1925-1958* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1982). Alongside *Wasu*, Olusanya also relies on the personal papers of the West African Students’ Union founder, Ladipo Solanke, for his sources.

⁴⁶ Olusanya, 1. Olusanya also writes that the W.A.S.U.’s significance also came from its “contribution to the social development of British West Africa.”

⁴⁷ Olusanya, 16.

consciousness not only amongst British West Africans but amongst Africans.”⁴⁸ After summarizing the content of the journal’s first issue, Olusanya notes that *Wasu* “took seriously the objectives of the Union of interpreting Africa to the world and promoting pride of race and political consciousness among Africans.”⁴⁹ As this thesis will demonstrate, however, *Wasu* did more than educate its readers about Africa.⁵⁰ It also created images of Western civilization that suited its political aims of emancipation and self-determination for West Africa. Paralleling Olusanya’s work, is Hakim Adi’s essay, “West African Students in Britain, 1900-1960: The Politics of Exile”⁵¹, which also used *Wasu* to illuminate the activities of West Africans in London, as well as public records from the Colonial Office and West African journals such as *West Africa* and the *African Telegraph* to survey the political activities of West African students during the twentieth century.⁵² Adi’s thoughts on *Wasu* mirror the conclusions of Olusanya, noting that the journal was important for its ability to “explain the concerns of West Africans to the world at large.” Adi also writes that it was significant for its role in “championing the concerns of West Africans in Britain, not least in their demands for independence from colonial rule.”⁵³

Anne Rush’s “Imperial Identity in Colonial Minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-1950” published in 2002, marked a shift in the historiography; here London’s black organizations are not center stage, but rather the topic of British

⁴⁸ Olusanya, 22.

⁴⁹ Olusanya, 20.

⁵⁰ Besides its journal, the Union also relied on its hostel, and the lectures it hosted, to educate people about Africa.

⁵¹ Hakim Adi, “West African Students in Britain, 1900-60: The Politics of Exile,” *Immigrants and Minorities* 12, no.3 (1993):107-128.

⁵² Adi, “West African Students in Britain,” 108.

⁵³ Adi, “West African Students in Britain,” 115.

imperial identity.⁵⁴ Rush examines how the L.C.P. used its version of a British identity to seek equal rights for coloured Britons.⁵⁵ Rush asserts that the importance of *The Keys* is derived from its usefulness as a primary source on the L.C.P. She uses the journal alongside other British newspapers such as *The Times*, *Daily Express*, *Liverpool Daily Post* and Britain's Parliamentary papers to analyze the L.C.P.'s reaction to racial discrimination amongst black workers in Cardiff and in London's Imperial Hotel.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Nicholas Gareth Brown's 2008 doctoral dissertation used *The Keys* to shed light on British race relations, examining Dr. Harold Moody's efforts to dismantle Britain's colour bar.⁵⁷ Brown focuses on Dr. Moody because "he protested most loudly against the colour bar", though he does conclude that Dr. Moody's efforts ultimately failed to make racial discrimination a significant topic of discourse.⁵⁸ Brown utilizes *The Keys* alongside documents from Britain's Colonial Office, personal papers and journals such as the *Christian Endeavor Times* and the *Negro Worker* to trace Dr. Moody's protests. He subtitles a section of his dissertation "*The Keys*" but, rather than analyzing the paper, he uses the journal to examine Dr. Moody and the League's work on racial discrimination. Brown's opinion of *The Keys* mirrors that of Anne Rush and David Vaughan, in perceiving the journal as a vehicle to present the League of Coloured

⁵⁴ Anne Rush, "Imperial Identity in Colonial Minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-50," *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no.4 (2002): 356-383. Meanwhile, David Killingray also utilizes *The Keys* as his primary source to investigate British identity in the interwar years, but the journal receives scant attention besides appearing in a few of his footnotes. See David Killingray, "'A Good West Indian, a Good African, and, in Short, a Good Britisher': Black and British in a Colour-Conscious Empire, 1760-1950," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no.3 (2008): 363-381.

⁵⁵ Rush, 356.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 356. London's Imperial Hotel made the news and became embroiled in legal trouble in 1943 when it refused a room to Learie Constantine, a black cricketer from Trinidad.

⁵⁷ Nicholas G. Brown, "More Than 'Mere Pin Pricks': Dr. Harold A. Moody and The League of Coloured Peoples' Revolutionary Challenge to the British Colour Bar, 1931-1948," (PhD diss., University of Mississippi, 2008).

⁵⁸ Brown, 8.

Peoples to the public and as an instrument for sounding the League's "message to (re)create the best British identity possible."⁵⁹

Jinni Prais' doctoral dissertation marks a shift back to the work of Garigue, Olusanya and Adi in that she uses black journals to study the activities of West Africans in London and Accra.⁶⁰ Prais analyzes how West Africans in London, over a ten-year period between 1925 and 1935, founded a "public sphere of clubs and newspapers in which they attempted to form a modern West African nation and subject."⁶¹ Making use of Britain's and Ghana's national archives and a mix of Gold Coast and British newspapers, Prais asserts that students "invented a West African national and cultural identity in the heart of the British Empire."⁶² Amongst Prais' sources is *Wasu*. Prais writes that through the publication "students educated each other and the British public about the histories and customs of each country, and, in the process, articulated a shared set of 'West African' values, cultural practices and traditions."⁶³ She also observes that *Wasu* represented West African public opinion in London, while promoting unity and the notion of West African nationhood.⁶⁴ Prais effectively demonstrates *Wasu*'s usefulness for investigating the views of the West African Students' Union, especially concerning Africa but she too overlooks how the journal allowed its authors to portray the Western world to its readers.

⁵⁹ Brown, 119, 96.

⁶⁰ Jinni Prais, "Imperial Travelers: The Formation of West African Urban Culture, Identity, and Citizenship in London and Accra, 1925-1935," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008).

⁶¹ Prais, vii.

⁶² Ibid., i.

⁶³ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 67.

Like Prais, Marc Matera used personal papers, newspapers, magazines and journals to examine black organizations and other social spaces for blacks in London.⁶⁵ His 2008 Rutgers' dissertation demonstrates that London "functioned, at once, as imperial metropolis and global city, as the administrative center of the British Empire and the nexus of black resistance to racism and imperialism."⁶⁶ Amongst Matera's sources are *Wasu* and *The Keys*, which he utilizes to explore how their parent organizations, the West African Students' Union and the League of Coloured Peoples respectively, responded to challenges important to Britain's black community.⁶⁷ Indeed, Matera concludes that the adversity blacks faced in 1930s was instrumental in bringing London's black intellectual community together.⁶⁸

Regarding *Wasu* and *The Keys*, specifically, Matera does make a few important observations. He notes that they were the main vehicles whereby black intellectuals in London could express "...countervailing arguments and representations of blackness."⁶⁹ Matera states that *Wasu* "... helped increase the measure of 'friendship, respect, prestige, and co-operation' that [W.A.S.U.] received from 'eminent individuals' in Britain by providing illustrative proof of the abilities and potential of educated Africans."⁷⁰ Of *The Keys*, he writes that it was a "... unique literary space for black authors in Britain" and that it "... elaborated a vision of black unity that simultaneously traversed the territorial boundaries of the British Empire and claimed the rights of imperial citizenship for blacks

⁶⁵Marc Matera, "Black Internationalism and African and Caribbean Intellectuals In London, 1919-1950," (PhD diss., Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2008).

⁶⁶ Matera, "Black Internationalism," ii.

⁶⁷ The particular challenges that Matera examines are the 1924 Imperial Exposition at Wembley, the colour bar, anti-sedition laws, the Italo-Ethiopian conflict and the challenge of creating a hostel.

⁶⁸ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 105-110.

⁶⁹ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 464.

⁷⁰ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 87.

in the metropole and the colonies.”⁷¹ Matera’s dissertation effectively establishes that the international events of the 1930s stirred London’s black intellectuals to action and prompted them to develop critiques of empire.

Matera has written about Britain’s black press more generally in an article entitled, “Colonial Subjects: Black Intellectuals and the Development of Colonial Studies in Britain” but, here too he uses the journals as a vehicle to understand black organizations.⁷² In his view, “... the journals and other publications of black organizations in Britain provide some of the richest available sources on the intellectual activities of Africans and West Indians in the 1930s and 1940s”, especially since the colour bar worked to exclude blacks from “mainstream academic publishing.”⁷³ Matera writes that these journals served as “... mouthpieces of an emergent black internationalist and anti-colonial perspective” and offered “... a rare space for West Indians and Africans in an otherwise harsh setting” to share their views.⁷⁴ Matera’s conclusions are valuable and yet, they leave questions unanswered about how *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* used their pages to depict the world to their readers and, therefore, reclaimed a sense of power through the representations they created.

Although scholars have used the journals as a means to understand black organizations and their activities, British imperial identity and British race relations, no one has investigated the individual issues of the publications as a subject of study themselves. In this inquiry I have, therefore, examined each issue of *Wasu*, *The Keys* and

⁷¹ Matera, “Black Internationalism,” 53,49.

⁷² Marc Matera, “Colonial Subjects: Black Intellectuals and the Development of Colonial Studies in Britain,” *Journal of British Studies* 49, no.2 (2010): 388-418.

⁷³ Matera, “Colonial Subjects,” 390.

⁷⁴ Matera, “Colonial Subjects,” 389, 414.

The Black Man, published between 1933 and 1937, exploring how each journal's pages presented a new lens to see the world. I argue that the journals constructed images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization for their readers to further their political interests, capitalizing on the opportunity to represent the world around them from the Empire's heart in London. I build on the work of Philip Zachernuk who writes that "European knowledge of Africa, as of many other parts of the colonial world, was very much 'invented' and 'imagined' according to European needs."⁷⁵ Zachernuk claims that if Europeans invented Africa then so did African intellectuals because Africans, like Europeans, had interests to serve and a need to express what power they held, no matter how limited.⁷⁶ Accepting Zachernuk's premise that Africans engaged with European ideas about Africa to invent their own, I assert that black intellectuals also actively "invented" Britain and Western civilization in their journals' pages, depicting both to their readers as a means to serve their own needs. Indeed, these constructions are significant because they unearth new perspectives and demonstrate the persistent efforts of Africans, and peoples of African descent, to be heard and to make their own determinations about the world in which they lived. The five-year period that I examine was chosen because it is a moment when all three publications overlap. Moreover, the period encompasses the Italo-Ethiopian conflict⁷⁷, providing an opportunity to evaluate how and if constructions of Britain, Europe and Western civilization changed after Italy conquered the independent black nation of Ethiopia.

⁷⁵ Zachernuk, 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁷ The Italo-Ethiopia crisis was also known as the Italo-Abyssinia crisis. As Jonathan Derrick notes, "[t]he name 'Ethiopia' was commonly used by African and Diaspora Christians to denote the whole continent, partly in reference to Psalm 67, verse 32." See Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's Agitators: Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918-1939* (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 17.

This work begins by introducing *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* and the organizations that produced them. Indeed, chapter one contextualizes each publication by shedding light on the West African Students' Union, the League of Coloured Peoples' and Marcus Garvey (as well as the Universal Negro Improvement Association), including the goals the organizations had for their journals. The second chapter analyzes the publications' depictions of Britain, Europe and Western civilization by examining articles written between 1933 and 1937. Chapter two demonstrates that the journals not only constructed images of the world around them, but that these images coincided with the journals' political aims. Chapter three introduces the Italo-Ethiopian conflict and examines how Britain, Europe and Western civilization were portrayed in the journals' coverage of the crisis. Of interest is whether the conflict was a turning point for the publications, inspiring new, more critical, representations of Britain, Europe and Western Civilization or whether it reinforced images already constructed.

Chapter One

While living in Britain, Africans and people of African descent were confronted with the reality of having dark skin in a racially ordered empire.⁷⁸ Indeed, blacks living in Britain were exposed to discrimination, notions of their inherent inferiority and to the devaluing of Africa's place in world history.⁷⁹ Yet, life in Britain was not solely negative as it also offered Africans and peoples of African descent an environment rich with intellectual and political activity.⁸⁰ In cities like London, blacks encountered ideas of anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, socialism and people who were sympathetic to their plight both in the colonies and in Britain.⁸¹ Excited by opportunities "to engage with Britons interested in colonial affairs" many Africans and people of African descent in Britain went further "to question the objectivity of those who played the role of colonial expert in Britain", thereby reclaiming a sense of authority to speak about their own experiences in, and knowledge about, the colonies from whence they came.

Britain's black organizations were crucial to combating discrimination, countering racial stereotypes and in exposing blacks to new ideas about the world in which they lived. These organizations, and the journals they published, were also important because of the space they created for black expression, pride and unity. Moreover, they helped to counter "images and stories about the 'Dark continent' and

⁷⁸ Killingray, 364.

⁷⁹ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 100. Gabriel Olusanya discusses other black organizations also founded in London in the interwar period such as the African Progress Union, the Gold Coast Students' Association, the Union of Students of African Descent, the National Congress of British West Africa and the Nigerian Progress Union. See Olusanya, 6.

⁸⁰ Adi, "West African Students in Britain," 122.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 122. Adi also explains that besides officials from the Colonial Office, that "[c]ommercial and humanitarian interests, represented by such organizations as the African Society and the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ASARPS) were alarmed at the development of racism and the colour bar in Britain, which they felt might provoke anti-British feeling." Adi, "West African Students in Britain," 110.

Africans as a 'primitive' people without history, culture, religion, identity, or logic."⁸² Any investigation of Britain's black print culture in the interwar years, therefore, must take into account the organizations that produced them, as their aims and values shaped their journals' pages. Indeed, each organization's political interests informed images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization that the authors in *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* constructed for their respective readers. Thus, what follows is an introduction to the West Africans Students' Union, the League of Coloured Peoples and Marcus Garvey, including his Universal Negro Improvement Association, and their respective journals.

The West African Students' Union was founded in August 1925 by Bankole-Bright and Ladipo Solanke. Dr. Bright, a medical doctor and member of Sierra Leone's Legislative Council in the colonies, felt that black organizations in Britain were not doing enough to promote British West African unity.⁸³ Similarly Solanke, a law student who was called to the bar in 1926, wanted an organization in Britain that would speak for and promote the idea of a United States of West Africa.⁸⁴ A year before founding W.A.S.U., Solanke had been "outraged" at the depictions of Africans at the British Empire Exhibition, held at Wembley in 1924.⁸⁵ This experience reinforced his belief in the need

⁸² Prais, 46.

⁸³ Olusanya, 4-6. British West Africa included Nigeria, Gold Coast, Gambia and Sierra Leone

⁸⁴ Olusanya, 5.

⁸⁵ Daniel Stephen has written on the 1924 British Empire Exhibition. He notes that this particular exhibition "included pictures of 'racial progress' that alleged that Africans were advancing under white rule" and that the exhibition ended up having "negative implications for imperial unity." See Daniel Stephen, "'The White Man's Grave': British West Africa and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-1925," *Journal of British Studies* 48, No. 1 (2009): 105.

for a forum where Africans could speak for themselves.⁸⁶ The West Africans Students' Union worked to fulfill the wishes of both Bankole-Bright and Solanke.

The W.A.S.U., which promoted the principles of 'self-help', unity and co-operation, was careful to be very clear regarding just what was meant by each term. Self-help meant "'service and sacrifice'" and 'co-operation' meant "working together with constituted authority, including organizations and individuals genuinely interested in the welfare of the Africans."⁸⁷ The Union explained that it was willing to "co-operate with and help the Government and [the] African Native authorities" to develop what it deemed was "still good in our laws, customs and institutions with a view of making some contribution towards civilization."⁸⁸ Embodying a sense of racial pride the W.A.S.U. did not dismiss African culture, but sought to take the best from both African and European cultures to forge a unique West African identity.⁸⁹ In its journal, the Union quoted Alain Locke, an African American writer, whose work was instrumental to the Harlem Renaissance, who observed that, "the people who live in terms of the greatest synthesis of civilizations are going to be in the end the most efficient."⁹⁰ According to the Union, Africans stood in the best position to benefit from such a synthesis. The article went on to state that for any African, "having at his disposal the greatest possible variety of cultures – both the African indigenous and the European and American", the "greatest synthesis is

⁸⁶ Fryer, 324; David Dabydeen, John Gilmore and Cecily Jones, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 456.

⁸⁷ Laminah Sankoh, "W.A.S.U. Special Address," *Wasu* vol. VI, no. 1, January 1937: 13.

⁸⁸ Laminah Sankoh, "W.A.S.U. Special Address," *Wasu* vol. VI, no. 1, January 1937: 15.

⁸⁹ Jinny Prais observes that the notion of picking what is best between two cultures was coined "the gift of 'double sight and double hearing'" by Gold Coast lawyer, author and nationalist J.E. Casely Hayford. The argument was that this "double-sightedness" gave educated urban Africans "the unique ability to recognize the valuable aspects of their own 'culture' and history and to blend those with successful examples from other 'cultures'." See Prais, 73.

⁹⁰ Alain Locke quoted in Julius Ojo-Cole, "Editorial: Synthesis of Civilizations," *Wasu* vol. 1, no. 8, January 1929: 2.

within his reach.”⁹¹ Indeed, emboldened by their unique West African identity, members of the Union perceived themselves as leaders who possessed “progressive elements which could further the development of West Africa.”⁹² Partha Chatterjee, in his monograph *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial Worlds: a Derivative Discourse*, characterizes colonial subjects’ attempts to forge a new identity as the “liberal-rationalist dilemma.”⁹³ Chatterjee argues that colonial subjects were caught up in a contradictory project involving the “rejection of the alien intruder and dominator who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards, and the rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity.”⁹⁴ What Chatterjee outlines in the “liberal-rationalist dilemma” is very evident in the pages of the West African Students’ Union journal, *Wasu*. These journal’s pages often included articles on African culture, laws and customs but simultaneously advocated notions of progress and the need to mature to adulthood; both of which were based on “Western” terms.

The principle of “co-operation” in the W.A.S.U. statement is also noteworthy for expressing the Union’s desire to work with those “genuinely interested” in the welfare of Africans, especially the British government. This co-operation with Britain was to prepare for West Africa’s “eventual emancipation from colonial rule.”⁹⁵ In fact, the Union felt that it was uniquely equipped to lead West Africa to self-determination: “if ever West Africa were to be a nation within the British Commonwealth here, in the

⁹¹ Julius Ojo-Cole, “Editorial: Synthesis of Civilizations,” *Wasu* vol. 1, no. 8, January 1929: 2.

⁹² Garigue, 58.

⁹³ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (Toyko: United Nations University, 1986), 2.

⁹⁴ Chatterjee, 2.

⁹⁵ Prais, 95.

Students' Union, should be its birth.”⁹⁶ It is important to note, however, that the union desired “not to oust the white man but to speak on equal terms with him.”⁹⁷ Indeed, while the W.A.S.U. promoted nationhood and a new West African identity, it was careful to do so under the auspices of the British Empire. As Jinny Prais explains, some members of the Union wanted to attain the same position as the dominions by joining the commonwealth.⁹⁸ This vision foresaw West African states “as self-governing nations equal to Britain” and exemplified the belief that some members had in the “human universalism and hope embedded in the new internationalism and the commonwealth system.”⁹⁹ Living in London had the advantage of exposing blacks in Britain to a vibrant intellectual culture and to news from other British colonies around the world. In the case of the West Africans Students' Union, its members followed “dominion nationalism closely” and acquainted themselves with pertinent arguments from across the Empire appearing in the British press that might, one day, serve their end of self-determination.¹⁰⁰

The W.A.S.U. set specific aims for itself as an organization in order to ensure that its operations were aligned with its professed goals. It wished, for instance, to establish and maintain a hostel,¹⁰¹ to become a center for research and information on Africa and to communicate a realistic picture of African life; the latter being a goal that spoke directly

⁹⁶ J.B. Danquah, “Editorial Notes: The W.A.S.U. ‘At Home,’” *Wasu* vol.1, no. 2, December 1926: 1.

⁹⁷ Asante, 48.

⁹⁸ Prais, 40.

⁹⁹ Prais, 40.

¹⁰⁰ Prais, 39.

¹⁰¹ The creation of a hostel in London to support colonial subjects and shield them from racism was not a new concept. Like the W.A.S.U., the L.C.P. also desired to establish a hostel and this amounted to a serious point of friction between the two organizations. See Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900-1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998), 57-67; Gabriel Olusanya, *The West African Students' Union and the Policies of Decolonization, 1925-1958* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1982); Whittall, 225-246.

to members' frustrations with how Africans were depicted in the British media.¹⁰² The Union's aims also included facilitating better relations between the races and between peoples of African descent, fostering a sense of race pride and, a "national consciousness."¹⁰³ Lastly, the West African Students' Union wanted to publish a monthly journal that it named, *Wasu*.¹⁰⁴

Largely driven by its passionate secretary-general and co-founder, Ladipo Solanke, the Union accomplished much in the way of providing a meeting place for intellectuals, a space for fostering political consciousness to develop and a forum for expression.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, in *Africa's Agitators: Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918-1939*, Jonathan Derrick argues that the W.A.S.U. played a central role in the formation of Africa's political elite.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, Marc Matera observes that the Union successfully projected "an image of the educated African as at once the embodiment of British Civilization and African cultural specificity", touching on the unique African identity that the Union looked to promote.¹⁰⁷ For Jinny Prais, however, the West African

¹⁰² Jinny Prais writes that, as "[a]vid readers of the British press, few African students would have missed the racist comments that appeared in England's 'respected' daily newspapers, weeklies, and reviews (that represented 'all political parties') on a routine basis." Prais, 49.

¹⁰³ The West African Students' Union's principle of unity and desire to facilitate better relations between peoples of African descent were important goals because the union suffered from considerable infighting. Hakim Adi writes that the W.A.S.U. "suffered from a lack of leadership, internal disputes between students from the Gold Coast and those from Nigerian and the non-appearance of *Wasu*", a problem largely due to financial difficulties. Disputes with Gold Coast members stemmed largely from a sense that the Union held a Nigerian bias something that was not aided by the fact that Solanke was Nigerian himself. See Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900-1960*, 55; Garigue, 60.

¹⁰⁴ Laminah Sankoh, "W.A.S.U. Special Address," *Wasu* vol. VI, no. 1, Jan 1927: 14.

¹⁰⁵ Garigue, 55-69.

¹⁰⁶ Derrick, 228-229.

¹⁰⁷ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 28. In fact, as Jinny Prais explains, this new identity was important for any West Africans wishing to return to their home colonies after spending time in Britain because the Colonial Office [C.O.] was spreading discourse "on the negative consequences of westernization and the 'denationalization' of educated Africans." The C.O. argued that "too much education and westernization threatened the 'preservation' of a 'traditional' and 'authentic' Africa", an argument that elevated the status of native chiefs in the colonies. As a result, West Africans returning home had the burden of proof to

Students' Union was important for the ideas to which it exposed its members. She writes that through the W.A.S.U. "members tapped into imperial, black international, anti-colonial, and other political networks" all of which provided a platform for members to take part in worldwide discussions on race, empire, nation and citizenship.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, the organization's understanding of current events and the internationalist spirit of the interwar years also allowed it to "bring 'broadmindedness' to the Empire" and, in turn, "to help [Britain] to realize its obligations to facilitate West Africa's progress and development."¹⁰⁹ For the purpose of this study, however, the West African Students' Union is most significant for the journal it produced.

The first issue of *Wasu* appeared in March, 1926 and the publication continued until 1947. According to the Union, *Wasu* was "to foster West African nationalism" and to demonstrate that "African nationalism and some of her institutions [were] good things and not a bewildering mass of barbarism and cruelty."¹¹⁰ The journal was also to be a source of information on African history, customs, laws and institutions and this is clearly evident in its pages.¹¹¹ Indeed, *Wasu* often ran features on African culture such as "The Customary Constitution of the Yoruba Commonwealth", "What Africans Have Said", "Yoruba (or Aku) Constitutional Law" and "Yoruba Law Marriage Law and Custom."¹¹² The task of explaining African culture was important to the journal,

demonstrate their "authentic" African self if wishing to win appointment to government positions in their colonies. See Prais, 66.

¹⁰⁸ Prais, 96.

¹⁰⁹ Prais, 96.

¹¹⁰ Cobina Kessie, "Editorial: 'Wasu'," *Wasu* vol.2, no. 2, April-June 1933: 1.

¹¹¹ Laminah Sankoh, "W.A.S.U. Special Address," *Wasu* vol. VI, no. 1, Jan 1937: 14.

¹¹² Ladipo Solanke, "The Customary Constitution of the Yoruba Commonwealth," *Wasu* vol.1, No.3 and 4, March/June 1927: 30-36; "What Africans Have Said," *Wasu* vol.1, no. 5, September 1927: 24; Ladipo Solanke, "Yoruba (or Aku) Constitutional Law," *Wasu* vol.1, no. 9, December 1932: 21-25; Ladipo Solanke, "Yoruba Law Marriage Law and Custom," *Wasu* vol. 5, Christmas Number, 1936: 63-67. Yoruba

especially in order to “combat the false and exaggerated views given to the world by strayed European travelers, anthropologists, missionaries, officials and film producers.”¹¹³ *Wasu* felt that such parties, for “their own good and aggrandizement”, embellished “the so-called difficulties and dangers which they [came] across in their duties towards their ‘Brother Africans’.”¹¹⁴ Thus, *Wasu*’s role was to set the record straight about the continent. Fortunately the journal felt particularly well suited to the task, claiming that as Africans “they have the natural right to interpret the psychology and philosophy of their own people and to act as their true ambassadors and peacemakers” for the continent while in Britain.¹¹⁵ Yet, their role as ambassadors went two ways. As this thesis will demonstrate, authors in *Wasu* were also best suited to relay Western civilization back to Africa and, thus, constructed images of Britain and Europe for their readers to digest.

When it came to the journal’s content, *Wasu* was meant to be “...literary and educational, dealing also with current events” and its politics were to be “liberal and constructive.”¹¹⁶ According to the Union’s constitution, the journal would “always endeavor to justify itself as the true and effective organ of the Society with reference to the Objects of the Union”, in other words, it would promote self-help, unity and co-

is the name of a group of people who share the Yoruba language and “a range of cultural traditions, concentrated in Nigeria but forming smaller communities in Benin and Togo.” See Ari Nave, “Yoruba” *Encyclopedia of Africa*, ed. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t295.e4173>> (accessed June 27 2012).

¹¹³ Cobina Kessie, “Editorial: ‘Wasu’,” *Wasu* vol.2, no. 2, April-June 1933: 1.

¹¹⁴ Cobina Kessie, “Editorial: ‘Wasu’,” *Wasu* vol.2, no. 2, April-June 1933: 1. The language in this particularly quotation warrants attention because it conveys the West African Students’ Union’s implicit understanding that Europeans, and Britons in particular, had “duties towards them.” This was especially the case when it came to West Africa’s development into a self-governing nation, a status members of the W.A.S.U. felt Britain had a duty to help them obtain.

¹¹⁵ Cobina Kessie, “Editorial: ‘Wasu’,” *Wasu* vol.2, no. 2, April-June 1933: 1.

¹¹⁶ Cobina Kessie, “Editorial,” *Wasu* vol.1, no.9, December 1932: 1.

operation.¹¹⁷ Originally priced at one shilling, *Wasu*'s price was halved in July 1935 to six pence. The journal explained that its price reduction came as a means to "show [its] awareness of the difficult times through which we are passing and also to make it possible for everyone to do his bit" to keep the journal running.¹¹⁸ From the beginning, the West African Students' Union struggled financially and these difficulties affected the organization's ability to produce the journal. From 1926 to 1932 only nine issue of *Wasu* were published, which together constitute the journal's first volume.¹¹⁹

The journal's title, *Wasu*, was significant to Union members and it stood for more than an acronym for the West African Students' Union. In its editorial section, under a subheading entitled "The Philosophy of the term 'Wasu'", the journal explained its title in detail.¹²⁰ In Yoruba, *Wasu* meant "to preach" and the journal explained that every member "is expected TO PREACH about not only the Union's doctrine of 'Self-Help, Unity and Co-operation,' but also to preach and interpret Africa rightly" to the world. Coincidentally in a Gold Coast dialect, which was unnamed, *Wasu* meant "self-help", a word right out of the union's principles. In the Efik¹²¹ language, *Wasu* meant "'to wipe off one's disgrace or reproach'" and the journal elaborated on why this was important. It explained that Union members had "the duty and task of having themselves equipped

¹¹⁷ Laminah Sankoh, "The Constitution of the West African Students' Union," *Wasu* vol. 5, no. 2 and 3, June-July 1936: 47.

¹¹⁸ Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: Price of 'Wasu' reduced," *Wasu* vol. 4, no.1, July 1935: 1. The words "difficult times" likely alluded to the Great Depression.

¹¹⁹ At times financial difficulties also affected the length of *Wasu*'s journal. The January 1933 publication of *Wasu*, which marked the first number in its second volume, was forty-one pages in length whereas its September 1935 edition was only fifteen pages.

¹²⁰ Cobina Kessie, "Editorial: The Philosophy of the term 'Wasu'," *Wasu* vol.1, no.9, December 1932: 1-2.

¹²¹ The Efik are an "[e]thnic group living mostly in Nigeria's Cross River State... The Efik speak a Niger-Congo language that shares many characteristics with that spoken by the Ibibio." See "Efik" in *Encyclopedia of Africa* ed. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY/html?subview=Main&entry=t295.e1348> (accessed June 27, 2010).

with all such modern, intellectual, moral, commercial, economic and such like weapons”, in order to “enable them to wipe off all those racial insults, disgrace and reproaches” levied against African and its descendants.¹²² In Ibo, Wasu translated meant “to speak first in one’s own interest” which, according to Cobina Kessie, one of the editors of the journal, spoke to “the absolute necessity for acquiring and developing healthy national inspirations.”¹²³ Finally, Kessie’s editorial explained how the title held importance if “read half backward and half forward”, as “USWA.” Read this way, the journal’s title became the acronym for the “United States of West Africa”, additionally reflecting the union’s goal to “stand side by side with the United States of America or of Europe in the world universal Brotherhood.”¹²⁴ Significantly, the journal admitted that this goal could only be achieved “through the guardianship of the British Nation”, underscoring its belief in the necessity of co-operation between West Africans and the British government.¹²⁵

Despite being plagued by a shortage of funds, the Union felt that *Wasu* did “much towards raising the status and prestige of the Union”, a sentiment that expressed W.A.S.U. members’ high regard for their journal.¹²⁶ *Wasu* was circulated “in West Africa generally, but more widely in Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Gambia.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, the journal was available “in many parts of the United States of America and West Indies” and was supposedly “well-known in East and South Africa, especially in Kenya and Uganda.”¹²⁸ Lastly, the editor of *Wasu* claimed that it had “won a large

¹²² Cobina Kessie, “Editorial: The Philosophy of the term ‘Wasu’,” *Wasu* vol.1, no.9, December 1932: 1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 1, 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁶ J.T. Sackeyfio and O. Moore, “Editorial: ‘Wasu’ Magazine,” *Wasu* vol.2, no. 1, January 1933: 3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

circle of readers all over Great Britain.”¹²⁹ While it is difficult to verify *Wasu*’s actual circulation, what was asserted in its own pages is important to take into consideration because it demonstrates that *Wasu* saw its readership stretching beyond Great Britain and her colonies and crossing over the Atlantic into the United States.

While the West African Students’ Union had self-determination as its ultimate goal, the League of Coloured Peoples wanted to promote a more inclusive, racially just British Empire. Indeed, the L.C.P. took its lead from Harold A. Moody, a Jamaican medical doctor, who founded the League in 1931. Dr. Moody, who served as the League’s president up until his death in 1947, was born to a middle-class family in Jamaica. He grew up in a society “infused with British culture” where he was “taught to take pride in his birthplace as an important part of the British empire.”¹³⁰ Moody undoubtedly represented one of Britain’s many colonial subjects who believed that the words *civis Britannicus sum* [‘I am a British Citizen] held the same meaning for all Britons, irrespective of colour. After travelling to Britain to train as a physician, however, Dr. Moody soon learned about the colour bar. While trying to find employment, and despite his qualifications, he was “repeatedly refused medical positions because of his colour” and, with no other option for work, started his own practice in London.¹³¹ Dr. Moody was “shocked” to learn that “most native English people knew little about his homeland and cared less” and that many Britons “considered ‘coloured’ colonial subjects

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁰ Rush, 357. Elaborating further on the roots of Moody’s pride in empire, Rush writes “[l]ike most middle-class Jamaican children even into the 1960s, Moody learned, both in school and at home, that being a British subject was a privilege and that he should take pride in belonging to an important part of a grand empire.” See Rush, 363.

¹³¹ Rush, 365.

inferior aliens.”¹³² Such attitudes inspired him to found the L.C.P., an organization that would combat the colour bar and work towards racial equality in the British Empire.¹³³

The League of Coloured Peoples was interracial in its composition¹³⁴ and set out to “capture the imagination of the black and white peoples” of Britain.¹³⁵ It had “as its object the purpose of stating the cause of the Black Man” which, it mentioned, was the “cause of our brothers and sisters within the British Empire.”¹³⁶ The L.C.P., however, did not limit its attention to British subjects only, noting it could not afford “to ignore the claims of the peoples of colour who owe allegiance to a flag other than our own.”¹³⁷ Indeed, the League concerned itself with news about blacks around the world and included in its journal, *The Keys*, such stories as “Cuba and the Colour Line”, “The Negro in America” and “The Australian Aborigines.”¹³⁸ The organization also passed resolutions offering support to African-Americans and their campaign to have an anti-lynching bill passed in the United States. In January 1933 the League used its journal to “respectfully urge the American Government to consider the advisability of taking every

¹³² Rush, 357. Rush also writes that many colonial subjects were “taught that in British justice, deep respect for the various people of the empire, and an absence of racial categories was the norm”, explaining why Dr. Moody would have reacted so strongly to the discrimination that he faced. See Rush, 364.

¹³³ Marc Matera quotes Dr. Moody as saying, “I am proud of my British citizenship, but I am still more proud of my colour, and I do not want to feel that my colour is going to rob me of any of the privileges to which I am entitled as a British citizen’.” It is such an attitude, one that looked to extend Britain’s benevolence to all of its subjects no matter their skin colour, that Dr. Moody took into the League. See Matera, “Black Internationalism,” 96.

¹³⁴ According to Philip Zachernuk, by 1936 the League of Coloured Peoples had 260 members, 100 of which were white. See Zachernuk, 98.

¹³⁵ Vaughan, 54. Despite the interracial composition of the League, Dr. Moody was uncompromising in his belief that the “organization would be run by people of colour and throughout its existence there were no white members included in its executive committee.” See Rush, 365.

¹³⁶ David Tucker, “Editorial,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.1, July 1933: 1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³⁸ See Emmett J. Marshall, “Cuba and the Color Line,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.3, January-March 1935: 50, 61-62; Frederick Hall, “The Negro in America,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 32-34; M.M. Bennett, “The Australian Aborigines,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 77.

possible step to put down this unjust and barbarous practice” of lynching.¹³⁹ Indeed, the League’s efforts to support oppressed blacks on the other side of the Atlantic demonstrates Marc Matera’s claim that the L.C.P. “aspired to be a vehicle for both transnational black unity and interracial harmony and cooperation.”¹⁴⁰

Like the West African Students’ Union, the League of Coloured Peoples had specific objectives as an organization. Its first aim was “[t]o promote and protect the social, educational, economic and political interests of its members”, a goal that meant addressing Britain’s colour bar and its impact on blacks in Britain. The L.C.P. believed in the British ethos of fair play and justice and felt that discrimination against blacks was contrary to Britons’ true character.¹⁴¹ The League felt that if it shone a light on the colour bar Britons would work to eradicate it. In this view, racism was not about hatred but ignorance and the League felt that it could do a great deal to educate their compatriots about the evils of racism and discrimination.¹⁴² For instance, in 1935, *The Keys* published an article entitled “Education for Better Understanding”, which was authored “by AN ENGLISHMAN.”¹⁴³ With the author’s name in capital letters, the journal emphasized that the article was written from the perspective of a white Briton who attempted to explain “certain factors, which render difficult the formation of an understanding between

¹³⁹ David Tucker, “Editorial,” *The Keys* vol. 1, no.3, January 1934: 42. *The Keys* also ran a letter from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) president, Walter White in 1936. The letter addressed how the anti-lynching bill had been filibustered in Congress and that the NAACP needed more funds to support their letter and telegraph campaign to see the bill passed. See Walter White, “Correspondence: Lynching in America,” *The Keys* vol. 3, no. 3, January-March 1936: 36.

¹⁴⁰ Matera, “Black Internationalism,” 49.

¹⁴¹ Whittall, 230.

¹⁴² Whittall, 229.

¹⁴³ An Englishman, “Education for Better Understanding,” *The Keys* vol. 2, no.3, January-March 1935: 59, 64. Original emphasis.

John Bull and his coloured contemporaries.”¹⁴⁴ A Briton was apparently “taught to regard himself and his co-colours as members of a caste above all exploitable peoples, rulers of the coloured by right of superior nobility and civilization.”¹⁴⁵ The article worked to underscore the L.C.P.’s larger point about the colour bar, emphasizing that “[i]gnorance rather than ill-will underlies most of [Britons] racial reactions.”¹⁴⁶ This argument allowed the League to celebrate Britain and its culture, while deploring the racism of its citizens. The L.C.P.’s second aim as an organization was to “interest members in the welfare of coloured peoples in all parts of the world.”¹⁴⁷ Thirdly, the L.C.P. sought to “improve relations between the races”, promoting increased co-operation between black and white peoples and, lastly, it wished to “co-operate and affiliate with organizations sympathetic to coloured peoples.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the L.C.P. worked alongside various Christian churches and organizations in London because it believed in the need for “greater co-operation and understanding to attempt some solution to the problem confronting” Britain’s coloured population, most notably the colour bar.¹⁴⁹

Crucial to the League of Coloured Peoples’ operations was the idea that blacks and whites would co-exist as equals under the umbrella of British citizenship. Implicit in this notion was a fundamental challenge to the understanding that British citizenship was predicated on white skin.¹⁵⁰ According to the League “the notions of equal rights, justice,

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 57.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 64.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 64

¹⁴⁷ David Tucker, “The League of Coloured Peoples: Objects,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.2, October 1933: 18.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹⁴⁹ David Tucker, “Editorial,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.1, July 1933: 1. Roderick Macdonald credits the L.C.P. for its interracial character, noting that the League had made the “first conscious and deliberate attempt to form a multi-racial organization, led by blacks.” See Macdonald, “Dr. Harold Arundel Moody,” 291.

¹⁵⁰ Rush, 361.

and fair play were the core of true British identity”, not a person’s colour.¹⁵¹ The League argued that, “the rights of Britons applied to all British subjects regardless of their race.”¹⁵² Unlike the West Africans Students’ Union, L.C.P. members were not looking to forge a new identity, but were trying to secure rights and protections they believed already belonged to them as British subjects. Indeed, they felt that racism and discrimination infringed on their rights as British citizens.¹⁵³ According to Daniel Whittall, the L.C.P.’s work on promoting black Britons “played an important role in challenging the normalization of whiteness in the 1930s and 1940s, both in Britain and across the British Empire.”¹⁵⁴ When it came to blacks living in Britain, the League made it known that “5/7 of [Britain’s] great empire is made up of such people”, and thus they needed to be treated with respect if the Empire hoped to thrive.¹⁵⁵

While the L.C.P. looked to challenge the idea that British citizenship necessitated white skin, it respected “traditional ‘Western’ ideas of class and gender.”¹⁵⁶ The League subscribed to the notion that British citizenship involved “a middle-class notion of respectability” and loyalty to the British Empire.¹⁵⁷ Its belief in traditional British ideals was best illustrated by the L.C.P.’s much-extolled value of self-help.¹⁵⁸ Members of the

¹⁵¹ Rush, 367.

¹⁵² Rush, 367.

¹⁵³ Rush, 361.

¹⁵⁴ Whittall, 227.

¹⁵⁵ George Brown, “University College Hospital Magazine. Editorial January-February, 1935,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June, 1935: 81. It is worth mentioning just how important Britain’s colonies were to the Empire. Jenny Prais writes that, after World War One, “the colonies combined accounted for forty-one percent of Britain’s trade and eighty-six percent of its foreign investment. As the unemployment rate in Great Britain increased during the twenties, 870,000 British people found employment in the colonies.” See Prais, 43.

¹⁵⁶ Rush, 361.

¹⁵⁷ Rush, 361.

¹⁵⁸ Anne Rush notes that the idea of self-help or social uplift was first adopted by “middle-class American blacks from the late nineteenth century into the 1920s.” The concept “had been championed by prominent African American leaders such as Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. They argued that equal

League often suggested that blacks had to raise themselves up to a level of respectability, arguing that they must govern their actions by the same social norms as their white counterparts.¹⁵⁹ Emphasis on self-help and the L.C.P.'s respect for British ideals of class and empire increased its popularity with white Britons and earned their co-operation. For many white Britons the L.C.P. was undoubtedly more palatable than the West African Students' Union whose eye on nationhood could have been unsettling. The League also held a variety of social functions such as conferences, dances and cricket matches that played to the interests of its largely-middle-class membership and, contributed to the League's reputation as "the best organised, the most active and influential" of England's black organizations of the interwar period.¹⁶⁰

Instrumental to the League of Coloured Peoples' success and reputation was its quarterly journal, *The Keys*. Priced at six pence, the first issue appeared in July 1933 and it ran until 1939, at which point the journal continued in a newsletter format until 1948.¹⁶¹ Initially, when the League of Coloured Peoples was founded in 1931 it never planned on publishing a journal. The idea, however, grew from the League's early experiences;

treatment from whites would come only when whites recognized that people of colour could be equals, and that his recognition could best be facilitated by encouraging moral behavior and educational achievement on the part of blacks." See Rush, 368. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has also published on the topic of respectability in her monograph, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. She writes that while "adherence to respectability enabled black women to counter racist images and structures, their discursive contestation was not directed solely at white Americans; the black Baptist women condemned what they perceived to be negative practices and attitudes among their own people." See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 187.

¹⁵⁹ Rush, 367-369.

¹⁶⁰ Olisanwuche P. Esedebe, "The League of Coloured Peoples: A Neglected Pan-African Organisation," *Ikenga: Journal of African Studies* 2, no.1 (1973): 41. *The Keys* often reported on the L.C.P.'s functions. For example, see David Tucker, "Conference Report," *The Keys* vol.1, no.1, July 1933: 3-8; David Tucker, "Coloured People's Service: Camberwell Green Congregational Church," *The Keys* vol.1, no.1, July 1933: 19-20; David Tucker, "The President's Reception to West Indies Cricketers," *The Keys* vol.1, no.2, October 1933: 26; David Tucker, "Reports of League Functions," *The Keys* vol.1, no.3, January 1934: 47-51, 61-62.

¹⁶¹ Brown, 92.

¹⁶¹ Vaughan, 8.

without a means to publish, the L.C.P. thought itself too quiet to capture and maintain the interest of citizens within the Empire, both black and white.¹⁶² Indeed, *The Keys* explained that it had not taken “long to discover that an organ which could be read, and sent to our many friends and well-wishers was urgently needed.”¹⁶³ With important matters, like the colour bar and the well being of colonial subjects in Britain, to address the League wanted to ensure that its message was in circulation and *The Keys* enabled this to happen. In regards to the journal’s aims, *The Keys* stated that, “[w]e hope always to state the true facts on any issue of importance concerning people of colour, in a fair, un-biased and dispassionate matter.”¹⁶⁴ While the journal sought to expose racial discrimination, its pages did so by explaining how such injustices were detrimental to black and whites alike, underscoring a need to work together. It observed that racism did “a great deal of harm to all parties concerned and [had] a detrimental effect on peace, order and good government within the British Empire and world at large.”¹⁶⁵

As a title, *The Keys*, was significant for reflecting the journal’s mission to act as an “open sesame to better racial understanding and goodwill.”¹⁶⁶ An editorial explained how its title was “symbolic of what the League is striving for – the opening of doors and avenues now closed to Coloured peoples”, a goal that spoke to the League’s quest for equal opportunity for coloured peoples.¹⁶⁷ The editorial also explained that its title invoked the musical metaphor of Dr. James Aggrey by calling for the “harmonious co-

¹⁶² Vaughan, 8.

¹⁶³ David Tucker, “Editorial,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.1, July 1933: 1.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

operation of the races.”¹⁶⁸ Dr. Aggrey, a prominent African educator and activist, asserted that, “the fullest musical harmony could be expressed only by use of the black and white keys on the piano.”¹⁶⁹ In other words, to play one coloured key, to the exclusion of the other would be to miss out on the full potential of the instrument. In the same way, the British Empire had to embrace both black and white citizens to realize its full potential in the world.

By 1934, only a year after it started publication, *The Keys* claimed it had a worldwide circulation of over two thousand.¹⁷⁰ As with *Wasu*, circulation details are difficult to confirm. According to Marc Matera, however, *The Keys* established itself as “the most comprehensive, consistent, and professional black internationalist” publication in Britain during the interwar years.¹⁷¹ Indeed, *The Keys* was a much more polished publication than *Wasu* and often included poetry and reviews of film, theatre or literature in its pages.¹⁷² The journal also saw notable black Britons edit its issues and submit articles. Names like C.L.R. James¹⁷³, Una Marson¹⁷⁴ and W. Arthur Lewis¹⁷⁵ all grace the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 2. Dr. James Aggrey was born in the Gold Coast and educated in the United States where he lived for over 20 years before coming back to Africa. He is known for his black pride, his desire for African independence, his Christian faith and his desire to cooperate with whites. In many cases, he has been thought of as someone who took what a Western education had to offer without losing his African roots which was a criticism levied against many Africans who studied abroad. See Sylvia M. Jacobs, “James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey: An African Intellectual in the United States,” *Journal of Negro History* 81, no. ¼ (1996): 47-61; Kenneth King, “James E.K. Aggrey: Collaborator, Nationalist, Pan-African,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 3, no.3 (1969): 511-530.

¹⁶⁹ Vaughan, 59.

¹⁷⁰ Matera, “Black Internationalism,” 53. Olisanwuche Esedebe has also written that *The Keys* “rapidly secured international readership” indicating that the journal circulated outside the British Empire. Esedebe, 42.

¹⁷¹ Matera, “Black Internationalism,” 53.

¹⁷² For example the poem “Nigger” appeared in *The Keys* vol.1, no.1, July 1933: 8-9; the poem “Freedom,” in *The Keys* vol.1, no.2, January-March 1935: 47; an article entitled “West African Art,” in *The Keys* vol.2, no. 4, April-June, 1935: 71 and “Some Reflections on Jazz,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.1, July-September 1935: 5-6.

¹⁷³ C.L.R. James was a prominent West Indian writer and historian. Born in Trinidad, he wrote “Abyssinia and the Imperialists,” in *The Keys* vol. 3, no. 2, January-March, 1936. A known Trotskyist, James was one of the founders of the International African Service Bureau. See Stephen Howe, “C.L.R. James: visions of

pages of *The Keys*. Common themes were also repeated in *The Keys* because, as the “Official Organ of the League of Coloured Peoples”, the journal shared the L.C.P.’s wish to eradicate the colour bar.¹⁷⁶ Thus, it published stories on the instances of racism and discrimination that took place in Britain, and even reprinted articles it found offensive from the mainstream British press, hoping to inspire its interracial readership to take action against racial injustices.¹⁷⁷ In October-December 1935 the journal published an entire issue dedicated to the plight of black seafarers in Cardiff who, because of their colour, were being shutout of jobs and, in some instances, repatriated.¹⁷⁸ With articles such as “Cardiff Report- General Survey”, “Investigation of Coloured Colonial Seamen

history, visions of Britain,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. Bill Schwarz (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 132.

¹⁷⁴ Una Marson was a Jamaican feminist, poet, playwright and social activist. She worked as a secretary for the L.C.P., submitted poetry to and also edited *The Keys*. See Stephen Bourne, *Mother Country: Britain’s Black Community on the Home Front, 1939-45* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2010), 99; Alison Donnell, “Una Marson: feminism, anti-colonialism and a forgotten fight for freedom,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, ed. Bill Schwarz (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 114.

¹⁷⁵ According to Jonathan Derrick, Lewis was a lecturer at the London School of Economics. He edited *The Keys* from June 1935 to October 1936. Of his editing style, Lewis wrote “my policy, as Editor, has been to create a magazine in which coloured people may express their ideas freely, whether on politics, music, art or otherwise.” He added that he wished the journal’s pages, “to assist in breaking down the barriers which separate white from coloured people.” See, Derrick, 396; “The Editor’s Report,” in *The Keys* vol. 3, no.4, April-June 1936: 58.

¹⁷⁶ Una Marson was not the only woman who contributed to *The Keys*. Women also authored articles in *Wasu*. For a selection of articles written by women in *The Keys* and *Wasu* see: Nancy Sharpe, “Cardiff’s Coloured Population,” and Vivian Virtue, “Reveille,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.3, January 1934: 44-45, 61; Margaret R. Sean, “Vision,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.4, April-June 1934: 82; Isabel Ross, “On Native Land in Kenya,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 28; Ella Wheeler Wilcox, “Jamaica,” and Vivian Virtue, “Kaietur Falls Unvisited,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935; Nancie Hare, “Coloured Children in England,” and Una Newbery, “Cape Colour Bar,” *The Keys* vol.5, no.1, July-September 1937; Eleanor Hawarden, “Status of Women in the Colonies,” *The Keys* vol.5, no.2, October-December 1937; Efwā Kato, “What Women Can Do,” *Wasu* vol.3, no.1, March 1934: 11-14; Amy Porter, “African Fairy Tale,” *Wasu* vol.3, no.1, March 1934: 27-29; Titilola Folarin, “Our Native Dress,” *Wasu* vol.5, Christmas number, 1936: 55-56. Aside from the journals, women figured prominently in the activities of the West African Students’ Union and the League of Coloured People. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to focus on these contributions, it should be noted that Marc Matera devotes an entire chapter to black women’s activities in London in his dissertation. See Matera, “Black Internationalism,” 164-227.

¹⁷⁷ For instance *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935 published an article from a prominent medical magazine in its entirety under the banner “University College Hospital Magazine. Editorial. January-February, 1935.” The article was an example of racist attitudes towards coloured peoples that “appear in responsible journals from time to time.”

¹⁷⁸ See *The Keys* vol. 3, no. 2, October-December, 1935.

in Cardiff” and “The League of Coloured Peoples and the Problem of the Coloured Colonial Seamen in the United Kingdom”, *The Keys* demonstrated its commitment to publishing on the colour bar and in fostering unity among Britain’s coloured population.¹⁷⁹

While *The Keys* was associated with the League of Coloured People and *Wasu* had the West African Students’ Union, *The Black Man* did not have strong ties to any black organization in London. Instead, the journal owed its existence to the tireless efforts of Jamaica’s Marcus Garvey who, by the 1930s, was trying to resuscitate his once dominant organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association.¹⁸⁰ Garvey was in Jamaica after being deported from the United States in 1927 where he had served almost three years in the Atlanta Penitentiary for using the mails to defraud stockholders in “his visionary Black Star Line steamship venture.”¹⁸¹ Imprisonment and subsequent deportation greatly affected Garvey, severing him “from direct contact with his greatest source of support, the American Negroes” and leaving him to witness his “mighty

¹⁷⁹ P. Cecil Lewis, “Cardiff Report – General Survey,” *The Keys* vol. 3, no.2, October–December, 1935: 16-18; George W. Brown, “Investigation of Coloured Colonial Seamen in Cardiff April 13th-20th, 1935,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.2, October-December: 18-22; Dr. Harold Moody, “The League of Coloured Peoples and the Problem of the Coloured Colonial Seamen in the United Kingdom,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.2, October-December, 1935: 22-24. For more on the discrimination against people of colour in Britain’s seafaring industry see Neil Evans, “Regulating the Reserve Army: Arabs, Blacks and the Local State in Cardiff, 1919-1945,” *Immigrants and Minorities* 4, no.2 (1985): 68-115; Jacqueline Jenkinson, “Black Sailors on Red Clydeside: Rioting, Reactionary Trade Unionism and Conflicting Notions of ‘British’ Following the First World War,” *Twentieth Century British History* 19, no.1 (2008): 29-60; Laura Tabili, *We Ask For British Justice’: Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, N.Y.; Cornell University Press, 1994).

¹⁸⁰E. David Cronon *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, U.S.A.; University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 156. The Universal Negro Improvement Association was founded by Garvey in 1914 and was based in New York City’s Harlem. Colin Grant explains that the organization’s “stated aim was ‘to establish a brotherhood among the black race, to promote a spirit of race pride, to reclaim the fallen and to assist in civilizing the backward tribes of Africa.’ Its motto, printed proudly on its letterhead, proclaimed ‘One Aim. One God. One Destiny’.” See Colin Grant, *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 54.

¹⁸¹ Robert A. Hill, ed. *The Black Man. A Monthly Magazine of Negro Thought and Opinion*. Compiled with an introductory essay by Robert. A. Hill. (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson Organization, Lt.d., 1975), 5.

organization disintegrating into gradual impotency.”¹⁸² At the peak of his influence in Harlem, Garvey had inspired blacks to realize their “[n]egroid characteristics were not shameful marks of inferiority to be camouflaged and altered” and, instead, had inspired them to see such characteristics as “symbols of beauty and grace.”¹⁸³ Garvey had also led a campaign that envisioned a “great independent African nation” and looked “to lead Negroes back to their African homeland.”¹⁸⁴ The idea, according to Garvey, was to see “Africa as completely dominated by Negroes as Europe was by whites”, explaining that blacks “needed the dark continent to achieve their destiny as a great people.”¹⁸⁵ The importance of Garvey’s pride in his African heritage cannot be overestimated. Indeed, Hakim Adi writes that the West African Students’s Union co-founder, Ladipo Solanke, spoke of “‘the indirect effects of Garveyism’ on the students, a result of Garvey’s ‘labour in the interest of the race’.”¹⁸⁶ The appeal of Garveyism was that it inspired “race confidence and solidarity”, allowing blacks to “‘feel like somebody among white people, who have said they were nobody’.”¹⁸⁷

After deportation to Jamaica, Garvey travelled from there to London and Paris in order to revive U.N.I.A. branches.¹⁸⁸ Barred from the United States he was set on making Jamaica the U.N.I.A. headquarters and put an increased emphasis on its international

¹⁸² Cronon, 156.

¹⁸³ Cronon, 174.

¹⁸⁴ Cronon, 183.

¹⁸⁵ Cronon, 183.

¹⁸⁶ Ladipo Solanke quoted in Hakim Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, 46. Adi notes that Garvey and Solanke met in 1928 when Garvey, looking to revitalize his international branches of the U.N.I.A., was in London. Garvey had made his U.N.I.A. headquarters available to Solanke to use and both men exchanged letters, keeping in contact. In 1936, Solanke wrote an article in *The Black Man* entitled, “Life and Conditions in West Africa.” See Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, 46-47.

¹⁸⁷ E. Franklin Frazier quoted in Cronon, 172, 174.

¹⁸⁸ Cronon, 45. Robert Hill also writes about Garvey’s tour, noting that it took eight months and saw Garvey also make a stop in Canada. See Hill, “Introduction to *The Black Man*,” 7.

branches to lift the organization to its former prominence. Garvey's efforts, as Robert Hill notes, were largely fruitless. While campaigning for office in Jamaica's general election, Garvey had, not so subtly, threatened Jamaica's judiciary; the country's Supreme Court sentenced him to jail for three months for contempt of court.¹⁸⁹ Hill describes the sentence as having had a "crippling effect" on Garvey undermining his bid for office and the U.N.I.A.'s reputation.¹⁹⁰ He "had gambled on Jamaica as his strategic base from which to rebuild the movement and had lost."¹⁹¹ The loss also "undoubtedly" influenced Garvey's decision to leave for London in 1935.¹⁹²

In Jamaica Garvey had started to publish *The Black Man*, a journal that was meant to appear monthly but which was actually published on a quarterly basis.¹⁹³ The journal first appeared in December of 1933, a year that also marked the end of Garvey's far more renowned publication, *Negro World*.¹⁹⁴ *The Black Man* ceased publication in 1939.

Priced at 10 cents¹⁹⁵, *The Black Man*'s first editorial announced that "through its columns, an intensified world campaign to again arouse the Negro to the seriousness of his responsibility" was underway.¹⁹⁶ The editorial stated that *The Black Man* would take up the task of "inspiring the Negro on those helpful lines of racial growth that ultimately

¹⁸⁹ Hill, "Introduction to *The Black Man*," 7.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁹³ Initially Garvey had published *The Black Man* as daily and it appeared as such in Jamaica from 1929 to 1931. See Hill, "Introduction to *The Black Man*," 6.

¹⁹⁴ *Negro World* was the U.N.I.A.'s weekly journal. Published in New York City, it appeared in 1918. Cronon writes that the journal "was one of the most remarkable journalistic ventures ever attempted by a Negro in the United States." The journal had an international circulation, but Cronon notes that, "it was banned by many of the colonial governments for its dangerous nationalism." See Cronon, 45-49.

¹⁹⁵ *The Black Man* listed two prices, 10 cents and a foreign price of 12 cents. Once the journal moved to England it listed a third price of 6 pennies for its British readers.

¹⁹⁶ M. Garvey, "The 'Blackman' Makes its Bow," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.1, December 1933:1. The first six issues of the journal spell the title as one word, "*The Blackman*." I have adopted the spelling used by the journal from its seventh issue onward, where its title appears as two words, "*The Black Man*."

will make him the man he ought to be.”¹⁹⁷ Indeed, Garvey allotted space in each issue of *The Black Man* to remind his readers of their need to work together and to rise from their present position in the world. In a challenging tone Garvey wrote that, “no one can destroy the Negro but himself”, emphasizing that “the success of our battles depend upon our own energies and effort.”¹⁹⁸ Any loss, according to Garvey, was the result of blacks’ “own inaction.”¹⁹⁹ Similarly Garvey explained that his readers must embrace self-reliance: with “reliance on his own ability [the black man] ought to climb the same mountains of economic, social, political and cultural prosperity as other people.”²⁰⁰ The key was to realize that “any real help of a substantial nature... must come from within.”²⁰¹ The “Negro [Garvey wrote] must originate, he must create, he must invent, he must manufacture, he must launch out into every field of human activity.”²⁰² Furthermore Garvey added that the black man, “must refuse to surrender his rights and privileges to anyone.”²⁰³ Articles such as these, ones that aimed to inspire and coordinate united action, mirrored the journal’s aim of being “the mouthpiece of the new effort to re-align the Negro in a world campaign for his redemption.”²⁰⁴ Garvey, who was the journal’s acting editor, also made sure to elaborate on why a publication like *The Black Man* was necessary to take stock of the state of blacks in the world. He explained that, “more than ever, the Negro seeks the proper guidance in national and international affairs” and was

¹⁹⁷ M. Garvey, “The ‘Blackman’ Makes its Bow,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.1, December 1933: 1.

¹⁹⁸ M. Garvey, “The Negro and Himself,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.1, December 1933: 14.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰⁰ M. Garvey, “The Outlook,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 3.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰² M. Garvey, “The New Programme,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 3.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰⁴ M. Garvey, “The ‘Blackman’ Makes its Bow,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.1, December 1933: 2.

particularly alarmed by the “disorganization” of the black community.²⁰⁵ *The Black Man* was meant to ameliorate such ills, providing its readers “all that information that is necessary to keep them in touch with the most important events of interest to the race” and, thus, guiding “the race toward a higher racial purpose.”²⁰⁶

In the November 1934 issue of *The Black Man*, Garvey announced that he would be relocating his U.N.I.A. headquarters to London. He explained that London was “the central city of the world, not only from a European point of view, but from the point of view of Negro interest.”²⁰⁷ He further justified the move by commenting that the “whole world gets its lead from London, and since the Universal Negro Improvement Association is the leading Negro Movement in the world, it is very appropriate that its Headquarters” should move.²⁰⁸ Sadly, Garvey’s assessment of the U.N.I.A. and its influence in 1934 was grossly overstated. Indeed, David Cronon characterizes the 1930s as “an era of obscurity” for Garvey since, like *Wasu*, the journal “had great difficulty raising funds”, a problem that was exacerbated by its geographically “scattered circulation.”²⁰⁹ Despite the financial struggles, however, *The Black Man* was “still reaching a world-wide following” though exact circulation details are impossible to determine.²¹⁰

The West African Students’ Union, the League of Coloured Peoples and Marcus Garvey represent three different perspectives emerging from Britain’s black community. While their political aspirations varied, each understood the importance of a journal in

²⁰⁵Ibid., 2.

²⁰⁶M. Garvey, “Our New Start,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 1.

²⁰⁷M. Garvey, “The Removal,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no. 6, November 1934: 2.

²⁰⁸Ibid., 3.

²⁰⁹Cronon, 159.

²¹⁰Ibid., 159.

order to have their voices heard. Indeed, publishing from Britain, the authors in *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* capitalized on the opportunity to depict the world around them by constructing images of Western civilization that served each of their political interests and conveyed them to their readers.

Chapter Two

Published in London, the heart of the metropole, where news from around the world flooded in and political debate abounded, *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* were ideally situated to report on world events. While these publications carried news of their respective organizations, a more important role of each journal was to inform their readers about the Western civilization that surrounded them.

This chapter argues that *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* constructed images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization²¹¹ for their readers, participating in (and also reversing) a process of invention that usually saw the white colonizers interpret and define their dark-skinned colonial subjects. European ideas of empire were not static or monolithic and, in the same manner, *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* generated different conceptions in their journals that matched their political aims.²¹² Indeed, the images the journals created served a purpose as authors, from their unique vantage point in London, made their own determinations about the world and conveyed them to their readers.

Wasu

Through its principles of self-help, unity and cooperation, the West Africans Students' Union looked forward to an independent West Africa. The Union provided a space for West African political consciousness to develop while simultaneously refuting stereotypes of Africans as inherently inferior and incapable of self-government. The

²¹¹ Language describing “the other” in the journals varied. Sometimes the papers made specific references to Britain, Britons and the British Empire and at other times more general phrases like “the white man” and “Europeans” and “Western civilization” were used.

²¹² Zachernuk, 6. Zachernuk writes that “European ideas of empire were far from static or monolithic, and just as there were many faces of colonial rule, so were there many faces of its ‘others’.”

Union's journal, *Wasu*, was critical to its political aims. The publication looked to explain Africa to Europeans, providing space for Africans to voice their opinions. Indeed, *Wasu* promoted the notion of an educated African, capable of synthesizing and employing both British and African influences to conduct his/her country's affairs.

Wasu was also important for the images it constructed of Britain, Europe and Western civilization, each of which conveyed important messages to its readers. The journal used its depictions of Britain to either illuminate what could be gained from living within the Empire or to underscore the need for West African self-determination. Moreover, *Wasu* portrayed Europe and civilization in a manner that emphasized the contribution West Africans could make to the world.

Wasu, despite its emphasis on West African independence, was not always antagonistic towards the British Empire and Western civilization. Indeed, the journal often endorsed the benefits of European tutelage. In the January 1933 issue of *Wasu*, Rev. M.S. Cole wrote enthusiastically of England's work in Africa: "England has thrown upon us all her advantages, her results of centuries of civilization" [noting that] "in the methods of administration in her colonies, her object was to give us training and responsibility necessary to control our affairs."²¹³ Cole's comments celebrated Britain's leadership and implicitly acknowledged Britain's superiority, for it was Britain which was offering its colonies "civilization" and the colonies were cast in the role of recipients. Moreover, Cole depicted Britain as a benevolent ruler concerned that its colonies would receive adequate preparation to fulfill a "useful function in a loyal and unsparing service"

²¹³ Rev. M.S. Cole, "Wasu Oration," *Wasu* vol.2, no.1, January 1933: 7.

to the Empire and, too, as a great “knower” as well, recognizing what was “necessary” for its colonies to develop.²¹⁴

Cole’s positive view of Britain, which essentially endorsed its ability to administer colonial affairs, included a glowing comparison with ancient Rome. To Cole, England like Rome, “turned subjects into citizens and ruled them for their own good and not for selfish gain.”²¹⁵ Indeed, Cole highlighted how Rome relied on the “steady loyalty of a conquered world” before its strength dissipated and it was no longer able to oversee its empire. Therefore, when the empire fell it was not because Rome’s “nations revolted from her”, but that it grew too weak to govern.²¹⁶ Nowhere did Cole problematize what it meant to govern “a conquered world” or, more obviously, the implications associated with the act of conquering other states because that would have conflicted with the image of British benevolence he wanted to communicate. Instead, Cole justified Britain’s rule over its subjects by maintaining that, like the Romans, the British ruled their subjects for their “own good.” Here, once again, Cole acknowledged Britain’s superior expertise in administration. Cole’s image of an altruistic Britain allowed him to assert that the path forward for the colonies was patient loyalty to the empire until Britain became too weak to govern. By highlighting the benefits of the Empire, Cole demonstrated to *Wasu*’s readers that the colonies could do no better than to capitalize on the benefits that Britain caringly and generously offered.

It was not uncommon in *Wasu* to find the acknowledgement that the colonies had something to learn from the British Empire and hence that there was a benefit to be

²¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 8.

derived from subjugation. In its July 1935 issue, Laminah Sankoh used his “Editorial Notes” to write about King George V’s Silver Jubilee, paying particular attention to the King’s message. Sankoh believed that it was the “policy of His Majesty to give expression both in word and in deed to the highest democratic principles”, quoting the monarch’s statement that “we are all members of one family.”²¹⁷ Sustaining the metaphor, Sankoh, however, pronounced the relationship to be a conditional one. “[W]e shall be content [he wrote] to abide in the nursery or in the stage of adolescence, provided our elder brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, behave themselves...”, adding that it was “when they contravene the principles of family relationship that they raise the devil in us.”²¹⁸ Sankoh’s depiction of colonial peoples as abiding in a “nursery” like children or as being in their “adolescence” is noteworthy because it clearly relegated colonial subjects to a lower stage of development when compared to their “elder brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts” who were portrayed as more experienced and learned. Sankoh could have envisioned all members of the British family, white and black, as brothers and sisters and, therefore, at a stage of relative equality, but he chose not to do so. Instead, he portrayed Britain as an elder whose guidance and protection paid dividends to its colonial youth. Like Cole, Sankoh’s image of Britain as a nurturer and a caregiver endorsed Britain as the most able to oversee colonial development as long as there was no departure from the “highest democratic principles.”²¹⁹ This positive image of empire appeared once more, some two years later. In “Unity and Nigerian States”, Ladipo Odunsi envisioned a peaceful break from empire where Britain “will hand over the reins

²¹⁷ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: the Silver Jubilee of their Majesties,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.1, July 1935: 2.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

of office” and will call on its former colonial subjects “to undertake the duties” of governing themselves.²²⁰ According to Odunsi, handing over the reins was “the avowed policy of all British Governments” and thus, he too, constructed a positive image of the Empire that downplayed any need for colonies to rebel.²²¹ Instead, because of Britain’s policy of caring for its colonies until they were ready to govern themselves, colonial subjects could focus on uniting and preparing for the day they were deemed fit “to make the vital decisions” of office.²²²

The same July issue of *Wasu* carried additional reinforcement of the image of British superiority in an article by the renowned black singer Paul Robeson²²³, which had appeared earlier in the London *Evening Standard*. In “I Want Negro Culture,” Robeson advocated the establishment of a black theatre where black artists could create and gain appreciation for their own culture.²²⁴ According to Robeson, such action was necessary because “the Negro has lost faith in himself” and because “slavery and the white man’s machines have been too much for his confidence.”²²⁵ Robeson took issue with black artists “imitating Europeans” and stated that with a greater sense of confidence blacks

²²⁰ Ladipo Odunsi, “Unity and Nigerian States,” *Wasu*, vol. 6, no.1, January 1937: 11.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²²² *Ibid.*, 11.

²²³ Paul Robeson was a prominent African American actor, singer and political activist who spent a significant amount of time in Britain. According to *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, “Robeson managed to gain the affection and respect of even the most steadfast of imperialists” and “he received continuing support from the British public.” Robeson was a patron of the West African Students’ Union and The League of Coloured Peoples. Of his involvement with the latter, Marc Matera writes, “individuals like Paul Robeson and C.L.R. James participated in the League’s activities in its early years but eventually drifted away from the organization.” See David Dabydeen and Shivani Sivagurunathan, “Robeson, Paul” in *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, ed., David Dabydeen, John Gilmore and Cecily Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 417-418; Matera, “Black Internationalism,” 102.

²²⁴ Paul Robeson, “I Want Negro Culture,” *Wasu* vol. 4, no.1, July 1935: 11-13.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

would not abandon their own culture for Europe's.²²⁶ While Robeson championed an independent black culture, he went on to privilege Europeans by suggesting that their recognition was needed if black culture was to be afforded legitimacy. Europeans, therefore, became an authority on the value of black cultural production. He wrote that blacks needed the self-respect that came from having a culture of their own and observed that “nothing would do that so quickly as to find himself being accorded respect by Europeans.”²²⁷ Elaborating, Robeson wrote that, “at present white men are apt to take [a black man] at his own estimation” and so blacks needed to “demonstrate [their] worth practically and win world recognition for it.”²²⁸ Robeson's argument recognized the sway that Europeans enjoyed by portraying them as gatekeepers whose approval was necessary to ensure that black culture gained international appreciation. Thus, while Robeson encouraged black artists not to “strain after the white man's culture” because they “must develop their own”, he nevertheless created a scenario where Europeans were the arbiters of cultural value. Robeson may have encouraged *Wasu*'s readers to take pride in their own culture, but his emphasis on European approval simultaneously affirmed the image of Europe as superior.

Constructions of Britain as benevolent and enlightened, and conferring the benefits of Empire, were bolstered by depictions of Britain as morally responsible. In an article comparing the treatment meted out by various “white overlords”, Britain was

²²⁶ Ibid., 11.

²²⁷ Ibid., 11.

²²⁸ Ibid., 11.

deemed “the most tolerable” because it possessed, “as it were, a living conscience.”²²⁹ While the comments were brief, they expressed to *Wasu*’s readers the sense that they had a basis for appeal when they felt wronged because Britain’s actions were morally guided. In this way, *Wasu* portrayed Britain as a responsible ruler with whom colonial subjects could reason. The British sense of right and wrong was also featured in an editorial entitled, “Trust B.P.O.”²³⁰ This article on British public opinion, explained that, despite being re-elected in November 1935 on a pledge to uphold the League of Nations and the principle of collective security, Prime Minister Baldwin’s duplicity was amply demonstrated by the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan.²³¹ Revelations about the plan produced an outcry in Britain and “the government had to bow to public opinion.”²³² While the British Government’s actions were suspect, editor Laminah Sankoh concluded that the British people demonstrated that they were “primarily concerned” with peace and that they believed this goal “could not be obtained except by justice and fair play in national and international relations.”²³³ According to Sankoh, British citizens were “becoming more and more enlightened and moral” which suggested that colonial subjects, as far as their

²²⁹ Ladipo Solanke, “Correspondence: W.A.S.U. Third Special Divine Service on Behalf of Ethiopia,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.4, October 1935: 67. Solanke was summarizing a lecture given by Mr. David E. Headley at the W.A.S.U.’s hostel.

²³⁰ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: Trust B.P.O.,” *Wasu* vol. 5, no.1, May 1936: 2-3.

²³¹ The Laval-Hoare Peace Plan was the result of negotiations between England Foreign Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare and French Prime Minister Pierre Laval regarding the Italian-Ethiopia crisis. It was the opinion of many that the plan contravened the principles of collective security by determining that “roughly two-thirds of Ethiopia would pass to Italian control, some by outright cession, some as a ‘zone of exclusive economic rights’; Ethiopia was to get a corridor to the sea, but would be denied the right to build a railway line within it.” See Daniel Waley, *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinian War, 1935-6* (London; Maurice Temple Smith, 1975), 48.

²³² Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: Trust B.P.O.,” *Wasu* vol. 5, no.1, May 1936: 3. Waley addresses the question of whether or not it was public outrage that brought the Hoare-Laval Peace Plan down. He concludes that, in fact, public opinion was afforded too much credit because British Members of Parliament were already opposed to the plan and, in some cases, embellished the number of protest letters they were receiving about the issue. See Waley, 86.

²³³ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: Trust B.P.O.,” *Wasu* Vol. 5, no.1, May 1936: 3.

well-being was concerned, could “appeal to” and “trust” the British public.²³⁴ *Wasu*’s depiction of Britons as both reasonable and trustworthy communicated a sense of confidence that, even if colonial subjects were suspicious of the British government, their interests would be safeguarded by the court of British public opinion.

Taken together *Wasu*’s positive portrayals of Empire conveyed the sense that the colonies derived many benefits from Britain’s guidance. Indeed, Laminah Sankoh wrote that those at the West African Students’ Union were “second to none in [their] gratitude to the white man for what he has done and is doing for [their] race.”²³⁵ Flattering depictions of Britain made Empire palatable to *Wasu*’s readers, clearly laying out what was to be gained by abiding in the family a bit longer. Furthermore, positive representations of Britain and Western Civilization highlighted characteristics *Wasu* wished the colonies would adopt. The journal’s depictions of Britain’s superior knowledge and ability to govern based on principles of reason and goodness were, therefore, reminders to *Wasu*’s readers that they needed to employ similar practices.

Praise for empire in *Wasu*’s articles, however, was not unqualified. While Britain’s leadership was mostly portrayed positively, articles conveyed a sense that West African independence was on the minds of *Wasu*’s authors. For instance, in his editorial comments, Laminah Sankoh told his readers that they must be vigilant: “unless our race is to prove itself to be the nitwit of humanity, the time has come when it must emerge

²³⁴ Ibid., 3.

²³⁵ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: The Ground of Optimism,” *Wasu* vol.6, no.1, January 1937: 2. A similar sense of gratitude is echoed by the “Empire Co-operation Advocate” in *Wasu*’s “Letters to the Editor”: “Great Britain is very dear to us in West Africa because the majority of those whom she has yet sent to us have done excellent work to promote the welfare of its native people.” See *Wasu*, vol.6, no.3, Christmas number 1937: 63.

from its stage of dependence to one of self-help.”²³⁶ Thus, while there was a qualified acknowledgement of European superiority there was also the assertion that Africans were capable of exercising the same degree of self-determination. Indeed, Sankoh claimed that “the peoples of Africa are certainly near to those of Europe” since both blacks and whites “participate or share a common human nature.”²³⁷ He concluded that “the black man is the white man painted black, and the white man is the black man painted white”, a position that underscored how, regardless of race, people were more alike than they were different.²³⁸

In order to demonstrate that Africans and Europeans were similar, authors in *Wasu* had to downplay any sense that Europeans were inherently superior. By constructing images of Western civilization that highlighted its deficiencies *Wasu*'s authors showed that European civilization was imperfect and needed improvement. Such a depiction encouraged the readers of *Wasu* to develop their own sense of civilization, one which could improve upon the deficiencies of Europe. Indeed, the editor of *Wasu* explained that since the African came “last in the development of the races, he stands on the shoulders of the white man and should be able to see further than his predecessors.”²³⁹ It was, therefore, the African's task “to take the best which the West has to offer and to carry the torch of civilization a step further.”²⁴⁰

Those negative portrayals of Western civilization appearing in *Wasu* pointed up a gulf between Europe's actions and its role as a bearer of civilization. For instance, *Wasu*

²³⁶ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: The Ground of Optimism,” *Wasu* vol.6, no.1, January 1937: 2.

²³⁷ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: WASU-,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.5, November 1935: 69.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

²³⁹ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: Warning,” *Wasu*, vol.4, no.5, November 1935: 72.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

featured an article about the Belgian Congo, naming it as the last place “in the civilized world where slavery exists.”²⁴¹ In another article entitled “Reflections on the Wilberforce Centenary”, Modjaben Dowuna launched a similar criticism by highlighting Western civilization’s inability to make a substantial difference in the lives of colonial peoples.²⁴² Dowuna noted that blacks’ status “in any part where he has come into contact with the ‘superior’ civilization of the West, is far from being satisfactory.”²⁴³ Dowuna’s depiction of Western civilization questioned whether Europe warranted its superior status. Specifically Dowuna saw problems in “the aggressive and intolerant attitude of the adherents to the post-war political philosophies of Europe” and “the already existing aggressive materialism of some industrialists.”²⁴⁴ Portrayals of European civilization as aggressive, intolerant and materialistic allowed Dowuna to emphasize that the West’s standard of civilization was too low. Elaborating further, Dowuna focused in on the League of Nations Commission’s definition of slavery and claimed it was ill suited to halting the practice because the “modern ‘civilized’ man is far too astute to act in so crude a way, and knows better ways of encompassing his object.”²⁴⁵ Western civilization may have abolished iron chains that turned men and women into chattel but, according to Dowuna’s depiction, it still condoned a brand of exploitation that mirrored slavery, undermining any image of ‘civilized’ behavior.

²⁴¹ J.T. Sackeyfio and O. Moore “News and Notes: West African British Subjects in Belgian Congo” *Wasu*, vol.2, no.1 January 1933: 22. The publication does not credit Sackeyfio and Moore specifically, but “News and Notes” was a section written by *Wasu*’s editor. January 1933’s issue lists its editor as “sub-judice” and provides Sackeyfio and Moore as its “Sub-Editors.”

²⁴² Modjaben Dowuna, “Reflections on the Wilberforce Centenary,” *Wasu*, vol.3, no.1 March 1934: 26-27.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

Images of Europe as morally decadent were prominent in those articles in *Wasu* critical of Western civilization. For example, in “Towards a Philosophy of Life”, Laminah Sankoh declared that, “individuals as well as nations stand or fall in so far as they behave rationally and morally or contrariwise.”²⁴⁶ Sankoh believed that history contained numerous examples of “individuals and nations who, having obeyed this fundamental law up to a point, became intoxicated with their achievements and set about to behave irrationally and immorally.”²⁴⁷ The economic depression of the 1930s provided Sankoh with a perfect example to illustrate his argument: “the crisis which has overtaken the so-called civilized nations [he wrote] is not due to economics”, but caused by “the prostitution of reason and goodness.”²⁴⁸ Sankoh portrayed the civilized states as behaving “irrationally” and “immorally”, straying from the characteristics that had fueled their earlier progress. His choice of words was significant. He could have written that “the so-called civilized nations” abandoned or sold their reason and goodness, but instead, by employing the term “prostitution” Sankoh underscored western civilization’s moral corruption.²⁴⁹ Indeed, Sankoh’s word choice invited *Wasu*’s readers to consider whether they really wished to imitate such a civilization. Sankoh’s article also laid bare what could be done to improve Western civilization, reminding *Wasu*’s readers that reason and goodness were central to any civilization’s long-term success.

²⁴⁶ Laminah Sankoh, “Towards a Philosophy of Life,” *Wasu*, vol.4, no.2, August 1935: 27. In the article Sankoh wrote that reason and goodness “set one man above the other, or one nation above another” and that it was “the willingness to live in accordance with the dictates of reason that man [had] advanced to his present position” in the world.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27. While Sankoh does not explicitly identify the crisis, it is more than likely he was referring to the world economic depression.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

Besides pointing to the Great Depression, *Wasu*'s authors also drew attention to other contemporary events to construct images of an ailing Western civilization. In one editorial note, Laminah Sankoh used the Italo-Ethiopian crisis to express his dissatisfaction with the precedent the West was setting.²⁵⁰ He found that although many "think that to be civilized after the fashion of the West is the goal to which we should strive" there was "no escaping the fact that the evils enumerated ... are part and parcel of Western Civilization."²⁵¹ As he had done in "Towards A Philosophy of Life", Sankoh depicted Western civilization as corrupt and, consequently, as unworthy of an African's blind devotion. Sankoh's portrayals underscored that Africans needed to be alert and to observe the world around them in order to discern which pieces of Western civilization they should adopt, and which pieces they should reject. Indeed, in 1936, Sankoh felt that "believers in the superiority of the white man must be at loss" because of the "fratricidal war in Spain", the "verbal duel between Russia and Germany", the "ruthless method of Italian pacification" and, lastly, "the feverish haste with which preparation [was] being made for the next" world war.²⁵² Sankoh argued that, compared to "the superior white man [Africans] are a bad runner-up in downright wickedness", and that "tribal wars, for which ostensibly the white man went to African to put down, are mere child's play to the so-called Great War and forthcoming race suicide."²⁵³ Sankoh observed that Africa was deemed backward for squabbles that did not even compare to the wars of "the white

²⁵⁰ Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: Warning," *Wasu*, vol.4, no.5, November 1935: 72. The Italo-Ethiopian crisis will be discussed in chapter three, including Sankoh's "Editorial Notes" on the subject. For the moment, I wish to examine Sankoh's general critique of civilization that followed two specific notes on Ethiopia entitled, "The Massacre of the Ethiopians" and "Why Italy."

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 72. Specifically the evils being enumerated were aggression and immorality that condoned an attack by one Christian nation on another. See chapter three for more information.

²⁵² Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: The Superiority of the White Man," *Wasu*, vol.5, Christmas number 1936: 50.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 50.

man.” Reversing criticism levied against Africans and with some irony, Sankoh wrote that, “it is time the African thinks seriously of sending missionaries to Europe, not to Christianize the natives ... but to humanize them.”²⁵⁴ Sankoh could see the possibility of mutual benefit: “the African needs the help of the white man in order to bring out the best that is in him, so the white man needs the help of the African for the same purpose.”²⁵⁵ Such an argument highlighted Sankoh’s position that Africans had a role to play in the world, through their capacity to contribute to civilization in a manner that “humanized” Europe. Other writers in *Wasu* also criticized the West’s aggression and the failure of European nations to remain civilized in their international affairs. For example, Asuguo Okon argued that “a nation which is deterred from dropping bombs on the head of its neighbour only for fear of reprisals, cannot be deemed to be cultured, however highly civilized it may be.”²⁵⁶ *Wasu*’s depictions of Western civilization, therefore, called European superiority into question in a manner that demonstrated the opportunity Africans had to correct the ills of the “civilized”²⁵⁷ world and to make a valuable contribution on the international stage.

Depictions of Western civilization’s deficiencies also created a space for *Wasu*’s authors to be critical of Britain by shifting the focus of their readers from the West as a

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 51.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 51.

²⁵⁶ Asuguo Okon, “Gleanings from my Notebook,” *Wasu* vol.6, no.2, Coronation number, 1937: 34. Okon argued that the issue was one of culture, not civilization. He explained the difference between the two writing that “culture is what we are, and our civilization is what we use.” Despite defining civilization differently than Sankoh, Okon made a similar argument about the West’s aggressiveness tarnishing its claim to superiority over Africans.

²⁵⁷ In “Pitfalls of Civilization,” Capt. E.J. Langford Garstin concluded that it would be “another world war which might exterminate what to-day passes for civilization.” Specifically, Garstin contemplated the fate of Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Persia and Rome to conclude that it was “not unfair to deduce that all civilizations bear in themselves the germ of their own decay.” Thus, Garstin, too, saw the West’s aggression as planting the seeds for its own destruction. See Capt. E.J. Langford Garstin, “Pitfalls of Civilization,” *Wasu*, vol.6, no.3 Christmas Number 1937: 55.

whole to the behaviour of a single state. Cobina Kessie's article in *Wasu's* April-June 1933 issue was a case in point.²⁵⁸ Kessie reported on the injustice of a "legal lynching" in the United States and argued that a "similar cankerworm is also to be found in the civilization of every other Power of the present so-called civilized world."²⁵⁹ To prove his point, Kessie highlighted incidents of racism in Britain, noting that both Stanley Baldwin and Lloyd George made "use of the term 'niggers'" when referring to blacks.²⁶⁰ Kessie declared that such "sort of thing will not do in an Empire like this which embraces citizens of all shades, colours and creeds."²⁶¹ Just as authors had portrayed the West as uncivilized, Kessie depicted Britain as a hypocrite for not living up to its word. Nancy Cunard²⁶² reinforced this image of Britain at the end of an article entitled, "Is the Attitude of France Towards Blacks a Truly Liberal One."²⁶³ She wrote that "the colonial is

²⁵⁸ Cobina Kessie, "News and Notes: a Cankerworm in the Whiteman's Civilization," *Wasu* vol.2, no.2, April-June 1933: 8-9.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 9. The legal lynching being referred to was the infamous Scottsboro Trial where nine African-Americans were convicted of sexually assaulting two white woman on a train.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 9. A text search of London's *The Times'* digital archive between 1 January 1933 and December 1937 gives an indication of how prevalent the word "nigger" was in the 1930s. The phrase generates 624 hits in *The Times'* pages (this includes 280 hits in advertising, 7 in the editorial and commentary section, 186 in features, 98 in news and 43 in the people section). The high frequency of the phrase in *The Times* is largely due to "nigger" being a descriptor for the colour brown, thus it appears whenever a suit, stocking or dress is described.

²⁶¹ Cobina Kessie, "News and Notes: a Cankerworm in the Whiteman's Civilization," *Wasu* vol.2, no.2, April-June 1933: 9. Kessie hoped such incidents were "slips of the tongue" because he noted that colonial subjects "have no cause as yet either to kick or to show the tiger's teeth." That is to say, the colonies would be happy under the tutelage of the British as long as they were treated with fairness and justice.

²⁶² Nancy Cunard was a prominent journalist and activist. *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* writes that she was "a controversial advocate for black emancipation in the United States and Africa." In 1934 she published the *Negro Anthology*, an 855 page collection of essays, polemics and poetry from 150 contributors from Britain, France and America "designed to highlight the vibrancy of the black world and to lobby for black freedom." Much of Cunard's work showed "a concern for black and left-wing causes. She reported from Geneva on the League of Nations debates on Abyssinia, and in the late 1930s she worked in Spain, covering the Civil War for the Associated Negro Press, the *Manchester Guardian*, and Sylvia Pankhurst's *New Times and Ethiopian News*." See Jonathan Morley, "Cunard, Nancy" in *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* ed. David Dabydeen, John Gilmore and Cecily Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 125-126.

²⁶³ "Raymond Michelet", "Is the Attitude of France Towards Blacks a Truly Liberal One?" *Wasu*, vol.2, no.2, April-June 1933: 22-26. The author's name appeared in quotations in the journal's pages. It is probable that Nancy Cunard actually authored the article and used Raymond Michelet as a pseudonym.

absolutely set on maintaining every form of racial-social inferiority, while putting up a front of 'liberal compassion.'²⁶⁴ Cunard portrayed the British Empire as a hypocrite that hid its maliciousness towards blacks under the guise of caring for them. That Britain's actions failed to match its rhetoric was a common theme in *Wasu*, especially when it came to articles discussing the colonies' relationship to the Empire.

Articles in *Wasu*, not infrequently, portrayed Britain as a hypocritical and, untrustworthy. In an editorial note about Britain's decision to recognize the "Kumasihene" as the King of Ashanti in British West Africa, Cobina Kessie discussed the Empire's reputation for reneging on its promises.²⁶⁵ The saying that "the 'Briton is true to his word' [he commented scathingly] is nothing more than a humorous expression" amongst West Africans.²⁶⁶ With respect to the King of Ashanti, however, Kessie congratulated Britain "for keeping her promise."²⁶⁷ But while Kessie's editorial note was brief, it was telling. *Wasu's* readers were left in no doubt about the rarity of having an undertaking kept. The Empire's honour was a joke to West Africans, because they had become accustomed to the disparities between Britain's words and deeds. Thus, Kessie's article put *Wasu's* readers on notice to be wary of Britain. This image was reinforced in subsequent issues of the journal, which shone more light on the contradictions between British policies and their implementation in the colonies.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 25.

²⁶⁵ Cobina Kessie, "Editorial Notes: Asantihene," *Wasu* vol.2, no.2, April-June 1933: 3-4.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 3.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.

In “‘Nigger’ Hunting in America and Africa”, it was Britain’s concept of justice that drew the journal’s disapproval.²⁶⁸ In the article, Cobina Kessie expressed his disgust with lynchings in America and with the U.S. President, Franklin Roosevelt, who had merely condemned the practice orally and had not taken any further action on the issue.²⁶⁹ Kessie, while acknowledging that “‘Nigger’ Hunting” in continental Africa had at least “theoretically ceased under the British, French and Belgian Empires”, brought attention to an incident in which 50 “helpless women” were shot in Nigeria for “carrying on a kind of suffragette movement.”²⁷⁰ In another event, this time in the Gold Coast, a Krooman was shot by a Briton named Acland.²⁷¹ Kessie, remarked that Acland “thought the black man’s skin was bullet proof” and noted how “for this ‘justified’ reason he was

²⁶⁸ Cobina Kessie, “Editorial Notes: ‘Nigger’ Hunting in America and Africa,” *Wasu* vol. 3, no.1, March, 1934: 4-5.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4. The women uprising in Nigeria was known as the “women’s war” and by the British government as the “Aba uprising.” Cindy Ibechem discusses the event in her doctoral dissertation, “When Women Leave the Village: An Evaluation of Women’s Power and Their Protest Actions in Ofodim, Umuneke, Imo State, Nigeria.” Ibechem describes the crisis as an anti-colonial outcry “primarily orchestrated by Igbo and some Ibibio women protesting the threat of taxation.” The women had been targeting Warrant chiefs, Native courts and European factories to express their dissatisfaction. However, when they surrounded a European factory in Aba, British authorities interpreted their actions as a threat and sent in troops to break up the protest. The women, only armed, with sticks, were fired upon and, in retaliation, proceeded to loot the factory. The British administration responded by “firing machine guns at the protesting women in Utu, Etim, Ekpo, Abak and Opobo. Thirty-two women were killed in Opobo, while 31 were wounded. In Abak, 3 women were killed, while in Utu Etim Ekpo 18 were killed and 19 wounded.” British soldiers suffered no casualties. See Cindy Ibechem, “When Women Leave the Village: An Evaluation of Women’s Power and Their Protest Actions in Ofodim, Umuneke, Imo State, Nigeria,” (PhD diss., Albany, State University of New York, 2000), 88-93; Keisha N. Blain, “‘We Women Are Like Trees Which Bear Fruit’: A Critical Analysis of the 1929 Women’s War,” *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* 12, (2008): 29-41; There was also a British Commission of Inquiry into the disturbance. See “Despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the officer administering the government of Nigeria regarding the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the disturbances at Aba and other places in south-eastern Nigeria in November and December, 1929.” *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances at Aba and other places in South-Eastern Nigeria in November and December, 1929*, Cmd. 3784 (1931).

²⁷¹ Cobina Kessie, “Editorial Notes: ‘Nigger’ Hunting in America and Africa,” *Wasu* vol. 3, no.1, March, 1934: 4. Kessie wrote on other empires besides Britain in his article. Indeed, he wrote “in French Africa and Belgian Congo the tide of white brutality has not ebbed and news of murder continues to reach us from Morocco and Congo.”

committed for manslaughter and sentenced to nine (or twelve)” months of prison.²⁷²

Kessie’s examples drawn from Nigeria and the Gold Coast illustrated that, contrary to the expectations, “‘Nigger’ Hunting” along the lines of American lynchings, had not ceased in the British Empire. Indeed, Africans were not only being murdered, but were being denied justice when they became victims of crime. In short, Kessie portrayed British justice as a travesty.

Further examples of Cobina Kessie’s depictions of British hypocrisy also appeared in the March 1934 issue of *Wasu*. He wrote about the contradiction of honouring Africans at the King’s birthday celebration, but not removing the barriers of discrimination that made their lives within the Empire difficult.²⁷³ “[W]ho could contend that any of these honoured knights, I.S.O.’s and O.B.E.’s [Kessie wrote with some bitterness] could be thrown out of fashionable hotels and restaurants in London” and added, who could “doubt that an African official though honoured and has all the necessary qualifications for promotion would in nine cases out of ten be denied that right?”²⁷⁴ Kessie illuminated the Empire’s two-faced treatment of Africans, one that celebrated their contributions and simultaneously ensured their continued subjugation. Since “African and Indian blood have been shed to maintain the peace, power and pomp” of Britain, Kessie argued, “they should be given all facilities of life in England.”²⁷⁵ Kessie’s depictions of British injustices underscored the hypocrisy of denying Africans and Indians, the liberties and rights that their efforts in battle had gained for others. While

²⁷² Ibid., 4. Furthermore, Kessie was outraged that Acland was “at present housed in the European luxurious apartments of Sekondi jail and lives under the expenses of the victim’s people. British Justice!”

²⁷³ Cobina Kessie, “Editorial Notes: ‘Honoured’ Africans,” *Wasu*, vol.3, no.1, March 1934: 5-6.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 6.

Kessie portrayed the Empire as contradictory, he asserted that British colonies were determined to prevent colour from becoming “an economic, social and political bar, or a dichotomy into the free and the slave, rulers and ruled.”²⁷⁶ Thus, Kessie used *Wasu*’s pages to construct an image of British conservatism that, according to his view, still featured slaves and serfs.²⁷⁷ This image worked to inform *Wasu*’s readers of what they could expect while living under the banner of Empire.

Jomo Kenyatta²⁷⁸, the future first President of Kenya, also contributed to the image of Britain as a hypocrite in his article entitled “The Gold Rush in Kenya: Africans Sacrificed to Imperialist Greed”, which appeared in the March 1934 issue of *Wasu*.²⁷⁹ Kenyatta described British policy in Kenya as “robbery and oppression”; land was stolen from Africans “to make room for the gang of gold-diggers.”²⁸⁰ Kenyatta held that Britain looked to “undermine the minds of the African masses with hypocritical phrases”²⁸¹ and that in the presence of “glittering metal the British Imperialists could not face their so-called ‘word of honour’.”²⁸² Indeed, Britain’s actions showed that “their civilization is all in the interest of capitalist greed and imperialist exploitation.”²⁸³ Resembling earlier depictions of Britain as untrustworthy and conservative on matters of race, Kenyatta’s

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

²⁷⁸ Peter Fryer writes that Jomo Kenyatta was one of the “Pan-Africanist radicals active in Britain in the 1930s.” Kenyatta studied Anthropology at the London School of Economics where many of his essays served as the foundation for his book, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938). Born into a Kikuyu family, he became an official member of the Kikuyu Central Association in 1925. His political activism drew much attention from Britain’s Colonial Office. Fryer writes that the Colonial Office had a dossier on Kenyatta entitled “‘Jomo Kenyatta: Libellous statements made to the Workers’ Educational Association.’ It noted that he was making ‘mischievous allegations’ about British rule in Kenya.” Kenyatta returned to Kenya in 1946 and became the country’s first president in 1964. See Fryer, 339-341.

²⁷⁹ Jomo Kenyatta, “The Gold Rush in Kenya: Africans Sacrificed to Imperialist Greed,” *Wasu* vol. 3, no.1, March 1934: 20-23.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 20.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 20.

²⁸² Ibid., 21.

²⁸³ Ibid., 22.

image of Empire made it clear that in his view no Africans should, “have any faith in these imperialist hypocritical ‘promises’ which mean nothing.”²⁸⁴ Such critical images of Britain, therefore, demonstrated to *Wasu*’s readers that they could not trust the Empire, fostering more enthusiasm for the journal’s aim of West African independence.

It is important to note, however, that despite constructing negative images of Britain in *Wasu*’s pages, the journal’s authors were clear regarding the language of their criticisms. Laminah Sankoh explained that, “whenever we speak against the white man, the term should not be taken in its generic sense, but as referring to those of the white race who have not yet outgrown the idea of racial superiority.”²⁸⁵ The journal had a nuanced understanding of “the white man” that did not suggest the actions of a few persons should speak for the entire race. Such an approach allowed *Wasu* to criticize Britain without alienating Britons whose cooperation the West African Students’ Union needed to secure West African independence. In fact, Sankoh went on to compliment Britons, writing that, “the average Britisher, especially of the student class, no longer believes, as did his forebears, that it is his task to lay down the law for the other fellow to obey or disobey at his own peril.”²⁸⁶ Accordingly, Sankoh stated that if “the white man would lay aside his prejudice, the African will convince him” that his cause of equality and independence is just.²⁸⁷ Sankoh made it clear that the W.A.S.U. would cooperate with progressive elements of British society but, that it would no longer tolerate racial injustice.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸⁵ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: WASU,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.5, November 1935: 70.

²⁸⁶ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: WASU,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.2, August 1935: 17.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 17. Furthermore, Sankoh explained that “the liberal-minded will be in sympathy with our movement, while those who are still riding the high horse of national prestige will be made to realize the type of African they are now up against.”

Between 1933 and 1937 the contributors to *Wasu*'s pages constructed images of Britain, Europe and civilization that suited the political messages they wished the journal to relay to its readers. When authors wanted to underline what could be gained from Empire and what could be adopted by African states, portrayals of Britain were positive. Yet, when writers wished to promote West African independence and the need for self-determination, they depicted Britain as hypocritical and untrustworthy. Finally, the journal created images of Western civilization that highlighted its deficiencies in order to challenge the notion of European superiority and to illustrate where Africans could make a contribution to the civilization that surrounded them. *Wasu*'s pages, therefore, were a valuable space for its contributors to not only interpret the world but, also to actively construct it for their readers in order to further their own political aims.

The Keys

Unlike the West African Students' Union, the League of Coloured Peoples did not advocate self-determination for blacks in Britain. Instead, the League wanted to create a more inclusive British identity that did not discriminate on the basis of colour and that goal impacted its journal, *The Keys*. Besides reporting on League activities, *The Keys* devoted much space in its pages to Britain's colour bar²⁸⁸, reflecting the L.C.P.'s goal of having racism and discrimination erased from the Empire. The L.C.P. believed that once Britons knew about the colour bar that they would take action to stop it. Yet, while *The Keys* published on the colour bar, it simultaneously asserted its loyalty to Britain by advocating a principle of self-help, encouraging its readers to adopt British norms of

²⁸⁸ For more about Britain's colour bar and the League of Coloured Peoples' aims for its publication see chapter one, 36.

respectability. Indeed, the journal often asserted that blacks needed to prove themselves and demonstrate their worth to be accepted into British society: “there is no real obstacle to our achievement except ourselves” and “[a]s soon as we are worthy we will get where we want to get.”²⁸⁹ *The Keys*’ emphasis on respectability evidences what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham deems in her monograph, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, an “insistence upon blacks’ conformity to the dominant society’s norms of manners and morals.”²⁹⁰ Attention to respectability, therefore, made *The Keys*’ criticisms of Britain more palatable to its interracial readership because it safeguarded cherished British values.²⁹¹

While *The Keys* and *Wasu* differed in their political aspirations they, nevertheless, employed similar techniques to achieve their ends. Negative portrayals of Britons and the British Empire in the pages of *The Keys* brought the colour bar, and its ramifications, to its readers’ attention highlighting the challenges that stood in the way of racial equality. Meanwhile, images of Europe as diseased and corrupt worked to outline the opportunity

²⁸⁹ Harold A. Moody, “The President’s Message,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.3, January-March 1935: 46-47.

²⁹⁰ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), 187.

²⁹¹ Unfortunately, as Una Marson’s January-March 1935 editorial exemplifies, an emphasis on respectability also created contradictions in *The Keys*’ pages. Marson noted that for blacks, “a whole world lies before [them] to conquer” but proceeded to describe the world as a place “that would oppress and use [blacks] for their enrichment, a world that has freed the Negro but still looks upon his land as spoil and himself as chattel.” She added that “the standard of living for the average Negro must be raised to a civilized standard, the average white child’s educational facilities must be given to the Negro – the native in Kenya must not be forced to buy grass off land that once belonged to him.” Yet, despite her own examples of the injustices meted out to blacks, she wrote “we are under a democratic government and that government is acting as trustees for us until we can stand on our feet ... we must believe that they want the best for their wards...” Though she concluded by writing “since we know what ‘the best’ is we must not cease to strive until we get it”, Marson’s faith in Britain’s democracy and trusteeship seemed to ignore the fact that the evils enumerated earlier were all under the guardianship of Britain. Consequently she reinforced faith in empire, encouraging her readers onwards in an Empire proven to “oppress” blacks and view them as “chattel” unfit for “a civilized standard” of education. See Una Marson, “Editorial,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.3, January-March 1934.

blacks had to restore moral order in the world and, therefore, make a valuable contribution to civilization.

In an article commemorating the anti-slavery work of William Wilberforce²⁹², *The Keys* published excerpts from a speech given by League president, Dr. Harold Moody.²⁹³ Moody highlighted Wilberforce's accomplishments, but did not extend his praise to Britain as a whole. Instead, he argued that vestiges of slavery remained, particularly in an attitude that condoned one man's subjugation to another. To illustrate his point, Dr. Moody described the Englishman to his audience: "the Englishman is so proud of himself and of his achievements and has such a consciousness of race superiority that he will do and does do everything in his power to establish this fact."²⁹⁴ Moody explained that the Englishman reinforced his dominance by "the principle he adopted in the education of my people ... [which] was the principle of suppressing all that was noble and good in my race and expressing what a great race was his, how noble and how good."²⁹⁵

²⁹² William Wilberforce was a leading figure in the abolition movement that ended Britain's slave trade in 1807. Peter Fryer writes about the "comfortable and comforting myth" that the abolition of the slave trade was "the result of a dedicated crusade by the 'Saints', a group of middle- and upper-class Christian humanitarians, led by that Great Emancipator William Wilberforce." He notes that this myth was first challenged by "an obscure German economist", followed by C.L.R. James who felt that the "abolition was part of a world-wide historical process: a stage in the successive victories of the industrial capitalist class over the landed aristocracy." Meanwhile, Trinidadian Eric Williams wrote in his 1944 book, *Capitalism and Slavery*, that, "the British slave trade was abolished in order to curtail overproduction of sugar." See Fryer, 207-208.

²⁹³ Harold Moody quoted in Una Marson, "The Wilberforce Centenary Celebrations, Hull July 23rd-29th," *The Keys* vol.1, no.2, October 1933: 22-23, 34-35. In her article, Marson included large excerpts from Dr. Moody's speech including his comment that it was not the sins of blacks that created slavery, but those of whites: "Wilberforce's work was made essential ... mainly or entirely because of the sins, selfishness and short-sightedness of your own people - sins from which, as a race, you have not, even yet, altogether delivered yourself."

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23. Abe Desmore, in *The Keys*, also dealt with the notion that whites sought to impose their supremacy over blacks. The article entitled, "The Cape Coloured People Today", did not deal with the Englishman specifically but did deal with a dominion of the Empire, South Africa. Desmore wrote that blacks were made to feel that "they belong to a lower order of human beings" and noted that their ambition and initiative had been "sapped out of them" and that an inferiority complex had been "imposed upon them by white people." The image of South Africa's white population that emerged from Desmore's account of

Dr. Moody's speech portrayed the Englishman as dishonest because he used his "authority to suppress facts" about the world's black population and about his own role in slavery.²⁹⁶ According to Moody, distortions of the truth allowed the Englishman to project the notion that he "delivered" blacks from slavery when, in fact, he had played a prominent role in its practice. The Englishman's sense of superiority, therefore, rested on a lie and was a vestige of slavery that the Englishman had yet to acknowledge. Thus, while Dr. Moody celebrated Wilberforce's hard work and moral conviction, his portrayal of the Englishman showed that he still possessed the sins and selfishness that brought slavery into practice in the first place. In fact, English society showed little change in racial attitudes since the abolition of slavery.

Charles E. Collet, the editor of *The Keys*, reinforced Dr. Moody's depiction of Britons in an editorial piece entitled "Current Comment: Neighborhood or Brotherhood." Collet deemed an article which had appeared in the *Hibbert Journal*, to be "an insidious attack, on the principle of the *Equality* of man, whatever his 'Race'."²⁹⁷ Collet took issue with the assertion of the author, Watkin-Davies, that "there have been a few Africans who have been able to enjoy Plato or Shakespeare in their old age" and that this was a standard that blacks needed to "reach to be admitted to social intercourse with the white

blacks was one of ruthless commitment to retaining white supremacy. See Abe Desmore, "The Cape Coloured People Today," *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 78.

²⁹⁶ Una Marson, "The Wilberforce Centenary Celebrations, Hull July 23rd-29th," *The Keys*, vol.1, no.2, October 1933: 23.

²⁹⁷ Charles E. Collet, "Current Comment: Neighborhood or Brotherhood," *The Keys* vol.4, no.4, April-June 1937: 55. Emphasis in the original. According to Collet the article appeared in April's issue of the *Hibbert Journal*. At times *The Keys* reprinted articles that evidenced colour prejudice that could be found in Britain. April-June 1935's issue reprinted an article from, what editor George Brown called, "one of our more important London hospitals" where foreign students were described as having "polychromatic faces, broken English and strange odours." See George Brown, "University College Hospital Magazine. Editorial. January-February, 1935," *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 81.

man.”²⁹⁸ Collet attacked the depiction of the “white man” as culturally superior, writing, “as if the conversation of the average Englishman were *indications that he is cultured enough* to appreciate Plato or Shakespeare.”²⁹⁹ Collet’s commentary, especially through its use of italics portrayed “the average Englishman” as incapable of meeting Watkin-Davies’ standard for social intercourse and using Watkin-Davies’ own measure defined him as ‘uncultured.’ Pressing forward with Watkin-Davies’ logic regarding the prerequisites of “civilized intercourse”³⁰⁰ Collet wrote that “an Englishman should be able to understand and appreciate the Bhagavad-Gita, or the Upahishads, or the Chinese Classics” and Collet added that, “if we remain in Europe he should be able to appreciate Voltaire, or Gide or Proust or Bergson.”³⁰¹ Collet’s new standard for “civilized intercourse” did two things. First, it openly challenged an Englishman’s superiority by redefining how such a qualification should actually be measured. Collet’s list implied that the “average Englishman” was unfamiliar with books and authors that should be the barometer of “civilized intercourse.” Secondly, Collet’s list hinted at the breadth of his own intellectual and cultural understanding. While the reader cannot know if Collet had actually read the works or the authors he cited, his naming of them implied a familiarity that challenged Watkin-Davies’ critique that Africans were culturally inferior on its own terms.

Dr. Harold A. Moody and Charles E. Collet’s image of Britons as convinced of and committed to their own superiority, was a characterization George Brown extended

²⁹⁸ Charles E. Collet, “Current Comment: Neighborhood or Brotherhood,” *The Keys* vol.4, no.4, April-June 1937: 55.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 55. Emphasis in the original

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

to all of Europe in his April-June 1935 editorial.³⁰² Brown asserted that the injustices perpetrated against blacks showed how “white Europe” was dedicated to protecting racial inequality.³⁰³ After highlighting the League of Coloured Peoples’ accomplishments, Brown claimed that “the interests of Independent Negro states demanded attention” from the League.³⁰⁴ In particular Brown noted that the sovereignty of black states’ “cuts white Europe to the quick.”³⁰⁵ His brief but sharp comment implied that “white Europe” keenly and negatively felt the existence of black sovereign states. Brown’s editorial, however, was not finished. Referring to the LCP’s hope for interracial cooperation he wrote: “the plight of coloured peoples throughout the world calls for deep thought and action by honest men of all races.”³⁰⁶ The challenges to overcome were, however, immense:

when the political screw is not being turned still further, the economic shackle is cast. Where the colour bar is not enough to keep us down, lynch law comes into operation.³⁰⁷

While Brown did not explicitly state who was applying the “political screw” or fastening “the economic shackle”, his earlier reference to “white Europe” makes it safe to assume that either “white Europe”, or “whites” more generally, were the perpetrators of these injustices. Certainly Brown’s commentary contributed to the image of whites using all possible means to bolster their racial supremacy throughout the world. His general depiction of the white world was also unflattering. Brown’s use of the word

³⁰² George Brown, “Editorial,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 65-66.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 65. Brown specifically noted that the League had to intervene “time and again on behalf of colonial peoples, and to insist that existing rights be honoured.” One such example was its work with Britain’s coloured seamen who had “been discharged in British ports, and left to earn a meager living in the docks.”

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

“emancipation”, and his earlier use of “shackle”, conjured the image of slavery and implied, as Moody had done, that slavery’s political and economic vestiges remained. “[W]hite Europe” stood indicted for allowing the continuation of such a grave injustice and affront to humanity.³⁰⁸

Negative depictions of Britons and, more generally, “white Europe” in *The Keys* pointed to how many authors believed little had changed in people’s minds since the practice of slavery. Indeed, such images conveyed an important message to *The Keys*’ white readers: if they sincerely wished to make a positive contribution to race relations, they needed to examine their own attitudes, and reform those of their fellow whites, eradicating the mentality that deemed blacks as inherently inferior and, thus, fit for exploitation.

Negative images of Britons in *The Keys* were reinforced by unflattering depictions of the British Empire. Illustrations of Britain’s failure to meet expectations for justice and fairness took a variety of forms. The second issue of *The Keys* featured a poem entitled “Disillusionment” in which Sylvia Lowe expressed her sorrow over the Britain she encountered rather than the one she had imagined visiting.³⁰⁹ Lowe wrote of her “loyalty which is for ever England’s” and the pride that came from getting to “boast... ‘Britishers are we, proud Britishers’.”³¹⁰ Unfortunately, upon visiting Britain the tone of the poem changed and Lowe’s patriotism “fades away.”³¹¹ Lowe wrote of how “glad hearts turn

³⁰⁸ Chapter three, which concerns the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, discusses the implications of practicing slavery in the 1930s in more detail. Italy accused Ethiopia of allowing slavery to exist within its borders which was taken as example of that state’s barbarity and need of a civilizing influence.

³⁰⁹ Sylvia Lowe, “Disillusionment,” *The Keys* Vol.1, no.2, October 1933: 28.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

sad”, that “splendour dies” and that “pomp and state seems mockery.”³¹² Furthermore Lowe explained how “in all our several British Lands we know no difference in the quality of our allegiance tempered by our race” and yet, after visiting England “here we have learnt the difference, here we see that we are barred by colour in this land to which we gave so great a loyalty.”³¹³ Lowe’s poem called attention to the supreme disappointment some colonial subjects felt after encountering the discriminatory colour bar. Her words revealed racism’s detrimental effects on those who had once considered themselves “proud Britishers”; describing how their sense of loyalty had become one of alienation. As Lowe’s title “Disillusionment” proclaimed, Britain’s treatment of its black population fell far below expectation. “[T]he crass injustices of earth [wrote Lowe] abound no less in England of the just and free.”³¹⁴

Disappointment with the colour bar was echoed in Nyasilie Magxaka’s article “Colour Bar in South Africa”, a reflection on a journey from South Africa to England.³¹⁵ “I thought that on leaving South Africa for England, [he wrote], I was at the same time leaving the infamous colour bar behind and was coming to the paradise of freedom. Since my arrival here I have been quite disillusioned on this point.”³¹⁶ Noting how he had been “refused admission” to hotels, Magxaka expressed the same sense of let down with England as Sylvia Lowe: his image of England as a “paradise of freedom” was dashed by the treatment he received. Many in South Africa had thought the colour bar was exclusive to their country and that “England, as the centre of the Empire, [was] the last place where

³¹² Ibid., 28.

³¹³ Ibid., 28.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 28.

³¹⁵ Nyasilie Magxaka, “Colour Bar in South Africa,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.1, July-September 1934: 13, 19.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

it would be tolerated.”³¹⁷ His visit had shown him, however, that “the treatment of the coloured peoples in London almost forces one to believe that colour bar is the policy of the British Empire.”³¹⁸ He was not alone. In an article reprinted from the *News Chronicle*, Una Marson also wrote about how blacks in England are met “with a ‘subtle prejudice’.”³¹⁹ She specifically noted how one woman, coming to England to be a nurse, was turned down by the 28 hospitals to which she had applied. She concluded, “in England, though the people will never say what they feel about us, you come up against incidents which hurt you so much that you cannot talk about them.”³²⁰ Marson, like Magxaka, gave a sense of how painful the colour bar was and how damaging it was to perceptions of Britain.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 13.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 13. Magxaka’s image of England was damning but, in line with *The Keys*’ faith in Britain, he did not attack the legitimacy of British colonial rule. Magxaka warned of an inevitable judgment day, but his stern warning was tempered by admitting the need for colonial rule. Magxaka ended his article with an appeal: “we appeal to the sense of justice and fair play of the British peoples for a better chance to make our contribution to civilization and world progress.” Rev. Jas A. Blake’s article, entitled “A Peep at Ourselves,” also contained criticisms of Britain and simultaneous endorsements of the legitimacy of its rule over the colonies: “the coloured people of the world are in a state of uneasy dissatisfaction ... having been aroused to a condition of race-consciousness, they are no longer satisfied with the treatment meted out to them by their ‘older brothers’.” Blake explained that “the scales of social justice need re-adjusting in order that they may be able to consider their ‘older brothers’ truly honourable, and they themselves as obtaining a square deal.” Blake asserted that blacks were being treated unjustly, arousing dissatisfaction and tarnishing the image of “their ‘older brothers’” as honourable. Yet, the way Blake constructed his criticism acknowledged Britain’s (or Europe’s) position as an elder and thus endowed Britain (or Europe) with the authority to look after his little brother or sister. Thus, while asking that Britain (or Europe) reform its colonial policies, Blake nevertheless legitimized their position of authority. See Rev. Jas A. Blake, “A Peep at Ourselves,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 36.

³¹⁹ Una Marson, “The Colour Bar in England,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.1, July-September 1934: 17.

³²⁰ Ibid., 17. Marson’s article also compared racism in Britain to racism in the United States. She wrote that, “in America they tell you frankly where you are not wanted by means of big signs, and they don’t try to hide their feelings”, intimating that she preferred the overt racism of the U.S. to the hypocritical racism of Britain. Immediately following Marson’s article was another piece copied from the *News Chronicle* epitomizing the discrimination she referred to entitled, “Coloured Nurses: no bar – but no jobs in the wards.” See Una Marson, “The Colour Bar in England,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.1, July-September 1934: 17. Another excerpt from the *News Chronicle*, featuring commentary from Una Marson appeared in *The Keys* two years later. This time, the excerpt was short, quoting Marson’s assertion that “spiritual and mental lynchings are just as bad as physical lynchings.” Marson’s words conveyed a sense of how painful Britain’s colour bar was for those who had to endure it. Any British feeling of moral superiority predicated on the fact that they did not lynch blacks was meaningless since there was still great mental and spiritual suffering in evidence. See Una Marson, “Here and There,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.4, April-June 1936: 70.

News from the Empire's colonies and dominions in *The Keys* reinforced portrayals of Britain as insincere in its concern for its black population, amplifying a current of disillusionment already prominent in the publication. For instance, J.B. Danquah³²¹ in his article "The Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation. A Gesture and Lesson"³²², criticized the Empire for dampening the spirit of democracy in the colonies: "there used to be a tradition in the Colonial Office [he wrote] that the British Colonies were nurseries of democracy", a system the colonies endorsed "believing that when the time came Britain would not hesitate to concede what was due."³²³ According to Danquah, the old Colonial Office understood the principle of what Nyasilie Magxaka had described, namely that: "white people must eventually realize they are our guardians and as trustees they will one day have to account for their stewardship."³²⁴ However, Danquah went on to explain that confidence in the Empire was now being eroded by a "greater tightening of Imperial

³²¹ Joseph Boakye Danquah (1895-1965) was a Ghana born lawyer, politician and one of the founding members of the W.A.S.U. In 1928 he published two books, *Cases in Akan Law and Akan Laws and Customs*, based on his time as first secretary and chief clerk and registrar of the native court in Akyem's capital in 1916. In 1921 Danquah headed to Britain and studied law and philosophy at the University College in London. He graduated in 1927 with a bachelor of arts, a bachelor of laws, a doctor of philosophy and had been called to the bar. In 1927 he returned to the Gold Coast and founded his own legal practice and the newspaper, the *Daily Times of West Africa*. In 1934 Danquah returned to Britain as the secretary to a deputation of chiefs and intellectuals petitioning the secretary state for the colonies regarding the Sedition Bill. Danquah returned to Accra in 1936 and formed the United Gold Coast Convention in August 1937, which was "[t]he first modern nationalist party in the country's history." Danquah died in 1965. See Richard Rathbone, "Danquah, Joseph Boakye (1895-1965)," In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Brian Harrison and H.C.G. Matthew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) – doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/32708 (accessed May 25, 2012).

³²² J.B. Danquah, "The Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation. A Gesture and Lesson," *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 23-24, 26. Two years later Samuel R. Wood wrote that the Gold Coast' colonial government was "a species of autocracy and dictatorship inconsistent with the Constitutional relations between the British Crown and the people" and asked for "... a complete reorganization of the Colonial system." Wood expressed his wish for a return "... to the days when the ideal of Colonial rule was not the wanton, arrogant or unscrupulous exercise of force, and the imposition of harsh and unjust laws but fair play, justice, freedom and an ungrudging recognition of the rights of Natives." See Samuel R. Wood, "The Gold Coast Deputation: its Message to the British and the African," *The Keys*, vol. 3, no. 3, January-February 1936: 35, 41-42.

³²³ J.B. Danquah, "The Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation. A Gesture and Lesson," *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 23.

³²⁴ Nyasilie Magxaka, "Colour Bar in South Africa," *The Keys* vol.2, no.1, July-September 1934: 19.

control over the Colonies” where, “democratic development in the colonies [was] not to expand forward; it [was] to contract backwards.”³²⁵ Danquah illuminated a disconcerting policy shift. The colonies “had lived content” with the understanding that British rule was nursing them toward democracy, but now Britain’s regressive policies contravened such an agreement, intimating that colonial dissatisfaction would surely follow.³²⁶ While the shift in policy was rooted in a wish to tighten control over its colonies, Danquah implied that Britain was actually sowing the seeds of destruction by fostering resentment. Danquah’s negative depiction of British colonial rule pointed to a signal change in the Colonial Office; once “tolerant of reforms, indulgent of local opinion, willing to aid in the growth of English democratic tradition throughout the far flung empire” it was now actually “dead.”³²⁷ Danquah’s portrayal of the Colonial Office warned *The Keys*’ readers that the era of a benevolent empire was over. Contrasting with his generous assessment of what the Colonial Office used to be was the none too subtle characterization of what the Colonial Office was at present: intolerant of change, ignorant of local opinion and unwilling to aid in the growth of democracy in the colonies, a powerful message to anyone who might believe that coloured people would achieve equality in the British Empire.

Danquah’s image of Britain’s colonial policy changing for the worst was similarly reflected in *The Keys*’ articles on the West Indies and Rhodesia.³²⁸ Editor W. Arthur

³²⁵ J.B. Danquah, “The Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation. A Gesture and Lesson,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 23, 24.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23, 24.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

³²⁸ Articles concerned with Britain’s treatment of its subjects did not just focus on the colonies, but included the dominions as well. As Magxaka’s article showed, South Africa drew the journal’s attention as did Australia and its treatment of its aborigines. Mrs. M.M. Bennett published on Australia in *The Keys*, asking the League of Nations to investigate “conditions that are a blot on humanity” and asked Britain to

Lewis wrote that labourers in St. Kitts, while trying to persuade people to join their strike, “were fired upon as rioters, some killed, others wounded, and several arrested.”³²⁹

Furthermore, he added that the same “treatment was meted out to the Africans in Southern Rhodesia who dared to strike in the mines.”³³⁰ Lewis made a point of distinguishing the labourers’ actions from those of rioters, underscoring the cruelty of the government’s response to the workers’ right to self-expression.³³¹ By linking the treatment of the strikers of St. Kitts to that of the strikers in Rhodesia, Lewis demonstrated that the use of force was not an aberration. In fact, Lewis’ explicit expose

stop “the monstrous injustice which must inevitably bring great disaster if condonation and willfull ignorance continue.” Besides an indictment of Britain for turning its back and allowing injustices in Australia to take place, Bennett also charged “the Commonwealth Government” for failing to keep “proper records of native and mixed trials including even criminal cases when natives are tried for their lives.” She explained that, “these omissions are calculated to prejudice the survival of the native race and to abet officials and settlers in their policy of spoliation, oppression and extermination.” Bennett’s article tied Britain to the unequal and unfair treatment of Australia’s aborigines in a manner that echoed Danquah’s depiction of an undemocratic empire. Indeed, Britain was being associated with a policy of “spoliation, oppression and extermination” against natives, a linkage that did not correlate with an image of empire as a bastion of freedom, justice and fair play. See M.M. Bennett, “The Australian Aborigines,” *The Keys*, vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 77 and also, W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: The Australian Aborigines,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.1, July-September 1935: 2. For another article on injustices elsewhere on the British empire, see W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: Nyasaland,” *The Keys* vol.4, no.2, October-December 1936: 15-16.

³²⁹ W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: Labour in the Commonwealth,” *The Keys*, vol.3, no.1, July-September 1935: 3.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3. Lewis did mention that “a white Commission of Enquiry” was set up to investigate the case, but noted that the League of Coloured Peoples’ request that “at least one African should sit on the Commission” had received no response. Lewis’ designation of the Commission as “white” and the subsequent request for “at least one African” to be a part of the enquiry exemplified his and, undoubtedly the L.C.P.’s, skepticism that the enquiry would be free of racial bias.

³³¹ R.O. Thomas also wrote about the strikes in the West Indies and, like Lewis, criticized Britain’s actions. He discussed how strikes in St. Kitts, St. Vincent and St. Lucia were the consequence of Britain “consulting its own selfish interest” when placing a quota on Japanese goods since this was “a direct blow to the standard of living by the labourer, already hit by wage reductions and unemployment.” Of the quotas, Thomas wrote that the people’s “protests were ignored” creating a desperate situation where “the Colonial Office has the satisfaction of sending warships careering up and down the Caribbean in efforts to hide its own folly.” Thomas concluded that the crisis was “due entirely to the selfishness of the British Government” and, worse yet, that Britain was unaware that “economic distress cannot be cured by a display of warships, or that it cannot feed hungry laborers by shedding their blood.” Thomas’ article reinforced the image of an empire ruled by force and disinterested in the well-being of the peoples in its colonies. See R.O. Thomas, “Revolt in the West Indies,” *The Keys*, vol.3, no.3, January-March 1936: 37-38. For more on disturbances in the West Indies see Sahadeo Basdeo, “The ‘Radical’ Movement Towards Decolonization in the British Caribbean in the Thirties,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 22, no. 44 (1997): 127-146.

revealed that any image of the Empire as a liberator who “granted” freedom to Africans was a chimera. As the government’s response to the strikes suggested, no such freedom existed.

Southern Rhodesia appeared in *The Keys*’ “Current Comment” section again a few months later.³³² This time W. Arthur Lewis discussed how Southern Rhodesia proposed a law introducing a pass system similar to South Africa. He particularly took issue with the hypocrisy of British public opinion: “when Herr Hitler decided to confine the German Jews to the Ghetto, and to deprive them of political rights, Britons held up their hands in self-righteous horror; such things could never happen under the Union Jack.”³³³ With more than a hint of sarcasm, Lewis pointed to a disturbing blindness to a double standard: “we should have loved to agree with them, were we not informed on good authority, that both South Africa and Southern Rhodesia are parts of the British Empire.”³³⁴ Lewis ended his article by asking: “is it too much to hope that those who scorn Hitler and extol the Empire may be moved to fight on behalf of freedom and justice for the coloured peoples within its borders?”³³⁵ Lewis’ commentary clearly depicted Britain as hypocritical for condoning acts in its Empire that it criticized elsewhere. He challenged Britons’ sense of moral superiority that seemingly gave them confidence that injustices perpetrated in Germany could not happen in Britain when, in fact, they were.

³³²W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: Southern Rhodesia,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.4, April-June 1936: 44.

³³³W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: Southern Rhodesia,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.4, April-June 1936: 44. For another article on British public opinion, See Rev. Reginald Sorensen, “British Public Opinion,” *The Keys*, vol.5, no.1, July-September 1937:17.

³³³W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: Southern Rhodesia,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.4, April-June 1936: 44.

³³⁴Ibid., 44.

³³⁵Ibid., 44.

Images depicting the Empire's failures in Africa, notably, that of ridding the continent of 'barbarism', continued in the January-March 1936 issue of *The Keys*.³³⁶ After outlining an instance of racial discrimination against four West Indian students on a cruise ship, the S.S. Caribia, Lewis explained his view on why the world had empires.³³⁷ "[E]mpires" he claimed, "exist to compel coloured races to grow cheap rubber, cotton, sugar, etc., so that Europeans may have a high standard of living."³³⁸ For Lewis both Europeans and "the exploited race" were being deceived, an observation that put an onus on both parties to see through the lies that justified exploitation since "the man in the street in Europe is deliberately made to feel himself superior to the coloured persons – in school, in the press, on the films, in literature – and coloured prejudice is merely an expression of that feeling of superiority."³³⁹ Analogous to Dr. Moody's argument that feelings of superiority were ingrained in Britons and an obstacle to equality within the Empire, Lewis depicted racial prejudice as a consequence of a European culture saturated with the notion of its own dominance. Since empires were economically driven, Lewis wrote that "we can understand why prejudice is greatest at the scene of exploitation – the colonies." He also stated that "the most prejudiced countries are those whose citizens profit (or hope to profit) most by exploiting coloured labour – Britain, Italy, Germany,

³³⁶ W. Arthur Lewis, "Current Comment," *The Keys*, vol.3, no.3, January-March 1936: 29-30.

³³⁷ The four West Indian students were aboard the S.S. Caribia, a German boat, set for England where the students were to continue their studies. During the voyage they received an order from the ship captain asking that they not use the ship's swimming pool until after 5p.m. That way, the students would not be in the pool at the same time as the ship's white passengers. After arriving in England, Lewis explained that the students sought legal action, but they were informed that, if winning, they would receive "nominal damages." Meanwhile, if they lost they may have large costs to bear. With "no money to spend settling nice points of English law" the students decided to not pursue legal action. See W. Arthur Lewis, "Current Comment," *The Keys*, vol.3, no.3, January-March 1936: 29.

³³⁸ W. Arthur Lewis, "Current Comment" *The Keys*, vol.3, no.3, January-March 1936: 30.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

etc...³⁴⁰ This was scarcely flattering company, while the association of Britain³⁴¹ with such words as “exploitation”, “prejudice” and “profit”, laid bare Lewis’ conviction that economic motives lay at the root of injustices perpetrated in the colonies. Lewis’s depiction of empires was blunt. His observations suggested that equality for the world’s exploited races would necessitate reorganization of the world’s economy, a chimera since it was “on colour prejudice their bread and butter depend.”³⁴²

Lewis’ image of empires as more concerned with profits than justice and willing to exploit and oppress people for commodities and resources ran counter to the image projected by Britain’s colonial master narrative. But it was not an isolated image. Other portrayals in *The Keys* revealed the British Empire as increasingly unjust and duplicitous in its treatment of its black population. The extent of Britain’s racial discrimination, therefore, was made evident to *The Keys*’ readers, calling attention to the gulf between Britain’s reputation and its practices.

W. Arthur Lewis’ portrayal of empires was also a broader critique of Europe itself. Authors in *The Keys* used contemporary events to construct images of Europe as morally corrupt which, consequently, suggested a place where blacks could make a contribution to civilization through moral leadership.³⁴³ In “The President’s Message”,

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 30. Lewis elaborated on race prejudice in the colonies by noting that it was greatest where “the exploitation is greatest as in South Africa, Kenya and the southern states of America.” While the latter example was not a part of an empire, it nonetheless exemplified a linkage between economy and the oppression of blacks through segregation policies.

³⁴¹ In 1936 Italy was in the middle of its attack on Ethiopia, meanwhile Germany, which had lost its colonies in the First World War and its aftermath, was known to be no friend of the Africans. See chapter three for more.

³⁴² Ibid., 30.

³⁴³ The analysis of Europe and Western civilization, at times, took place from the vantage point of a pupil who had to discern what, from their mentor’s teaching, they wished to salvage and what they wished to discard. For instance, in an his editorial, David Tucker asked blacks coming to Britain to unite under the League of Coloured Peoples in order to “seek out how best to help the race.” Of Britain, he added that, “it is here we can learn from the failings of the world’s most advanced peoples, what is best for our own

Dr. Moody wrote that, “present happenings in neurotic Europe point to a redisturbance of Peace on Earth by another war.”³⁴⁴ He added that, “since the white man chooses to engage in inter-tribal warfare along highly scientific and diabolically efficient lines and to accelerate his decadence thereby, why should we share his ruin?”³⁴⁵ Dr. Moody was firmly of the view that a “vengeful brutality is decidedly beneath our principles and our social outlooks.”³⁴⁶ Dr. Moody saw Europe as unstable and headed inexorably towards “another” war. While subtle, the language used by Moody questioned “the white man’s” behaviour by leveling a criticism usually made against Africans, namely, that of engaging in “inter-tribal warfare.” In other words, Dr. Moody deftly reversed a gaze that had Europeans looking down on Africans. Africans, he believed, had an opportunity to practice a sort of moral superiority by avoiding Europe’s “vengeful brutality”, which was “beneath” blacks’ principles. Dr. Moody saw Europe set on a path of moral decline, a point he emphasized again just over a year later at the League of Coloured People’s annual conference.³⁴⁷

people.” Tucker depicted blacks as students learning from Britons and British society and emphasized that there were “failings” blacks could improve upon. Furthermore, his comments evidenced a perspective that posited blacks outside of “the world’s most advanced peoples”, which meant they were able to make critiques because they were not a part of the society they were studying. This assertion is particularly interesting when considering how the League of Coloured Peoples fought for black Britons to be included within the empire as regular citizens. For the West African Students’ Union, standing outside British society and learning from it, made sense because the Union wished to create a new civilization that was a synthesis of Europe’s and Africa’s best attributes. See David Tucker, “Editorial” *The Keys* vol.1 no.4 April-June 1934: 65-66. This issue of *The Keys* featured both an editor and assistant-editor, Una Marson. It was not stated specifically who wrote the issue’s editorial or whether it was a collaborative effort.

³⁴⁴Dr. Harold Moody, “The President’s Message,” *The Keys*, vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 67.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁴⁷ Dr. Moody wrote that the “task of building up a new Africa fell most appropriately on the young educated African.” His speech, the last of the 1936 annual conference, was said to apply “to all Africans whether they lived in Africa, America, the West Indies, or elsewhere” because “racial unity was essential.” While the speech was critical of Europe Moody also noted that “all was not well with African society” too and used the continent’s poor standard of education and the status of women as his evidence. Furthermore, he noted that Africa needed “to shed its superstitions and narrow conventions, and without losing its own soul, to absorb, on the other hand, the scientific technique of Europe.” Thus, analogous to commentary in

European society was proving itself to be diseased, and if Africa was to avoid the evils inherent in the social structure of Europe it was essential she should not indiscriminately adopt the institutions and customs of Europe.³⁴⁸

Here Dr. Moody's criticism went a step further by asserting that the continent's evils were "inherent in the social structure of Europe" and thus, an inescapable consequence of its society.³⁴⁹ By portraying European society as fundamentally flawed, Dr. Moody was inviting readers of *The Keys* to be critical of Europe, the home of the world's empires, so that its evils would not be reproduced. Dr. Moody's plea that Africa "should not indiscriminately adopt the institutions and customs of Europe", undermined any notion of Europe's innate superiority and placed a responsibility on Africans to develop their own, morally grounded, civilization.³⁵⁰

It was not just Dr. Moody who depicted Europe as diseased and who worried about its harmful example.³⁵¹ In an article entitled, "African Economic Problems", W. Arthur Lewis observed that "it is not industrialism that has diseased the soul of Europe, but the

Wasu's pages, Dr. Moody wanted Africans to blend the strengths of Europe with those of African society. See Dr. Harold Moody quoted in W. Arthur Lewis, "The Annual Conference: A Call to Young Africans," *The Keys* vol.4, no.1, July-September, 1936: 14.

³⁴⁸ Dr. Harold Moody quoted in W. Arthur Lewis, "The Annual Conference: A Call to Young Africans," *The Keys* vol.4, no.1, July-September, 1936: 14.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁵¹ In *The Keys*, anthropologist J.H. Driberg also relayed the message that Africans should be discerning when it came to adopting aspects of Western civilization. Driberg, in a lecture to the League of Coloured Peoples summarized by David Tucker, reported that "respect for the tribal system was being gradually lost", particularly with the "introduction of clothes, alcoholic drinks, prostitution, which was in itself alien to every tribal culture." Driberg, who studied in East Africa, asserted that European influence undermined the indigenous lifestyle because of the evils it had introduced. He continued in his assessment, observing that with "all the worst vices of Western Civilization, a village in East Africa to-day was not a sight of which the European had any reason to be proud." He concluded that Africans "should discover what is best in his own culture, and accept what is best in Western Civilization and adapt it to build up a culture that would be unlike that of his forefathers and also unlike Western civilization." See J.H. Driberg quoted in David Tucker, "Reports of League Functions: Lecture by Mr. J.H. Driberg," *The Keys*, vol.1, no.3, January 1934: 51, 61-62.

absence of social controls.”³⁵² Diagnosing Europe’s disease was important for Lewis because he wished to chart a path forward for Africa’s industry without replicating Europe’s mistakes. Lewis pointed out that “the prime object in developing the wealth of Africa should be the increased welfare of Africans”, although that was, “not the purpose for which Europeans went to Africa.”³⁵³ Europe’s sickness was not caused by its industry but, instead, by its greed and desire to enhance its wealth and prestige. To further emphasize his point, Lewis noted how “vast wealth is being poured out in dividends, leaving the country impoverished, and the people with little to show for their labour.”³⁵⁴ Underpinning Lewis’s criticism was an image of Europe exploiting Africans. One of the key questions for Africans was how best to move forward without recreating Europe’s moral decadence.³⁵⁵

Consistent with the aim of bringing the colour bar to readers’ attention, authors in *The Keys* constructed unflattering images of Britons and the British Empire between 1933 and 1937. Their depictions illustrated how prejudiced feelings were founded on Britons’ sense of racial superiority, putting an onus on Britons to reform the way they viewed

³⁵² W. Arthur Lewis, “African Economic Problems,” *The Keys* vol.5, no.1, July-September 1937:15. In his article Lewis did a broad assessment of Africa’s progress in industrialization, agriculture and commerce and wrote about what was necessary moving forward.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵⁵ Civilization was also discussed in S. Sanmuganathan’s “The Ancient Civilization of Africa”, which highlighted Africa’s rich history through archeological and anthropological findings. Like Dr. Moody and Lewis, Sanmuganathan’s article questioned civilization as it was being defined by Europe. Sanmuganathan wrote that civilization “is not clean boots, bombs, not life destroying gases. Nor is it money-making, but the quest of the practical things of value which is primarily food.” He expanded further to note that, “the different ways of obtaining this food form the different stages in civilization.”³⁵⁵ Sanmuganathan’s reference to “bombs”, “life destroying gases” and “money-making” was seemingly an unflattering reference to Europe that intimated European civilization was predicated on violence and greed. According to Sanmuganathan, such things were not the markers of who was civilized and who was not. In fact, he asserted that there were “no uncivilized men, but men in different grades of civilization.” That is to say, men were at different levels of obtaining food. Notably, Sanmuganathan redefined civilization, allowing him to refute the notion that Africans were “uncivilized” by instead arguing they had a rich civilization of their own. See S. Sanmuganathan, “The Ancient Civilization of Africa,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.4, April-June 1934: 79-81.

themselves and their black counterparts. Meanwhile, portrayals of Britain and its Empire underscored the costs of unjust and deceitful policies by demonstrating how they fostered disappointment and tarnished Britain's reputation. Those authors in *The Keys* who constructed images of Europe as diseased not only challenged notions of European superiority but also highlighted a contribution Africans could make by becoming moral leaders. Thus, despite its writers' loyalty to Britain and their commitment to British ideals, *The Keys* used its (often sharp) images to criticize Britons and to challenge their perception of Africans and those of African descent. Like *Wasu*, therefore, *The Keys* painted a picture of the world that promoted its goal of a more inclusive British Empire.

The Black Man

Unlike the steady success of the West African Students' Union, or the League of Coloured Peoples, by the 1930s the popularity of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association was on the decline. In 1933, the U.N.I.A. suspended its most famous publication, the *Negro World*, creating a space for *The Black Man* to assume the rank of "most important Garvey publication" circulating.³⁵⁶ With the explicit goal of promoting black solidarity and collective action, *The Black Man* looked to instill the world's black population with a sense of racial pride. Indeed, as David Cronon writes in his study, *Black Moses: the Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*, Garvey wanted to "[c]reate a strong Negro nation" because only then would blacks never "fear oppression at the hands of other races."³⁵⁷ *The Black Man's* pages, therefore, became a space dedicated to instructing and inspiring the world's black population to a better position in the world.

³⁵⁶ Cronon, 49.

³⁵⁷ Cronon, 174.

While Marcus Garvey wrote most articles in *The Black Man*, the journal, like *Wasu* and *The Keys*, constructed images of the “white man”³⁵⁸ and civilization to suit its political aims. Indeed, the “white man” was portrayed as possessing “superior intelligence”³⁵⁹, as “a man of character” and was placed at “the highest scale of appreciation”³⁶⁰ to highlight characteristics that blacks needed to adopt. In an article entitled “The Glory of Being Conscious” the author, “a White Man”³⁶¹, claimed that it was a connection to the Divine that endowed whites with a sense of authority in the world.³⁶² According to the author, a consciousness of and connection to a higher being, was the foundation of whites’ “influence and sovereignty”, allowing them to master any

³⁵⁸ I have chosen to use the term “white man” to mirror the language the journal used and since the phrasing is not mine, it appears in brackets throughout.

³⁵⁹ M. Garvey, “West Indian Negroes,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.3, February 1934: 17. Garvey noted that West Indians were crucial to the building of the Panama Canal and the United Fruit Company but were kept from the benefits of each and attributed this to the “superior intelligence of the white man.” He also stated that blacks needed to unite to avoid the fate of North American Indians and the Australian Bushmen. Specifically, Garvey claimed that such unity could save blacks since “the world is tightening itself around all unprepared peoples, with the object of destroying them.” According to Garvey, the world was a hostile place but its dangers could be mitigated if blacks underwent the necessary preparations to save themselves.

³⁶⁰ M. Garvey, “The Negro and Character,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.5, May-June 1934: 5-6. Garvey specifically referenced the Anglo-Saxon in his article, writing “the Anglo-Saxon stands to-day, highest in the scale of appreciation, not because he is merely Anglo-Saxon but because he is a man of character.” Garvey’s emphasis on the “white man’s” attributes as the cause of his “sterling qualities” meant that blacks, too, could acquire the necessary traits to achieve a place of prominence in the world. Thus, while the “white man” was being singled out as superior, Garvey pointed out that blacks could attain the same level of success. In fact, Garvey reiterated this point in another article entitled, “The Negro Race.” Here he claimed that, “the white man to-day rates himself as being the leader of all races, not because of his colour, but because of his achievements.” Again, Garvey underscored how it was the “white man’s” actions and not his colour that made him successful. Furthermore, Garvey argued that the “white man’s” knowledge was “inherited from the original minds of the black man who made Egypt, Carthage and Babylon, the centres of civilization, that were not known to the unskilled and savage men of Europe.” Accordingly, the black man founded civilization and, therefore, could regain his place of prominence again. See M. Garvey, “The Negro Race,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.5, May-June 1934: 15-16.

³⁶¹ This was the second article authored by “a White Man” in the journal and it is likely that Marcus Garvey was the author of both. The first article was entitled, “Why I Hate The Negro” and, as the title indicated, it explained whites’ scorn for blacks. Specifically, the author claimed that, “the thought has never come to the Negro to be his own boss in politics, industry, commerce, education or religion.” Furthermore, the author noted that “when the Negro becomes a fully developed man, with the conception of his own possibilities, his initiative, courage and adventure of daring to accomplish all that other human beings have accomplished, I would readily admit him as my social equal.” The article justified whites’ prejudice, claiming that the black man had yet to earn respect as the “white man’s” equal. See A White Man, “Why I Hate The Negro,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.1, December 1933: 15-16.

³⁶² A White Man, “The Glory of Being Conscious”, *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.3, February 1934: 19-20.

situation they were in.³⁶³ The author did admit, however, that, “the average white man may not entirely reflect this” dominance, but explained that he did not need to.³⁶⁴ Unlike authors in *The Keys*, who used their portrayals of the average Englishman to undermine the notion of an Englishman’s superiority, this article did the opposite. Here, the average state of the “white man” did not matter because, as a race, there were people who could exert sufficient influence and power to maintain whites’ supremacy in the world. Thus, “The Glory of Being Conscious” created an image of whites as superior, but in the process it detailed how white supremacy was attained and perpetuated in the world, implying that blacks could achieve the same power and influence by adopting a similar consciousness and connection to a higher being.

Positive portrayals of the “white man”, outlining positive attributes for blacks to adopt, continued in another article entitled “Negro Psychology.”³⁶⁵ Here Marcus Garvey asserted that the “white man” had “scientifically developed a character of resistance to the extent that he has become the steeled creature in the confliction battles of life.”³⁶⁶ Garvey drew attention to the “white man’s” strength and seemingly took no issue with the “white man’s” efforts to oppress other races. Indeed, he depicted whites’ actions as historically justifiable: “[t]he history of the contact of races, shows that a powerful or dominant race is always disposed to look down upon competitive races with the

³⁶³ Ibid., 19. Garvey reinforced the notion of the “white man” mastering his domain in an article entitled, “The Negro as Colonizer.” He wrote that blacks were in the same places as the “white man” but that, “the white man always gains the victory by being the recognized power in the colony or in the Province.” He emphasized that blacks must take their lead from their white counterparts, writing, “if colonization with the ultimate object of nationalization is good for the white man, it is also good for the black man.” Garvey used “the white man” in his article to chart the actions blacks must take to rise from their present position. See M. Garvey, “The Negro As Colonizer,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.4, March-April 1934: 15-16.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 19.

³⁶⁵ M. Garvey, “Negro Psychology,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.5, May-June 1934: 7-8, 14.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 7.

unfriendly eye.”³⁶⁷ The “white man”, therefore, was acting in accordance with human nature and could not be blamed for actions that enforced blacks’ downtrodden position.³⁶⁸

Besides depicting the “white man’s” steely character, Marcus Garvey also highlighted more admirable characteristics of the “white man” in a speech he gave at an international convention in Kingston, Jamaica³⁶⁹ Garvey illustrated the “white man’s” versatility by noting his ability to be an “organizer”, a “producer”, a “great commercial magnate” and an “industrial captain.”³⁷⁰ His flattering depiction of the “white man” continued as he remarked that he “starts the factory, “establishes the bank” and “organizes the industries.”³⁷¹ Garvey’s image illustrated the “white man’s” resourcefulness, his ambition and the numerous initiatives he had undertaken to achieve

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 7.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 7. Garvey defended the “white man’s” treatment of blacks in other articles as well. In “The West Indian Negro”, he claimed that the “white man” has an “excellent ability of world rulership” and specifically referenced how he used “mob violence” in the United States, “suave diplomacy” in the West Indies and the “strength of his superior scientific knowledge” in Africa. While all three “rulership” styles differed from one another, Garvey reiterated his belief that no one could blame the “white man” for taking advantage of opportunities created by “his superior mind”, effectively excusing the “white man” from any criticism and placing the onus on blacks to adjust and help themselves. Furthermore, in “The Cold Truth”, Garvey explained that it is through “austere materialism” that races and individuals “see themselves enthroned, guaranteed and protected by the strength of their own practical achievements.” Thus, he claimed that man’s behavior was based on “material rivalry” and that those who did not compete were “bound to be buried under the grinding competition.” Yet, rather than take issue with materialism itself, Garvey argued that the black man should not be “vexed with a white man for endeavoring to make out that the black man is inferior and as such must obey.” Instead, he wrote that “if the white man can get the Negro to obey him, why not. Life becomes easier. The fault is not with the white man, the fault is with the Negro who doesn’t realize that he has as much right as any other man.” Garvey, again, excused the “white man’s” behavior, portraying him as a clever opportunist who made the best of the resources available to him, even if such resources were the black man. Lastly in “Marcus Garvey Addressing the People of Detroit”, Garvey wrote that God will “justify and honour the white man for making use of the world and rebuke” blacks for the “slipshod manner” they exist in the world. See M. Garvey, “The West Indian Negro,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.5, May-June 1934: 17 -18; M. Garvey, “The Cold Truth,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.7, August 1937: 6-7; M. Garvey, “Marcus Garvey Addressing the People of Detroit,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.8, December 1937: 9-12.

³⁶⁹ Marcus Garvey, “Marcus Garvey Opens International Convention With Great Speech,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.6, November 1934: 4-12. Garvey gave the opening speech at the Seventh International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, which was hosted by the U.N.I.A. The conference was held in Kingston, Jamaica.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 7.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 7.

success in the world. These images, however, were not so much about the “white man” as they were about inspiring *The Black Man*’s readers to action. Indeed, implicit in the article was an argument that blacks needed to follow the “white man’s” lead, taking care of their own affairs instead of “depend[ing] upon his sympathy and his charity” to survive.³⁷² In this way, the “white man” was used to set a standard for *The Black Man*’s readers to measure themselves against.³⁷³ Garvey implied that, like the “white man”, blacks needed to exhibit the same level of initiative and action in order to become their own organizers, producers and industrialists.

Garvey’s article also warned of the “white man’s” potential for brutality and his power to destroy. To bolster his claim, he evoked the First World War to show that the “white man’s” sympathy could not be relied upon indefinitely. The explicit reference to the war came when Garvey wrote,

...what did we experience between 1914-1918? We saw men of one original stock fight on the battlefields of France, we saw them slaying themselves to the extent of millions. When I went to the battlefields of France and Flanders, I saw buried there, underneath an ocean of white tombstones, tens of thousands of dead, all traced back to one original racial stock, where men of one family slaughtered each other.³⁷⁴

³⁷² Ibid., 7.

³⁷³ Later in *The Black Man* Garvey utilized this same technique of emphasizing qualities of the “white man” he wished that blacks would adopt. In “A Dialogue: What’s the Difference? Chapter II”, he wrote that “the white man has a dominant idea of control”, that he feels he “must govern, that no one must be above him” and Garvey noted that this attitude “inspires him to its accomplishment and so he is a ruler everywhere you find him.” Once more Garvey explained what made the “white man” so successful, intimating that *The Black Man*’s readers needed to adopt similar attitudes. He added that “the white man is not afraid of responsibility, he is not afraid of any risk, he is adventurous, he is bold, has daring in his blood.” Garvey’s depiction of the “white man”, therefore, sketched a blueprint of attributes blacks need to cultivate in order to raise their position in the world. See M. Garvey, “A Dialogue: What’s the Difference? Chapter II,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no. 8, July 1935: 13-16.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 8.

Garvey saw the First World War as an indication of the “white man’s” ruthlessness; he had killed his “own kith and kin” and was certainly, therefore, capable of killing the world’s black population if need be. To Garvey, however, this was not an indictment of the “white man” so much as a reminder that the blacks needed develop their own strength to protect themselves and needed to “adopt a policy of friendship,” with their white counterparts to ensure their survival.³⁷⁵

As intimated by Garvey’s acknowledgement of the “white man’s” potential for brutality, not all portrayals of the “white man” in the journal were positive. Indeed, critical images of the “white man” emphasized the need for black unity and collective action, two important aims of *The Black Man*. In an article entitled, “South Africa” Marcus Garvey wrote about blacks’ efforts to gain the franchise, noting that the attempt to block blacks from direct representation in the legislature was because whites were “afraid of him.”³⁷⁶ Garvey claimed that whites in South Africa had adopted “the conduct of a coward” that had “little confidence in [his] real superiority.”³⁷⁷ The “white man” in South Africa, according to Garvey, was insecure and was worried about losing his position of dominance in the world.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 8. Indeed, Garvey remarked later in the article that “it is the duty of man in his clan to protect that clan against other clans and against other tribes, and if the white man protects himself do not blame him.” Once again, Garvey justified the “white man’s” actions, no matter how brutal they appeared to be.

³⁷⁶ M. Garvey, “South Africa,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no. 9, August-September 1935: 2. Garvey made a similar assessment of South Africa’s white population in the December 1935 issue of *The Black Man*, in discussing General Smuts’ desire to increase the number of Europeans in South Africa. Garvey wrote that Smuts’ wanted to “eliminate the fear complex which is responsible for the unprogressive ideas of most Europeans in regards to the relations between white and black” peoples. Just as he did in “South Africa”, Garvey linked whites’ racism in South Africa to their fear of their black counterparts. See M. Garvey, “News of the World: The Political Morals of General Smuts,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.11, December 1935: 14-15.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 2.

The image of the “white man” as cowardly was only the beginning of negative depictions in the journal. Indeed, *The Black Man*’s articles also portrayed the “white man” as dishonest and hypocritical, two characterizations that encouraged blacks’ need for self-reliance and independence. Garvey asserted that the “white man” was conniving because he hid “the truth about Africa and advance[d] the superiority of European civilization.”³⁷⁸ Like his criticisms of white South Africans for behaving in a cowardly fashion by trying to keep South African natives subdued, Garvey highlighted a similar effort to keep blacks from realizing their potential. In this case, rather than disenfranchising blacks, the “white man” was hiding truths that could potentially inspire and instill blacks with a sense of pride. Thus, like the criticisms that Dr. Moody made of Britons in *The Keys*, Garvey questioned the “white man’s” teachings, claiming “you cannot...get the true facts of Africa from the white man’s point of view.”³⁷⁹ Consequently, the “white man” was depicted as dishonest for propagating lies. Garvey also implied that the “white man” was selfish, since he glorified “himself at the expense of other peoples” to ensure his supremacy.³⁸⁰ Since the “white man” resorted to deception in order to champion his own greatness, Garvey demonstrated that he was untrustworthy as an authority on knowledge, especially when it came to Africa.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ M. Garvey, “A Dialogue: What’s the Difference? Chapter IV,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.10, October 1935: 19.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 19. Garvey actually wrote about how pervasive the “white man’s” campaign to hide the truth about Africa was: “every book, magazine or newspaper” contained propaganda “aiming at the glorification of one set of people, and the enthronement of all their ideas.” M. Garvey, “A Dialogue: What’s the Difference? Chapter IV,” 20.

³⁸¹ Of Africa’s past Garvey claimed that “you may find an accidental admission of Africa’s past greatness, but not sufficient to be completely convincing”, therefore, keeping blacks from the truth about the continent’s history. See M. Garvey, “A Dialogue: What’s the Difference? Chapter IV,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.10, October 1935: 20.

Coinciding with Garvey's depictions of the "white man" as deceitful were portrayals of him as a hypocrite. In a poem entitled "The White Sinful Church", Garvey claimed that the church "sanctifies the cause of war" and "winks at evil deeds", as "blacks and weaker sets of men are robbed and killed galore."³⁸² Garvey argued that the church condoned behavior that contravened its religious principles and caused a great harm to people it should be defending. Garvey's title also emphasized that the "white man" was responsible for the church's depravity. Elsewhere in the journal, in a section entitled "The World As It Is", Garvey bolstered his depiction of the "white man" as a hypocrite by commenting on the era's "booming" war industries.³⁸³ He observed that amidst the "agitation for peace" there were people "hoping to put more butter on their bread out of the profit they make in the manufacture and sale of deadly weapons."³⁸⁴ Garvey's depiction illustrated that the "white man's" commitment to peace came second to a desire for profits. In fact, he wrote that, "it is surprising sometimes to find Chairmen of these war impliments [*sic*] factories Deacons of Churches and officials of Synods."³⁸⁵ Garvey characterized this dual role as "the white man's way of mixing religion with the deadly impliments [*sic*] of Hell."³⁸⁶ Thus, rather than portraying the "white man" as a role

³⁸² M. Garvey, "The White Sinful Church," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 8. Garvey never identifies which church he is specifically discussing. It is clear, however, that he is speaking about Christianity because of reference to the Ten Commandments, Priests and Pastors.

³⁸³ M. Garvey, "The World As It Is," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 10.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁸⁵ M. Garvey, "The World As It Is," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 10.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 10. Garvey made use of heaven and hell in his poem, "The Great(?) White Man." He wrote that whites "threw away the chart of holy life," that they were "becoming Satan's cruel children" and that they were engaged in an effort to "crush the higher self." The poem conveyed how it was the "white man's" moral depravity that was "making all the world a living hell" and yet, the "white man" seemed to be oblivious to this fact. See M. Garvey, "The Great(?) White Man," *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 15. Question mark is in the original.

model, as he had done earlier, Garvey demonstrated the extent of the “white man’s” moral depravity by illustrating how he sold his principles for profits.

In *The Black Man* positive portrayals of the “white man” highlighted traits Garvey wished blacks worldwide would adopt, whether personal initiative, confidence derived from feeling connected to a divine power or a steeled character. On the other hand, articles in the journal also depicted the “white man” negatively, undermining any sense of his inherent superiority and providing the impetus for blacks to come together as a race. Images of the “white man”, therefore, all worked to promote the journal’s goal of a strong, independent black nation. Indeed, this goal was also served by the journal’s negative portrayal of civilization.

The Black Man’s images of civilization were not flattering as Garvey made sure to characterize it as “the white world gone mad.”³⁸⁷ For instance, in “Wake Up, Black Man”, Garvey wrote that the white world’s “civilization is blundering” and that whites were “incapable of carrying it further”, implying that soon civilization would fall in the hands of blacks to take over.³⁸⁸ Garvey was a firm believer that blacks were the original bearers of civilization: “the white man is the last to inherit a civilization, and the civilization that he boasts of to-day is really a heritage from Africa, where the first civilization was projected by man.”³⁸⁹ Thus, Garvey believed that whites would only be in charge of civilization until they could carry it no further, at which point blacks would have an opportunity to “restore the Empire of the glorious Ethiopians” by taking back its

³⁸⁷ M. Garvey, “Gone Mad,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 1. Garvey wrote that some in the twentieth century are behaving like “primitive barbarians and savages.” This language is significant, describing the “white man” with words predominantly used to describe Africans as inferior.

³⁸⁸ M. Garvey, “Wake Up, Black Man!” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.3, February 1934: 15-16.

³⁸⁹ M. Garvey, “A Dialogue: What’s the Difference? Chapter IV,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.10, October 1935: 20.

reins.³⁹⁰ Garvey's sense that blacks would soon lead civilization helps explain his contradictory position on the "white man" which both celebrated and condemned his actions. In light of his outlook on civilization, Garvey seemed to be analyzing what, from the "white man" was worth salvaging, and carrying forward once blacks regained their prominence in the world.

Garvey's portrayal of civilization in *The Black Man* could also be read as a clear indictment of Europeans and the manner in which they conducted their affairs. In the poem, "The Conquering Race", Garvey wrote that whites' "slew the Blackman for his wealth" and that his friends celebrated him for "deeds of courage he performs."³⁹¹ Garvey criticized European imperialism for being driven by greed and claimed that the world was "the Devil's den so long as evil spirits reign."³⁹² This image of a "Devil's den" was reinforced a month later in *The Black Man* when Garvey described the state of civilization in an article entitled "The World A Battlefield."³⁹³ He portrayed the world as an "armed battlefield" where people fly "at each other's throats."³⁹⁴ Garvey asserted that, "most of the people who are anxious to get at each other are those who have had control of our civilization for at least five hundred years."³⁹⁵ According to Garvey, the fate of Europe's civilization was already sealed and all that blacks had to do was wait until the "smoke from the fire and ashes of twentieth century civilization [had] blown off" so they could create a new civilization of their own.³⁹⁶ Indeed, in "Tearing Up Civilization", Garvey claimed that Europeans were at "their highest point of civilization" and, having

³⁹⁰ M. Garvey, "Wake Up, Black Man!" *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.3, February 1934: 16.

³⁹¹ M. Garvey, "The Conquering Race," *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 6.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁹³ M. Garvey, "The World A Battlefield," *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 2.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

reached their peak, were on a decline, “engaged in the mad effort of destroying themselves.”³⁹⁷ Europe’s insistence on self-destruction, according to Garvey, could be linked to how they “never properly understood” the civilization they inherited from Africa: “they [had] misused and misapplied so many of the principles” they were given, leading to their own “wreck and ruin.”³⁹⁸ The notion that white civilization was on a path of destruction appeared again in an article entitled, “The Peculiar Fear.”³⁹⁹ Garvey asserted that the “white man” had “set about destroying himself by his system of injustice, not only to others but to the different groups of his own race.”⁴⁰⁰ Garvey claimed that there were “...peoples of the white races, who are not only determined to get even with other groups of the white race, but who are so selfish as to desire a complete domination of all civilization.”⁴⁰¹ According to Garvey it was the endless quest to assert his supremacy that would be the “white man’s” undoing. Unlike the authors in *Wasu* and *The Keys* who portrayed Europe and civilization as either deceased or corrupted, Garvey’s depictions went a step further to convey a sense that both were past the point of redemption. Thus, he ruled out any chance that Europe and its civilization could be brought back from the brink through reform, which effectively underscored his assertion

³⁹⁷ M. Garvey, “Tearing Up Civilization,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.3, September-October 1936: 1.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1. Garvey reiterated this message in “Look Up, You Mighty Race.” He wrote, “the evils of our civilization are the results of evil thought- jealousy, malice, hatred, prejudice- all tending to destroy the white man, because he has misapplied and mis-used [*sic*] the powerful will that shapes things.” In “Fascism and Communism” he also wrote, “the decadence of Europe is a matter of fact, and it is only a question of time when the whole political fabric will collapse in a mighty wreck.” Thus, Garvey’s writings clearly depicted white civilization in peril and placed the responsibility for its destruction squarely on Europe’s shoulders. See M. Garvey, “Look Up, You Mighty Race,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.3, September-October 1936: 3-4; M. Garvey, “Fascism and Communism,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.3, September-October 1936: 1.

³⁹⁹ M. Garvey, “The Peculiar Fear,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.2, July-August 1936: 10.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

that blacks would be the bearers of civilization once again and, thus, needed to be prepared to take over.

The Black Man's articles did not just feature general depictions of the "white man" and his civilization though these were the most prominent images in the journal's pages. Once relocated to England from Jamaica, *The Black Man* also featured depictions of Britons and Britain.⁴⁰² As with the "white man", however, these images were a mix of praise and criticism that worked to emphasize what blacks could learn in order to better their position in the world. For instance, in "Our New Start", Marcus Garvey described the English to his readers while discussing the publication's relocation from Kingston, Jamaica, to London, England.⁴⁰³ He wrote of the English that, "their financial manipulations and their general economic and political diplomacy, have placed them as leaders of world thought and directors of an international opinion that must be considered."⁴⁰⁴ Garvey's brief description detailed England's prominence in the world, placing the country at the forefront of international thought and affairs. This depiction was not only flattering to England but underscored the significance of *The Black Man*'s move from the colonies to the metropole, as Garvey implied that the journal was now at the world's center. The image also made it clear that it was Britain's economic and political skills that were at the core of its success, informing *The Black Man*'s readers that they needed to develop a similar skill-set.

⁴⁰² Unlike the journal's images of the "white man" and civilization that appear right from *The Black Man*'s beginning, commentary on Britain coincided with the publication's move from Jamaica to England in 1935. It is at this point that Britain starts to figure more predominantly in the journal's pages. For more on *The Black Man*'s move to England see chapter one, 41.

⁴⁰³ M. Garvey, "Our New Start," *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 1.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

In an article entitled “Silver Jubilee in England”, Marcus Garvey assumed the role of an ethnographer and once again described Britons to *The Black Man*’s readers, writing of their “peculiar disposition”, of how they were the “most quiet and sober people in the world” and of how they “do not make noise, neither in the theatres, in public places nor in the streets.”⁴⁰⁵ Garvey’s characterization of Britons as disciplined and self-restrained, intimated that they conducted their affairs in a cool and controlled manner. He also observed that, “their loyalty to the throne is admirable” and expressed his hope that “one day the Negro will also learn to be patriotic and loyal to his clan.”⁴⁰⁶ As he had done earlier with the “white man”, Garvey had described Britons in such a way that they became a model for the black man to follow. The reader was given a sense that Britons were not prone to emotional impulses and conducted themselves with a notable levelheadedness. Garvey bolstered his image of the sensible Briton in an article entitled “A Good Rebuff”, in which he discussed South Africa and General Hertzog’s request for more protectorates and crown colonies.⁴⁰⁷ Aside from commenting that South Africa was “the most un-British of all the Dominions”, he celebrated Britain’s denial of Hertzog’s request.⁴⁰⁸ Considering Garvey’s earlier comment that South Africa was “un-British”, his praise perhaps implied that traditionally Britain was just and incapable of the same “inhumanity” as South Africa:⁴⁰⁹ the “heart of England is not dead, even though men like

⁴⁰⁵ M. Garvey, “Silver Jubilee in England,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 2.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁰⁷ M. Garvey, “A Good Rebuff,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 13-14.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 13. He wrote that the decision “upheld the tradition of true British statesmanship.”

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 13. Garvey used “un-British” again to imply that Britain’s actions in the colonies were inconsistent with its true nature. In “West Indian Re-Action” he reported on labour disputes in Kingston, St. Vincent and British Guiana, claiming Britain gave nothing to blacks “to assist them to overcome the difficulties that would confront them” after emancipation from slavery. He noted that the peasants and labourers “are being taken advantage of, they are being robbed and exploited and all this is un-British.” He ended by asking the British government to both investigate the situation and intervene. The article, while

Hertzog may be in the ascendancy in the government of outposts of Empire.”⁴¹⁰ Thus, despite how *The Black Man*’s readers in the dominions and colonies may have felt about Empire, they were given a sense that any injustice they experienced was an aberration of true British policy.⁴¹¹

Garvey’s positive assessment of the British continued in his article “British General Election”, which discussed the election of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin.⁴¹² Garvey characterized Britons as “calm, cool and calculating”, reinforcing his earlier depictions of Britons as levelheaded.⁴¹³ He added that it is “this coolness that makes him dangerous. Yes, it is this coolness that makes him transcendent.” Garvey appears to intimate that Britons possessed an exceptional quality that ensured that no one could ever “tell what the Englishman thinks.”⁴¹⁴ He also described Britons’ conservatism at the polls, claiming that they had “discard[ed] passion and refus[ed] to be hysterical” when making their selection.⁴¹⁵ In fact, according to Garvey, a Briton felt a sense of “responsibility to his heirs”, one based on his belief that what he gains “becomes a Trust to be administered for himself and succeeding generations of his children.”⁴¹⁶ Garvey’s sketch of Britons

describing deplorable conditions in the West Indies, worked to reinforce a sense that such injustice was out of Britain’s character. Garvey implied that Britain was just and would work to remedy the situation. See M. Garvey, “West Indian Re-Action,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.10, October 1935: 2-3. For another example, see M. Garvey, “A Funny Place Called Bermuda,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.8, December 1937: 1.

⁴¹⁰ M. Garvey, “A Good Rebuff,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 13.

⁴¹¹ The article ended with an editor’s note explaining that Britain’s policy reversed and how it had “made promises to the Negro-hating General calculated to completely satisfy him in all his requests.” Garvey noted that if the proposition passed through parliament, more blacks would “pass into the slavery of South African prejudice and injustice.” It seems noteworthy that this change in policy did not see Garvey completely rewrite his article and offer a different assessment of British statesmanship. It could be that Garvey felt that Parliament would not pass the proposition and, therefore, his depiction of Britain could stay the same.

⁴¹² M. Garvey, “British General Election,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.11, December 1935: 2-3.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

depicted them as steadfast, pragmatic and honorable in their commitment to safeguard future generations. He affirmed his portrayal by using a comparison, claiming that, “unlike the American, the Englishman doesn’t burn up all his wealth in an inflated state of living”, highlighting Britons’ modesty.⁴¹⁷ These positive depictions, however, were not without a purpose. Garvey used his characterization of Britons to illustrate particular qualities which, if adopted, would allow blacks to achieve success in the world. He claimed: “if we could lose or control our passion, our momentary enthusiasm, and be as sober as these people, we may be able to build a political and national structure that may last as long as that of the British Empire.”⁴¹⁸ As with his earlier articles depicting Britons and the positive portrayals of the “white man”, Garvey used the images he constructed as benchmarks for his readers.

Britons’ conservatism was the focal point of another article in *The Black Man* entitled, “An English King and His People.”⁴¹⁹ The article discussed Edward VIII’s abdication and Britons’ reactions to the decision. Garvey claimed, “it is evident the English people, from observation, are trained not to have any opinion of their own, and if they should have any, not to express it except when told to do so.”⁴²⁰ Once more, Garvey described Britons’ reserved nature and discipline. This time, however, he also illustrated the strength of Britain’s government, asserting that it held a tremendous amount of influence over its citizens. In fact, Garvey called the State’s, supposed “complete control over its masses” enviable and claimed that he understood the country’s political

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 2. Garvey’s comments would have struck his readers as particularly legitimate because he had lived in the United States.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁴¹⁹ M. Garvey, “An English King and His People,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.5, January 1937:4.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 4.

climate.⁴²¹ According to Garvey, as long as Britain's leaders promised jobs and recreation, Britons were "not prepared to interfere with whatever policy the leaders desire to pursue."⁴²² Even in a crisis Garvey figured "the people easily fall in line and do whatever is requested of them" as long as the government promised that better conditions were coming.⁴²³ For this reason, Garvey called Britons "a wonderful people" as they were concerned mostly with economic security and would "sacrifice anything" which held "the promise of such economic security."⁴²⁴ Garvey's depiction of Britons underscored their pragmatism and restraint, but it also intimated that they were capable of being duped and manipulated by promises. Thus, the article conveyed a sense that Garvey's compliments were backhanded and, therefore, criticisms of Britons.

As with images of the "white man", which were both positive and negative, criticisms of Britain and Britons did appear in *The Black Man*. In "The World As It Is", Garvey denounced the unequal treatment the media gave blacks and whites when an assault of woman was reported.⁴²⁵ "[W]henver an Indian, a coloured or black man happens to run foul of a white girl in England [he observed], great noise is made about it by the Press."⁴²⁶ Garvey explained that, "the individual is held up as a kind of index to the character of people of colour whose morals are supposed to be very low and whom the European should shun."⁴²⁷ Consequently, such incidents were significant not only because they were newsworthy, but also because of the broad generalizations they inspired. In fact, Garvey claimed that, "this attitude has been very prejudicial to the social

⁴²¹ Ibid., 4.

⁴²² Ibid., 4.

⁴²³ Ibid., 4.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁴²⁵ M. Garvey, "The World As It Is," *The Black Man*, vol.1, no. 9, August-September 1935: 10.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 10.

freedom of people of colour in England.”⁴²⁸ When, for example, Europeans assaulted women in Africa, Garvey found the press to be less condemning in their reports.⁴²⁹ To illustrate his point, Garvey cited an incident in Bombay where white soldiers were accused of attacking black women and wondered how the English public would handle the affair. He asked, “whether they will call the white soldiers beasts as they call coloured men, or will only regard it as a matter of right for the so-called superior race to impose its ‘immoral will’ upon a supposedly inferior race.”⁴³⁰ Garvey depicted the media and, more generally the British public, as hypocrites by illustrating how their reactions to assaults against women differed based on the colour of the individuals involved. Contrary to earlier depictions, Garvey portrayed Britons as unjust for the way they could turn a single incident into an indictment of an entire people. Eric Walrond⁴³¹ echoed Garvey in an article entitled “The Negro in London.”⁴³² Walrond commented on how Britain was viewed with “an adoring eye” by many from its colonies but noted that, “what he so affectionately imagines he sees does not always ‘square’ with the facts.”⁴³³ Walrond claimed that contrary to expectations, once in Britain, blacks felt “utter loneliness”, “cold indifference” and “subtle antagonism.”⁴³⁴ He characterized London as “a maze of bewildering subtleties and paradoxes” with “no clean-cut definition of the Negro’s

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 10.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁴³¹ Eric Walrond was born in Guyana and worked for Garvey’s *Negro World* during “its peak Harlem period.” According to Colin Grant, Walrond joined Garvey in London and was kept on a small retainer for his contributions to the journal. See Grant, 438.

⁴³² E. Walrond, “The Negro in London,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 9-10.

⁴³³ Ibid., 9. Walrond explained that “this deception, common to the virgin gaze of African and West Indian alike, is partly a case of ‘distance lends enhancement’” and, too, “the black man’s extraordinary loyalty to the Crown.”

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 9.

position.”⁴³⁵ Clearly, Walrond was not writing a glowing endorsement of London and, instead, portrayed the city as hostile to visiting blacks: “the black man never knows just how the Englishman is going to take him”, describing a sense of uncertainty that overshadowed daily encounters with white Londoners.⁴³⁶ Walrond explained that Britons exhibited a strong sense of empire but, despite this, “the average Englishman” knew little of the people who lived in the colonies “and is invariably astonished to find them in command of the English language.”⁴³⁷ Walrond portrayed most Englishmen as ignorant, demonstrating that their low opinion of people inhabiting Britain’s colonies was because of their own naivety. Walrond’s conclusion was equally damaging to any romantic view of Britain regarding matters of race:

it is indeed a paradox that London, the capital of the largest Negro Empire in the world – the cradle of English liberty, justice and fair-play – the city to which Frederick Douglas fled as a fugitive from slavery – should be so extremely inexpert in the matter of interracial relations.⁴³⁸

The Black Man’s readers were effectively being told, despite their many reasons to believe that they would be well received when they came to the metropole, that their expectations of the “Mother Country” were wrong.⁴³⁹ Walrond’s article challenged

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁴³⁹ Another assessment of Britain appeared in *The Black Man’s* May-June, 1936 issue but it was copied from an African newspaper entitled, *West Africa*. The article, “What Moore and Wood Think of the English”, was written by G.E. Moore and S.R. Wood (the latter also appeared as a contributor to *The Keys*) who came to Britain with the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights Protection Society. They reported that Englishmen living in the colonies exhibit a “superiority complex” and believed in “white prestige” and how it “must be upheld even at the risk of justice and fair play.” However, Moore and Wood wrote that Englishmen in England, once educated about the colonies, “become genuinely sympathetic.” Like Walrond, therefore, both men believed that people in England knew little about the colonies. Yet, contrary to their portrayal of Englishmen in Britain, Moore and Wood wrote that people working from Downing Street’s Colonial Office have “ceased to be human.” More akin to the Englishmen in the colonies, these officials were depicted as concerned, not with “justice and fair play, but the upholding of so-called ‘White

readers' thoughts on Empire, countering preconceived notions and constructions of Britain and Britons with an insider's point of view. Thus, in line with negative portrayals of the "white man", criticisms of Britain demonstrated the need for black self-reliance and independence.

As with *Wasu* and *The Keys*, articles in *The Black Man* constructed images of the world that correlated with the messages it wished to convey to its readers. Indeed, *The Black Man's* depictions of the "white man", which were both positive and negative, demonstrate how images could be manipulated to suit authors' aims. The journal's emphasis on how blacks needed to take more initiative were served by positive images of the "white man" that explained what made him successful. Moreover, negative images made it clear that blacks could not rely on the "white man" and, therefore, needed to band together. Likewise, portrayals of civilization as mad and doomed, undermined any notion of Europeans as superior and, too, asserted that the world's blacks needed to be ready to regain their position of supremacy. Thus, images in *The Black Man's* articles all worked to promote Garvey's dream of a united, empowered black nation that was no longer relegated to a downtrodden position in the world.

In the end, despite their different leanings, authors in all three journals capitalized on the opportunity to construct images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization that suited their needs. These portrayals were significant for the political messages they relayed and because they demonstrated the ability of blacks in Britain to reverse a gaze that predominantly saw white colonizers judge dark-skinned people as experts on the

prestige' among the dark races." Moore and Wood provided a nuanced account of Englishmen, differentiating between their behavior according to location and position in society. See, G.E. Moore and S.R. Wood, "What Moore and Wood Think of English," *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.1, May-June, 1936: 14-15.

“other.” Indeed, in the pages of *Wasu*, *The Keys*, and *The Black Man*, it was Africans and people of African descent who possessed the authority to describe the white culture around them, exercising their power to make determinations about the world.

Chapter Three

For many in the world's black community, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935 "represented Fascist aggression against a 'black' state."⁴⁴⁰ Indeed, the authors of *From Toussaint to Tupac: the Black International since the Age of Revolution* unequivocally state that the Italo-Ethiopian crisis was "the single most important event in black internationalism in the years between the two world wars, and one that outraged African peoples everywhere."⁴⁴¹ When Ethiopia was attacked it was the world's only remaining independent black power⁴⁴², giving credence to the claim of the prominent African-American scholar and activist, W.E.B. DuBois, that the conflict was "a threat to the sanctity of international agreements, a crisis in Christianity, foreboding a new orientation in the problems of race and color."⁴⁴³ For many, indeed, Ethiopia was a "potent symbol of African defiance in the face of imperialism" because it had already defended itself once before against Italian aggression, in the late nineteenth century,

⁴⁴⁰ S.K.B., Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941* (London: Longman, 1977), xi. Unlike the black community, few historians have perceived the Italo-Ethiopian crisis in this way. For the most part, the conflict has been deemed significant because of its impact on the League of Nations organization. For instance, Frank Hardie called the conflict "the turning-point of the thirties" because of its discrediting of the League and the principle of collective security. For similar reasons George Baer calls the event the League's "test case." See Frank Hardie, *The Abyssinia Crisis* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1974), 3; George W. Baer, *Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia, and the League of Nations* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), xiii.

⁴⁴¹ William G. Martin, Michael O. West and Fanon Che Wilkins, eds. *From Toussaint to Tupac: the Black International Since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 14.

⁴⁴² I am not forgetting Liberia and Haiti, which were also black states. Compared to Ethiopia, however, their independence was considered compromised and thus not a source of inspiration for the black community. Asante writes that Haiti "gained her freedom from the United States at the price of shouldering an enormous debt which threatened to 'enslave her for many decades'." See Asante, 15-16. Meanwhile, "Liberia, too, was practically mortgaged to the Firestone Rubber Company after being threatened with absorption by both France and Great Britain." See Asante, 10.

⁴⁴³ W.E.B. DuBois, "Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 14, no.1 (1935): 82. DuBois' claim that the event was a "crisis of Christianity" was a reminder that both Italy and Ethiopia were Christian states.

under Menelik II.⁴⁴⁴ The invasion of Ethiopia, therefore, drew much international attention, in Africa and around the world, as Mussolini's⁴⁴⁵ Italian troops tested "African valour and resistance" once again.⁴⁴⁶ This chapter will examine the contemporary commentary on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict in *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man*. Of particular interest is whether the journals merely reported on the events as they unfolded, or if they drew broader conclusions from the conflict that affected their earlier constructions of Britain, Europe and civilization.

Ethiopia held a special significance in the black community for more than that country's victory at the Battle of Adowa in 1896.⁴⁴⁷ S.K.B. Asante maintains that Ethiopia's importance came from a mixture of contemporary and historic justifications:

The fact that Ethiopia had a long recorded history, an ancient Coptic Christian faith, a monarchy which claimed descent from King Solomon, and internationally recognized diplomatic status, also helped to increase her prestige.⁴⁴⁸

Ethiopia stood as a testament to Africa's rich history, one that included a thriving civilization long before European contact. Moreover, the country exemplified Africans' ability to manage their own state affairs:

The continued existence of Ethiopia as 'an independent native state in Africa' was a 'nuisance to Powers with colonial possessions in that continent', as it would act as a focus of national feeling and an

⁴⁴⁴ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 105.

⁴⁴⁵ By 1935, Benito Mussolini had centralized political power in Italy. He was not only Italy's prime minister and head of government but, as Baer explains, he was also the "leader of Italy's only political party, chief of the Fascist militia, and, since 1933, simultaneously minister of war, navy, air, colonies and foreign affairs." See Baer, 13.

⁴⁴⁶ Asante, 11.

⁴⁴⁷ "The Battle of Adowa," *The Times*, 11 April 1896, p.5, col. A.

⁴⁴⁸ Asante, 11. Ethiopia's connection to Christianity was reinforced by its place in the Bible. Asante writes that Ethiopia held "Biblical authority, especially the oft-quoted 68th Psalm: 'He hath scattered the peoples that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.'"

encouragement to subject races in the neighborhood to assert themselves against the white powers under whose tutelage they had come.⁴⁴⁹

Ethiopia's independence was also important because it shielded the country from the influences of western civilization that were part and parcel of colonialism. The country spoke to many Africans' desire "to save cherished indigenous values from what were considered to be the disintegrating influences of the various European missions."⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, S.K.B. Asante has claimed that, compared to its African counterparts, Ethiopia had maintained its African roots and, for that reason, stood out as "a spiritual inspiration" to downtrodden blacks worldwide.⁴⁵¹

Ethiopia was also distinguished by its membership of the League of Nations which, in and of itself, invited Europe "to begin to recognize Africa and Africans as equal partners with her in the great task of human development and to cease to look upon Africa and the Africans as objects for exploitation."⁴⁵² Under international law Ethiopia, and its citizens, had the same rights and protections as any other member of the League.⁴⁵³ Granting membership status to Ethiopia was significant, therefore, because it "challenged European conceptions of race and definitions of 'civilization' and 'equality'", topics which all resurfaced during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁴⁹ Asante, 40.

⁴⁵⁰ Asante, 12.

⁴⁵¹ Asante, 16. Asante quotes Kenya's future first president, Jomo Kenyatta, speaking in 1935, claiming that Ethiopia was "the sole remaining pride of Africans and Negroes in all parts of the world", underscoring the country's importance as a symbol of black independence. For the original quotation see, Jomo Kenyatta, "Hands off Abyssinia," *Labour Monthly* (London), xvii, 9 September 1935, 536.

⁴⁵² Esedebe, 44.

⁴⁵³ Michael D. Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: the League of Nations and Africa, 1929-1946* (Portland Or.: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 6.

⁴⁵⁴ Callahan, 6. Ethiopia's request to the League of Nations was contested. Information Department papers entitled, "Abyssinia and Italy", from the Royal Institute of International Affairs summarize the discussion surrounding Ethiopia's membership. They explain how the discussion "revealed two schools of thought; the one, in which Great Britain, Switzerland and Australia were prominent, felt that there was need, before

When Italy attacked Ethiopia on 3 October 1935⁴⁵⁵, it justified its invasion as a “civilizing mission”⁴⁵⁶, one that required it to stabilize an anarchical state, abolish slavery, put down border raids and encourage the country’s economic enterprises.⁴⁵⁷ Despite its self-justifications, Italy’s actions prompted condemnation from the international community. On 7 October 1935, the League Council unanimously declared

admission, for a thorough enquiry into Abyssinia’s capability of fulfilling her undertakings. The other, led by France and Italy, contended that admission would pave the way to the abolition of slavery, and that the best means of strengthening the Abyssinia Government was to admit it to the League.” See Chatham House, “Abyssinia and Italy,” *Royal Institute of International Affairs*. Information Department Papers: no. 16 (London: 1935), 10; For more see Antoinette Iadarola, “Ethiopia’s Admission into the League of Nations: An Assessment of Motives,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8, no.4 (1975): 601-622.

⁴⁵⁵ The Italo-Ethiopian war officially began with the invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935, but the two countries had been in conflict since 5 December 1934’s Wal Wal incident. Richard Pankhurst explains that the Wal Wal incident was “an armed clash between Ethiopian and Italian troops, over a hundred miles on the Ethiopian side of the frontier with neighboring Italian Somaliland, and was used by Mussolini as the pretext for invading Ethiopia.” Following the incident Mussolini demanded compensation from Ethiopia and recognition that Wal Wal was Italian territory. He subsequently proceeded to amass troops in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, two Italian colonies bordering Ethiopia, an action that, to many, signaled the dictator’s intentions to invade once the rainy season ended. See Richard Pankhurst, *Silvia Pankhurst Council for Ethiopia: a Biographical Essay on Ethiopian, Anti-Fascist and Anti-Colonist History, 1934-1960* (Hollywood: Tsehai Publishers, 2003), 8; Pitman B. Potter, *The Wal Wal Arbitration* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1938)

⁴⁵⁶ A telegraph from Britain’s Ambassador to Italy, Sir. E. Drummond, to Britain’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir John Simon, gives a sense of Mussolini’s feeling about Ethiopia. In the message Drummond summarizes a conversation he had with the Italian dictator. He writes that Mussolini explained “... that Abyssinnia was a country which had become a blot on civilization. It was collection of tribes, some warlike, who preyed on the others, but all backward. He suggested the existence of cannibalism; at this moment he expatiated on Adowa (and the ensuing mutilations) and the need to avenge it. Surely the League, he went on, could not take up a strong attitude against Italy if the latter tried to bring order and progress into such a State. Abyssinia was not worthy of being a member of the League. Great Britain had taken this line at the time of Abyssinia’s entry.” Sir E. Drummond to Sir John Simon, 21 May 1935, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part III, Series G, Africa*, ed. Peter Woodward (Bethesda, Md: University Publications of America, 1998), 5-6.

⁴⁵⁷ Baer, 35. In a propaganda piece entitled, *The Last Stronghold of Slavery: What Abyssinia Is*, Italian G.C. Baravelli stated that the invasion of Ethiopia was justified because Ethiopia had not fulfilled its obligations and responsibilities to the League. Baravelli specifically pointed to how “complete anarchy overruled the country” and that the “authority of the Regent is not felt outside the Capital and entire regions are in the hands of raiders and slave-traders.” See G.C. Baravelli, *The Last Stronghold of Slavery: What Abyssinia Is* (Roma: Società editrice di Novissima, 1935), 5. Despite such assessments, however, George Baer writes that in Britain, “Italian propaganda describing the Ethiopians as vicious, uncivilized, multiraced barbarians never supplanted the post-imperialist, liberal-romantic sentiment that saw them as free and noble people, most of them Christians.” See Baer, 43.

that Italy had breached Article 12 of the League's covenant.⁴⁵⁸ Similarly, at an Assembly meeting on 9 October and at subsequent meetings on the 10th and the 11th, fifty states recorded their disapproval of Italy's actions, backing the Council's decision and agreeing that a Co-ordination Committee should be established to censure Italy.⁴⁵⁹ Article 16 gave the League the right to apply sanctions, but their application was left to each individual state to enforce.⁴⁶⁰ As Baer explains, "the most that could be done, by an agency of the League or a conference of delegated members, was to make recommendations to the government of the individual states."⁴⁶¹

On 18 November 1935, the League's Co-ordination Committee voted to enact financial sanctions, to impose a ban on Italian imports and an embargo on certain exports to Italy.⁴⁶² The embargo, however, did not include iron, coal and, most importantly, oil, which would have significantly impacted Italy's effectiveness in Ethiopia.⁴⁶³ Furthermore, the League denied Ethiopia's request for financial assistance and Switzerland, France and Britain all refused to supply Ethiopia with arms.⁴⁶⁴ The League's censure of Italy was limited, and failed to aid Ethiopia in any significant way, reflecting

⁴⁵⁸ Hardie, 101. Article 12 addressed how disputes between two states should be reconciled. It stated the need for "arbitration, judicial process or a council decision before" any members engaged in warfare.

⁴⁵⁹ Hardie, 102.

⁴⁶⁰ Article 16 "called for the complete and immediate severance of commercial and financial arrangements with citizens of Covenant-breaking states." It also "stated the duty of the Council to recommend what armed force might be needed to support these prohibitions." Furthermore, there was a clause to "provide mutual support to minimize the loss and inconvenience among participating states resulting from" League action. Finally, article 16 could have been "invoked to expel Italy from the League." However, after Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations on 21 October many did not want to lose Italy too. See Baer, 7.

⁴⁶¹ Baer, 7.

⁴⁶² Hardie, 103.

⁴⁶³ Baer, 25. The prohibition of certain exports to Italy included horses, rubber, tin and some ores.

⁴⁶⁴ George Baer quoted Britain's Minister for League of Nations Affairs, Anthony Eden, regarding the decision to not supply Ethiopia with arms: "the Abyssinians seem to me to have had a consistently raw deal from us in the matter of arms." Baer also quoted Eden, as calling the decision "a 'cardinal error of policy'." See Baer, 80-81.

the wishes of both London and Paris for a “double policy of sanctions and negotiations.”⁴⁶⁵ Their objective was to keep Italy on side, but their actions were also informed by fears of Germany’s escalating rearmament and its departure from the League of Nations. Consequently, Paris and London desired to impose “sanctions strong enough to vindicate expectations of the Covenant yet never beyond the limit of Italian toleration.”⁴⁶⁶ Executing the “dual policy”, however, was difficult because of the expectations of the supporters of the League, especially in Britain. Indeed, as Baer insightfully observes, “for supporters of internationalism this test case aroused all the old Wilsonian hopes; for its opponents, all the old reservations.”⁴⁶⁷ Thus, the conflict rapidly assumed a multi-dimensional significance, and attracted a worldwide audience, as the effectiveness of the League in resolving an international dispute was once again put to the test.⁴⁶⁸

British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin’s cabinet, however, was determined to maintain peace in the Mediterranean, believing that “the current Italian problem simply had to be ridden through without a radical departure in policy.”⁴⁶⁹ Baldwin’s commitment

⁴⁶⁵Baer, 9.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶⁷ Baer, 43. One such supporter of internationalism was the British *Manchester Guardian* newspaper which deemed the crisis “a test case” for the organization and its principle of collective security. See, Waley, 31.

⁴⁶⁸ The Manchurian Crisis was the League of Nations first big test. Before the First World War Japan had wanted to “penetrate and consolidate” its position in relation to China with the acquisition of Manchuria. Finally, in 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria and converted the territory “in fact, if not in law, into a Japanese colony.” See Andrew J. Crozier, *The Causes of the Second World War* (Oxford, UK.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 12-13.

⁴⁶⁹ Baer, 48. One Foreign Office voice urging a policy of non-antagonism toward Italy was that of the Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Robert Vansittart. In a minute to Sir Samuel Hoare (FS) and Anthony Eden, Minister for League of Nations Affairs, dated 8 June 1935, Vansittart wrote: “... The position is plain as a pikestaff. Italy will have to be bought off – let us use and face ugly words – in some form or other, or Abyssinia will eventually perish. That might matter in itself less, if it did not mean that the League would also perish (and that Italy would simultaneously perform *another* volte-face into the arms of Germany, a combination of haute politique and haute cocotterie that we can ill afford

to the League's Covenant was tepid, helping explain the Prime Minister's ability to speak "the language of righteousness and idealism" that demonstrated faith in the League, while simultaneously encouraging officials in Paris to "work in the other vocabulary of realism, power and armaments" to negotiate a settlement.⁴⁷⁰ Baldwin's dual policy, however, proved costly as negotiations in Paris led to the Hoare-Laval Plan, which was not only rejected by the League, but resulted in the resignation of Britain's Foreign Secretary, Samuel Hoare.⁴⁷¹ The plan, which conceded much to Italy, demonstrated the extent to which both the British and the French governments were willing to conciliate Italy at Ethiopia's expense. The deal undermined confidence in the League and mocked its principle of collective action by demonstrating that both Britain and France were willing to work outside of its parameters to broker a settlement in the style of late nineteenth century imperialists.⁴⁷² Thus, the Hoare-Laval plan severely damaged the image of solidarity that the League depended upon to deter aggression and to enforce sanctions.

just now." From *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, 2nd series, Vol.XIV quoted in Anthony P. Adamthwaite, ed., *The Making of the Second World War* (1976), 38.

The government's response to Italian actions was undoubtedly influenced by a Foreign Office report commissioned by an interdepartmental committee under the Sir John Maffey. The report was to investigate if Britain had any interests in Ethiopia that were incompatible with Italy's. However, as Baer explains, "the committee did not report until June, and did not send its conclusions to the cabinet until the end of August, by which time the affair was seen in new terms." Nonetheless, the report determined, "there were 'no such vital interests in and around Ethiopia as would make it essential for His Majesty's Government to resist Italian conquest'." See Baer, 3-4.

⁴⁷⁰ Waley, 44. Waley explains that France's premier, Pierre Laval, was "[d]etermined that at all costs Italy should not join Germany as a force hostile to France, utterly skeptical concerning the League of Nations and uninterested in the sorrows of Abyssinians" and thus was continually "preparing a 'deal'" with Italy to resolve the conflict. See Waley, 44.

⁴⁷¹ Initially, Eden defended the plan at Geneva. He explained at a League council meeting on 18 December 1935 that "[i]t must be emphasized that the Paris proposals which were put forward last week were not advanced as proposals to be insisted on in any event. They were advanced in order to ascertain what the views of the two parties and of the League might be upon them, and His Majesty's Government recommended them only for this purpose." See League of Nations, *Report on the Work of the League 1935/6 Part I* (Geneva: League of Nations Publications, 1936), 24.

⁴⁷² Baer, 126. For more on the Hoare-Laval plan see James C. Robertson, "The Hoare-Laval Plan," *Journal of Contemporary History* 10, no.3 (1975): 433-464; Henderson B. Braddick, "The Hoare-Laval Plan: A Study in International Politics," *Review of Politics* 24, no.3 (1962): 342-364.

Following the press revelations of the plan “distress was intense in Geneva” as many states felt that Britain and France had “breached faith with Ethiopia and the Covenant”, effectively discrediting the League.⁴⁷³

General disillusionment was spread by a growing sense of betrayal. Many believed that Britain “was chiefly responsible for ‘the repression of the international wrongs done to the Africans in slavery in the West Indies, America and other places’” and thus had hoped that its government would unreservedly support the right, and Ethiopia.⁴⁷⁴ These hopes were also based on Ethiopia’s membership in the League of Nations and the sense, therefore, that it would be treated fairly and not discriminated against as an African nation. Indeed, the Italo-Ethiopian conflict was generally viewed as not just a test case for collective security but also as a test of the League’s fidelity to its principle of justice and equality for all of its members. For the British Government, however, it was still more: it also raised the specter of polarizing relations between blacks and whites in its colonies. In his book, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, 1934-1941*, S.K.B. Asante explains that the Foreign Secretary was clearly cautioned “that in the presence of the growing nationalist spirit among African races” the Ethiopian situation could do much harm to race relations.⁴⁷⁵ The British Minister in Addis Ababa, Sir Sidney Barton⁴⁷⁶, an experienced diplomat, warned that,

⁴⁷³ Baer, 130.

⁴⁷⁴ Asante, 75.

⁴⁷⁵ Asante, 179.

⁴⁷⁶ Born on 26 November 1876, Barton was given the diplomatic rank of British minister to Addis Ababa in 1929. He was reportedly “horrified and deeply upset that the League of Nations and Britain in particular did not take a tougher line to prevent ‘an international crime’” in Ethiopia. When Addis Ababa was captured in May 1936, Barton returned to England. He retired a year later. See Edward Crowe, rev. Lorna Lloyd, “Barton, Sir Sidney (1876–1946)” In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Brian Harrison and H.C.G. Matthew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) Accessed May 17, 2012. doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/30632.

“far from furthering the cause of ‘civilization of which she claims to be the champion’” that Italy “had done more to lower the reputation of the white race than any occurrence since the 1914-18 war.”⁴⁷⁷ Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia, he believed, created “enmity against all the Western powers having interests in Africa.”⁴⁷⁸ Barton’s concerns were echoed by Lord Hailey⁴⁷⁹ who, according to Asante, warned that, “the Italo-Ethiopian conflict [would] serve as a rallying-point for race-conscious Africans in South and West Africa.”⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, Hailey’s predictions were accurate as “the invasion was often viewed as something of a ‘racial war’” and, when it was clear that Italy would be victorious, the conflict was seen “as ‘the betrayal of the black race’ by the League of Nations.”⁴⁸¹ Thus, the Italo-Ethiopian crisis impacted the Empire’s race relations as it “put British sincerity to blacks on trial”, confirming that “the Empire’s motto of fair-play and justice was not applicable to them.”⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁷ Asante, 179. Asante was quoting a letter from Sidney Barton to Samuel Hoare dated 10 July 1935.

⁴⁷⁸ Asante, 179.

⁴⁷⁹ Born 15 February 1872, Hailey was an administrator in India and writer on Africa. From 1901 to 1907 he served as the first colonization officer of the Lower Jhelum Canal Colony in India. In 1928, he became governor of the United Provinces which was “regarded as the top position open to a member of the Indian Civil Service.” He retired from the Indian Civil Service in 1934 and in 1936 he toured Africa. In 1933 he had accepted directorship of an *African Survey*, a report on the continent sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. See John W. Cell, “Hailey, (William) Malcolm (1872–1969),” In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Brian Harrison and H.C.G. Matthew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) Accessed May 17, 2012. doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/33636.

⁴⁸⁰ Asante, 179. The article of Hailey’s used by Asante was Lord William Malcolm Hailey, “Nationalism in Africa,” *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 36, (1937): 134-47.

⁴⁸¹ Adi, *West Africans in Britain, 1900-1960*, 67.

⁴⁸² Asante, 173. The 1870 Foreign Enlistment Act prevented Black Britons who wished to join Ethiopia’s forces and defend the country against Italians from doing so. Asante, 46. The act states “...[i]f any person, without the license of Her Majesty, being a British subject, within or without Her Majesty’s dominions, accepts or agrees to accept any commission or engagement in the military or naval service of any foreign state at war with any foreign state at peace with Her Majesty, and in this Act referred to as a friendly state, or whether a British subject or not within Her Majesty’s dominions, induces any other person to accept or agree to accept any commission or engagement in the military or naval service of any such foreign state as aforesaid,- He shall be guilty of an offence against this Act, and shall be punishable by fine and imprisonment...” See “Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870” in *The Public General Acts Passed in the Thirty-Third and Thirty-Fourth Years of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria* (London).

Scholarship on the Italo-Ethiopian crisis has, for the most part, focused on the diplomacy of the crisis.⁴⁸³ Even investigations of the League of Nations, and the impact that the conflict had on its operations, concentrate heavily on the actions of the Great Powers, notably Britain, France and Italy. Stephen U. Chukumba in his book, *The Big Powers Against Ethiopia*, conducts a comparative study of the roles played by Britain, France and the United States' in the Italo-Ethiopian crisis.⁴⁸⁴ Chukumba argues that his investigation offers a new perspective on the conflict because it "is directed from the African perspective" and he concludes that the "three powers effectively cooperated individually and collectively to ensure Italy's triumph over Ethiopia."⁴⁸⁵ Yet, Chukumba never defines what it is meant by "the African perspective", nor does he explain how it impacts his work. Thus, like Barker, Hardie and Baer⁴⁸⁶, his study centers only on the actions of the Great Powers and, offers no new analysis of the conflict. Diverging from Chukumba's study is J. Calvitt Clarke III's *Alliance of the Colored Peoples*, a new book that attempts to break from the traditional historiography by examining the Italo-Ethiopian crisis through the lens of Ethiopian-Japanese relations.⁴⁸⁷ Clarke argues that in the 1930s Japan was commonly seen "as the leader of the world's colored peoples" and that "many colonials and American blacks turned to Japan for inspiration."⁴⁸⁸ Utilizing archives in Rome, Tokyo and Washington, Clarke employs a top-down approach to

⁴⁸³ Clarke, xii.

⁴⁸⁴ Stephen U. Chukumba, *The Big Powers Against Ethiopia: Anglo-Franco-American Diplomatic Maneuvers During the Italo-Ethiopian Dispute, 1934-1938* (Washington: University Press of America, 1977)

⁴⁸⁵ Chukumba, 1.

⁴⁸⁶ A.J. Barker, *The Civilizing Mission: the Italo-Ethiopian War 1935-6* (London: Cassell, 1968); Frank Hardie, *The Abyssinian Crisis* (London: Batsford, 1974); George W. Baer, *Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia, and the League of Nations* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976)

⁴⁸⁷ J. Calvitt Clarke III, *Alliance of the Coloured Peoples: Ethiopia and Japan before World War II*, (Suffolk: James Currey, 2011)

⁴⁸⁸ Clarke, xiii.

skillfully trace Ethiopian-Japanese relations from their inception right through the Italo-Ethiopian war. In line with most historians before him, however, he does not venture far from the conclusion that the war “fatally wounded the League and rendered collective security, in or out of the League, impotent.”⁴⁸⁹ Employing a bottom-up approach, Daniel Waley’s *British Public Opinion and the Abyssinia War 1935-6* utilizes British national and local newspapers, diaries, memoirs, pamphlets, correspondence and interviews to investigate the conflict.⁴⁹⁰ Waley examines the British public’s feelings toward the conflict and the principle of collective security, however, in his wide ranging analysis, Waley makes no use of sources rooted in the black British community.

In fact, any understanding of minority opinions and responses to the Italo-Ethiopian War would be missing from the historiography if it were not for S.K.B. Asante’s *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941*.⁴⁹¹ Asante explains that his monograph examines the conflict’s impact “on the growth of nationalist movements in West Africa and developments of pan-African thought and politics”, adding that he chose British West Africa because its nationalism “was far more vigorous than in any other colonial area south of the Sahara” and, also because “in English-speaking West Africa, newspapers developed as a voice to express the protest of the ruled.”⁴⁹² In his investigation, Asante makes extensive use of the West African press, official documents at the national archives of various West African countries, Colonial

⁴⁸⁹ Clarke, xv-xvi.

⁴⁹⁰ Waley, 11.

⁴⁹¹ S.K.B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1931-1941* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1977); S.K.B. Asante, “The Italo-Ethiopian Conflict: A Case Study in British West African Responses to Crisis Diplomacy in the 1930s,” *Journal of African History* 15, no.2 (1974): 291-302; S.K.B. Asante, “The Catholic Missions, British West African Nationalists, and the Italian Invasion of Ethiopia, 1935-6,” *African Affairs* 73, no. 291 (1974): 204-216.

⁴⁹² Asante, 1.

and Foreign Office records and private papers.⁴⁹³ He also uses *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man*, but his utilization of them is almost exclusively limited to understanding how the West African Students' Union and the League of Coloured Peoples organizations reacted to the conflict.⁴⁹⁴ Similarly, Marc Matera includes *Wasu* and *The Keys* in a chapter of his dissertation investigating the Italo-Ethiopian crisis and its impact on "black political organizing in London."⁴⁹⁵ Like Asante, however, he employs the journals as a means to investigate opinions and activities of the West Africans Students' Union and the League of Coloured Peoples. Thus, while *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* have been used by scholars to examine the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, these journals have not been analyzed with the specific purpose of exploring how their earlier depictions of Britain, Europe and Western Civilization were changed by the conflict. Therefore, what follows is an investigation of what the journals wrote regarding the conflict. The examination reveals that the commentaries in *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* reinforced images the journals had already constructed for their readers prior to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935.

Wasu

Wasu's coverage of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis began in July 1935 with an editorial note entitled "The League, Italy and Abyssinia."⁴⁹⁶ In a rather depressing tone, Laminah Sankoh, the editor, wrote that "since the inception of the League of Nations, we have always regarded it with suspicion and, we regret to say, that events have proved our

⁴⁹³ Asante, 3, 5-6.

⁴⁹⁴ For example, Asante writes that what "galvanized the [West African Students' Union] into rebellion against European rule in Africa was the Italian invasion of Ethiopia." See Asante, 50.

⁴⁹⁵ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 104.

⁴⁹⁶ Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: The League, Italy, and Abyssinia," *Wasu* vol.4, no.1, July 1935: 3-4.

suspicion to be well-founded.”⁴⁹⁷ Sankoh stated bluntly that the League had proven ineffectual against a bully in 1931-33, its “pusillanimity in handling the Sino-Japanese situation ... a by-word even among its ardent supporters” and “now the same problem has arisen in the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia.”⁴⁹⁸ Rather than learning from past mistakes, however, Sankoh grimly concluded that “we find the same shilly-shallying, the same trifling with principles, the same compromise...and, we venture to predict, the same acquiescence in the ‘victory’ of the bully.”⁴⁹⁹ Sankoh’s commentary was witheringly skeptical about the League of Nations as a bulwark of justice, portraying the organization as a cowardly one that disregarded principles and failed to protect weaker nations. Moreover, the editorial argued that Britain and France were responsible for Italy’s aggression because they had set a precedent of acquiring colonies that other nations wanted to follow: “under the camouflage of ‘mandated territories,’ France and Great Britain have extended their possessions in Africa” and that “Italy is now demanding payment.”⁵⁰⁰ Yet, rather than despair about Europe’s seemingly unchecked expansion into Africa, Sankoh concluded his article by issuing a stark warning to the ‘white man’: “Perhaps it is as well that the whole of Africa be brought into subjection by the white man, so that when the day of reckoning comes, there will not be found a single country in

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 3. In 1933 Japan refused to accept the mildly termed condemnation that came from a League of Nations enquiry into the Manchuria incident and left the League of Nations in March 1933. See Crozier, 12-13;191. The League of Nations enquiry, known as the Lytton Report, declared “[i]t is a fact that, without a declaration of war, a large area of what was indisputably the Chinese territory has been forcibly seized and occupied by the armed forces of Japan and has, in consequence of this operation, been separated from and declared independent of the rest of China.” See League of Nations, *Appeal by the Chinese Government: Report of the Commission of Enquiry* (Geneva: League of Nations Publications VII, 1932), 127.

⁴⁹⁹ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: The League, Italy, and Abyssinia,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.1, July 1935: 3.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 4.

that continent to afford him as asylum.”⁵⁰¹ Sankoh made no distinction between acquiring colonies by mandate or by invasion, implying that in the eyes of Africans there was little difference between the two. In his view, the crisis was significant because it was a step towards a polarizing, continent-wide, clash between blacks and whites in Africa.

In August the Italo-Ethiopian dispute was back in *Wasu*'s editorial notes in the form of an article entitled “Is the British Government Not Guilty of Slavery?”⁵⁰² The article focused on Anthony Eden's negotiations with Italy and Ethiopia in hopes to broker an agreement that would solve the crisis. Eden, Britain's Minister Without Portfolio for the League of Nations Affairs, offered Ethiopia a piece of British Somaliland in return for an economic concession for Italy.⁵⁰³ Laminah Sankoh not only opposed the proposal, but he wanted to know if the inhabitants of British Somaliland were ever consulted about the offer: “[i]f Signor Mussolini had accepted the proposal, would not the inhabitants of that ‘strip of land’ become subjects of the Abyssinia Government, a government which, as is generally known, tolerates slavery?”⁵⁰⁴ His expression of displeasure with the deal was wrapped in a stinging indictment of British diplomacy: “[s]o for the purpose of appeasing the wrath of the Duce and maintaining the prestige of the League, 5,000 Africans are to be sold into slavery!”⁵⁰⁵ Sankoh attacked Britain's unilateral action to broker an agreement, noting its readiness to simply deal away its subjects without speaking with

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁰² Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: Is the British Government Not Guilty of Slavery?” *Wasu*, vol.4, no.2, August 1935: 21.

⁵⁰³ Michael Callahan explains that Britain wanted “Ethiopia to cede the southern provinces of Ogaden to Italy and give landlocked Ethiopia a corridor of land leading to the port of Zeila in British Somaliland. Mussolini rejected the deal and “demanded control of large sections of Ethiopia territory with an Italian ‘protectorate’ over what was left.” See Callahan, 79.

⁵⁰⁴ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: Is the British Government Not Guilty of Slavery?” *Wasu*, vol.4, no.2, August 1935: 21.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

them or considering their wellbeing. Britain, according to Sankoh, had reduced the people of Somaliland to a pack of cards to be traded at Britain's convenience. Furthermore, Sankoh's commentary was scathingly critical of Ethiopia, portraying it as a barbarous state where slavery still survived and was, in fact, condoned by its government. Given the general recognition accorded Ethiopia in the black community, one might have assumed that the transfer of Africans from British to Ethiopian rule would have been celebrated. Sankoh, however, was unrelentingly critical of Ethiopia and unsparing in his charge that the British government was complicit in slavery. He concluded his article by detailing the broader, harsh, lesson readers were to glean from Eden's offer to Mussolini:

...the Western Powers are not in Africa for the African's good. The claims of humanity do not enter into their dealings with us, in spite of assurances to the contrary. Repeatedly, whenever their interests clash with ours, it is theirs that prevail. We hope that this recent perfidy of the British Government will open the eyes of those who are still unaware of the ruthlessness of imperialism.⁵⁰⁶

This message was significant because, while it was not stated explicitly, Sankoh's conclusion intimated that if Africans' interests were to be safeguarded, Africans would need to take action themselves and not rely on the Western Powers. His comments, therefore, reaffirmed the West African Students' Union's principle of self-help, advocating that Africans should rely on themselves and their own concerted efforts as opposed to waiting on the help of western powers. Moreover, Sankoh's portrayal of Ethiopia's backwardness, emphasizing its barbarity, allowed him to reinforce his depiction of the Western powers as insincere and disinterested in the well-being of Africans since they would simply trade Africans into slavery. Thus, Sankoh capitalized

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 21.

on the opportunity to construct images that served his political needs, even if it meant depicting Ethiopia negatively in order to highlight the Western powers' callousness.

Sankoh's conclusion in "Is the British Government Not Guilty of Slavery?" was an indictment of European morality, something Sankoh returned to in a September article on the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. In an editorial note entitled "Words of Brave Men", Sankoh reiterated an earlier message of his, namely, that the Italo-Ethiopian dispute was more than a disagreement between two countries; it was "the age-long conflict between Right and Wrong."⁵⁰⁷ Sankoh depicted the "attitude of the so-called civilized governments" as tragic and he proceeded to explain why.⁵⁰⁸ His characterization of Italy as a spoiled, pouting child was hardly flattering, while his comments on Britain were devastating: "[T]rue to its traditional policy of sitting on the fence and waiting to take the main chance, [Sankoh wrote of Britain, it] supports, in one breath, 'Italy's desire for overseas expansion,' and in another, the integrity and independence of Abyssinia."⁵⁰⁹ Sankoh's descriptions of Britain as opportunistic and unprincipled cut at the root of the image of Britain as a fair and just power. In sharp contrast he portrayed Ethiopia's emperor, Haile Selassie, as "convinced in the justice of his cause" in contrast to the "double-dealing and indecision of the 'civilized' world."⁵¹⁰ To Sankoh, it was Selassie who was upholding justice, who was upholding the "Right", and not Britain. Significantly, Sankoh made no mention of Ethiopia's backwardness and overlooked the Emperor's role in allowing slavery to thrive in the country because that would have conflicted with the image of Selassie he wanted to create. Instead, Sankoh's comments

⁵⁰⁷ Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: The Words of Brave Men," *Wasu*, vol.4, no.3, September 1935: 37.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37. Quotes in original.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

reinforced an image of both Britain and of Europe as deceitful, allowing him to assert that Africans could not afford to “kowtow to the Powers that be” if they wanted “freedom of expression and self-determination.”⁵¹¹

Sankoh escalated his attack on European morality in three separate articles in *Wasu*'s October 1935 issue. In “The Spiritual Bankruptcy of the West”, he attacked Europe’s “vacillation and trifling with principles”, specifically targeting England’s Archbishop of York.⁵¹² The Archbishop, in commenting on the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, endorsed the League of Nations stating that its covenant should be upheld even if it necessitated force. However, if Britain were left to act alone, because the other League members would not enforce the Covenant, the Archbishop declared, “*it would be positively wrong on the part of Great Britain to act alone.*”⁵¹³ Sankoh disagreed with the Archbishop: “Great Britain is the leading nation of the world and her exalted position entails a corresponding responsibility.”⁵¹⁴ Sankoh portrayed Britain as a trailblazer of the international community, which had to set an example for other nations to follow. He asked whether Britain is “to stand aside and allow a bully to violate a defenceless nation because the other nations have not yet awakened to the sense of their obligations?”⁵¹⁵

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 38. Sankoh wrote that the “heroes of history have always been ready to lay down their lives rather than submit to tyranny”, inferring that Africans would also have to take action to protect their rights. It is also important to note that Sankoh’s commentary on British justice mirrored those of Cobina Kessie in a provocatively entitled editorial article in the March 1934 issue of *Wasu*. Kessie implied that British justice was a travesty and that Britain was hypocritical for denying its black population the rights it afforded its white population. See Cobina Kessie, “Editorial Notes: ‘Nigger’ Hunting in America and Africa,” and “Editorial Notes: ‘Honoured’ Africans,” *Wasu*, vol.3, no.1, March 1934: 5-6.

⁵¹² Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: The Spiritual Bankruptcy of the West,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.4, October 1935: 52.

⁵¹³ Ibid., 52. Emphasis in the original

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 52. Daniel Waley discusses a perception in England of Italy as a bully, which was pushing Britain around on the Ethiopian dispute. See Waley, 81-82.

Perhaps it was his disappointment at the Archbishop's comments that also provoked

Sankoh's reflection upon the Church's contribution to the West's moral decline:

[h]aving forsaken the simplicity and directness of the man they profess to follow, the spiritual leaders who should have been in the forefront of every progressive movement have now their interests so bound up with the social and economic inequalities of the day, that, consciously or unconsciously, they could not but endeavor to maintain the status quo.⁵¹⁶

Thus, Sankoh clearly linked the Italo-Ethiopian dispute to Western civilization's moral bankruptcy, concluding that: "there can never be any civilization that is worthy of the name until the masses are emancipated from the dead hand of the past and our so-called spiritual leaders put in their proper place."⁵¹⁷

Elsewhere in the October issue of *Wasu*, Sankoh attacked the findings of the League of Nations Commission⁵¹⁸ which investigated the Wal-Wal border dispute and declared that neither Italy nor Ethiopia was to blame for the incident.⁵¹⁹ Sankoh

⁵¹⁶ Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: The Spiritual Bankruptcy of the West," *Wasu* vol.4, no.4, October 1935: 53.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53. Sankoh authored another article on the Italo-Abyssinia crisis that took aim at spiritual leaders entitled "Why Italy." He noted that Italy was the home of Christianity and thus the dispute was an opportunity "for Christ's vicar [the Pope], to apply the remedy to restrain his own people from wanton aggression against their co-religionists" in Ethiopia. However, rather than denounce the invasion Sankoh wrote the "Italian priests are now at the Front making god for the soldiers to eat [a reference to transubstantiation and the Eucharist] to strengthen them for their dastardly work." Unfortunately, it was not just Italian spiritual leaders who deviated from the teachings. Sankoh wrote that "in England, for instance, while the clergy prate about 'peace and goodwill to all men', they hold Chaplaincy in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force and wear military decorations on their vestments." To Sankoh, the clergy's activities in the army bolstered his message that "the so-called crisis that has overtaken the modern world is nothing but the judgment of the Moral Order." He made it clear that "[p]olitically and religiously the West has been weighed in the balance and found wanting." See Laminah Sankoh, "Why Italy," *Wasu*, vol.4, no.5, November 1935: 71-72.

⁵¹⁸ The League released the Italo-Ethiopian Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration on 3 September 1935. It "held in substance that neither the Italian nor the Ethiopian government was responsible for the Wal-Wal incident, which was rather 'due to an unfortunate chain of circumstances.'" See Hans Aufricht, *The League of Nations Publications: A Bibliographic Survey of the Work of the League, 1920-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 322. Aufricht was quoting from the League of Nations *Official Journal*, November 1935, 1350-1355.

⁵¹⁹ Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: The Wal-Wal Commission," *Wasu*, vol.4, no.4, October 1935: 53.

condemned “the civilized world” for its “moral turpitude” in allowing Italy to have its way.⁵²⁰ Elsewhere, in the same issue, more disgust was shared over League members’ lack of moral conviction.⁵²¹ Reflecting on the unfairness of the findings of the League’s Commission on the Wal-Wal dispute, Ansah Koi and Ladipo Solanke wrote that “[t]his is the European political logic notoriously styled ‘diplomacy’ which stifles all feelings for religion, all sense of justice, all due regard for fair play, and every consideration in the cause of humanity.”⁵²² Koi and Solanke’s telling commentary highlighted the moral shortcomings of the League of Nations and its missing principles: “... any race or group of people in any of the world to-day that sit down nowadays with their arms folded [Koi and Solanke predicted], will remain for ever an underdog.”⁵²³ The overarching lesson, therefore, was to “keep moving forward on the path of progress in an equal pace with the other marchers, otherwise” according to Koi and Solanke, “you are not a fit and proper

Wasu’s October issue also featured the Secretary of the Imperial Ethiopian Legation in London’s thoughts on Wal-Wal in an article entitled, “Ethiopia Presents Her Case.” The author’s name was not given, but he/she also expressed disgust with the Wal-Wal Commission’s findings. The author characterized Wal-Wal as “a trumped up pretence to cover a barefaced encroachment and trespass on Ethiopian territory.” The author then proceeded to refute each of Italy’s justifications for invading Ethiopia. For instance, he/she noted that Italy’s need for expansion was not a “justifiable excuse for a big Christian power to threaten to massacre another Christian nation” and that an invasion was not “the proper way to civilize and teach proper administration” skills to Ethiopians. In the end, the author concluded Italy’s actions were a “barefaced trampling of treaties, covenants and pacts underfoot” as a “wanton disturbance of the peace of the world.” Furthermore, Italy’s actions would amount to “a great blot on civilization and Christianity.” Lastly, the secretary of the Imperial Ethiopian Legation warned that “the eyes of the African and Asiatic peoples” are fixed on the League to see how it will manage the dispute, implying that there is pressure to justly end “a wanton aggression on a coloured nation.” See The Secretary of the Imperial Ethiopian Legation in London, “Ethiopia Presents Her Case,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.4, October 1935: 54-57.

⁵²⁰ Laminah Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: The Wal-Wal Commission,” *Wasu*, vol.4, no.4, October 1935: 53. Consequently, Sankoh determined that “Abyssinia is to be dismembered to make room for Italy’s surplus population.”

⁵²¹ Ansah Koi and Ladipo Solanke, “Wasu Day 26th October, 1935: an Appeal,” *Wasu*, vol.4, no.4, October 1935: 58-59 In the article, Koi and Solanke noted that the Union’s anniversary was approaching, a day of “joy mingled with sorrow” because of the organizations milestones but, too, because of some of the challenges it faced.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 58. Koi and Solanke explained that this meant they would have to “accept *nolens volens* anything that their superiors may prescribe for them politically, economically and otherwise.”

member to be on the same road ... you must then either be trampled ... or be cleared out.”⁵²⁴ Koi and Solanke portrayed humankind as governed by the rationale of survival of the fittest. Their *realpolitik* image intimated that Africans needed to adopt the international community’s currency of power.

The November 1935 issue of *Wasu* seemed to realize Ansah Koi and Ladipo Solanke’s warning that nations falling behind on the path of progress would be “trampled ...or be cleared out.” In the bluntly entitled editor’s note, “The Massacre of Ethiopians”, Ladipo Sankoh wrote that the League’s condemnation of Italy’s plans was “a far cry from preventing or stopping the war” because, as he explained, the members of the League “subscribe to a form of society based on exploitation of the many by the few for the enrichment of the latter.”⁵²⁵ War, he observed, was “integral” to such a society. Indeed, League members had done the same as Italy by expanding into other countries, and “in condemning Italy the nations [had] also passed judgment on themselves.”⁵²⁶ Sankoh reasoned that this was why League members were hesitant to apply severe sanctions, particularly citing the absence of an embargo on oil. Sankoh knew that oil was of paramount importance to Mussolini’s “mechanised army”, insightfully deducing that its absence from the list of sanctions meant that Mussolini would “be allowed to ‘get away with...’” his attack on Ethiopia.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 58.

⁵²⁵ Laminah, Sankoh, “Editorial Notes: The Massacre of Ethiopians,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.5, November 1935: 70-71.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 71. Sankoh did, briefly, convey a sense that all hope for an Ethiopian victory was not lost in the same November 1935 issue of *Wasu*. In the journal’s “News and Notes” sections he wrote an article entitled “Italian War of Aggression in Ethiopia”, claiming that the tide had turned in the war and that circumstances favored the Ethiopian soldiers. He wrote, “protecting deities in Africa ... have begun to rise against Italian armies everywhere in Ethiopia”, spurring the army on towards victories that were allowing them to reclaim territories. In the face of such success, Sankoh concluded by writing, “we wish Ethiopia

The Italo-Ethiopian conflict appeared less frequently in *Wasu* after November 1935. Indeed, the journal only published two articles on the crisis in 1936, and none in 1937. The first, published in *Wasu*'s May 1936 issue, described the opinions of Africans in Edinburgh's Ethiopian Relief Committee.⁵²⁸ Laminah Sankoh explained that opinions in the committee were divided. It was the view of some Africans that "Britain being the power with the largest portion of Africa, would in fairness to her subjects, see to it that justice was done and honour upheld."⁵²⁹ On the other hand, some members felt that the issue came down to race and could only be seen as a conflict between whites and blacks. Sankoh explained that this group felt that Britain would "unhesitatingly sacrifice the black race on the altar of injustice to preserve the superiority of the white race."⁵³⁰ Lastly, some on the committee felt that Britain would secure its own interests, ensuring that it received the "greatest benefit" from the conflict. While Sankoh was only describing the opinions of Africans in Edinburgh, his summary demonstrated how opinions on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict could vary. Nonetheless, there was a strong sense that Britain, whether to uphold white prestige, or to secure its own interests, would allow Ethiopia to fall.⁵³¹

final and complete victory over Italy." See Laminah Sankoh, "News and Notes: Italian War of Aggression in Ethiopia," *Wasu*, vol.4, no.5, November 1935: 77.

⁵²⁸ Laminah Sankoh, "The Foundation and Activities of 'the Edinburgh Ethiopian Relief Committee,'" *Wasu* vol.5, no.1, May 1936: 21-22.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵³¹ S.K.B. Asante, while studying West Africans' opinions on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, also summarized the West African Students' Union's assessment of the conflict. He writes that the Union saw the battle as the "age-long conflict between right and wrong" and that "opinions were at first divided among them concerning the conflict" and proceeds to detail various opinions on the affair. It was Laminah Sankoh's view that the conflict was between right and wrong and not necessarily the position of the Union itself. Moreover, the divided opinions that Asante attributes to the W.A.S.U. were quoted from Sankoh's "The Foundation and Activities of 'The Edinburgh Ethiopian Relief Committee.'" The divided opinions that Asante attributed to the West African Students' Union in fact represented the sentiments of the Edinburgh

Laminah Sankoh offered his final assessment of the conflict in his June-July editorial note entitled "Wasu."⁵³² He wrote that "nations are united when it comes to their attitude towards the black man which is: keep the black man in his place."⁵³³ Despite Sankoh's belief that the conflict was a battle between right and wrong, he admitted that a "moral problem has been construed into one of race."⁵³⁴ Italy, aided by the Great Powers, had taught Africans the need for and importance of "a united Black Front against the White or any other peril."⁵³⁵ Sankoh's final message made it clear to *Wasu's* readers that the world's great powers were willing to disregard morality in order to oppress blacks, a message that underscored the need for black unity and self-help to overcome collective oppression.

Wasu's analysis of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict reinforced the images of Britain, Europe and western civilization that had appeared earlier in the publication. Before the crisis even began *Wasu* had already characterized British trusteeship and the notion of Christian brotherhood as "fatuous"⁵³⁶, western civilization as morally corrupt for prostituting its reason and goodness⁵³⁷, and "the colonial" as determined to oppress blacks in order to maintain racial superiority.⁵³⁸ Thus, *Wasu's* coverage of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict did not simply report the events of the crisis; it used the war to reiterate the images it had developed earlier in its pages.

committee and were clearly not, as Asante claims, the opinions of the W.A.S.U. members themselves. See, Asante, 50.

⁵³² Laminah Sankoh, "Editorial Notes: Wasu," *Wasu*, vol.5, no.2 and 3, June-July 1936: 25-26.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵³⁶ Laminah Sankoh, "Book Review: A Phase in the Struggle for Independence," *Wasu* vol.3, no.1, March 1934: 35-37.

⁵³⁷ Laminah Sankoh, "Towards a Philosophy of Life," *Wasu* vol.4, no.2, August 1935: 26-28.

⁵³⁸ Raymond Michelet, "Is the Attitude of France Towards Blacks a Truly Liberal One?" *Wasu*, vol.2, no.2, April-June 1933: 22-26.

The Italo-Ethiopian conflict, therefore, did not inspire new opinions in *Wasu*, nor did it drastically change how the journal perceived Britain, Europe and western civilization. Marc Matera's assertion that the war "cast a long shadow over events of the late 1930s, informing how black intellectuals in London viewed everything", arguably overlooks how some blacks in London perceived Britain and Europe well before the crisis started.⁵³⁹ Similarly, S.K.B. Asante's sense that the conflict inspired West Africans "to see themselves in some kind of world perspective, and to think of themselves ... as people belonging to a despised 'race'", neglects the extent to which such feelings existed amongst some West Africans before Italy invaded Ethiopia.⁵⁴⁰ As *Wasu*'s pages show, long before Italian troops marched into Ethiopia, black intellectuals in London had been following, and were drawing meaning from, world events in order to construct images for their readers. Furthermore, Asante asserts that West Africans' were disappointed in how Britain handled the crisis because some strongly believed in British benevolence, intimating that West Africans were surprised when Britain did not protect Ethiopia's sovereignty.⁵⁴¹ Yet, before the war, *Wasu* featured singularly unflattering depictions of Britain as hypocritical and untrustworthy, showing that not all West Africans believed that Britain subscribed to justice and fair play. Moreover, Asante's assessment of West Africans' opinions on the crisis, his insinuation that they were naïve, that they "failed" to understand Britain's international circumstances and were "unable" to see the conflict's complexity, does not stand up to a close scrutiny of *Wasu*.⁵⁴² Laminah Sankoh's article "The Massacre of Ethiopians" and Ansah Koi and Ladipo Solanke's "Wasu Day" were

⁵³⁹ Matera, "Black Internationalism," 118.

⁵⁴⁰ Asante, 9.

⁵⁴¹ Asante, 75.

⁵⁴² Asante, 76.

certainly not naïve. Together they depicted the world as governed by the rule of survival of the fittest and asserted that it condoned the exploitation of the many to benefit the few. Rather than naïve, these writings insightfully and realistically showed that international relations were influenced by power, implying that the strongest nations, such as Britain, would always look out for their best interests. The Italo-Ethiopian crisis proved they were right.

The Keys

The Italo-Ethiopian crisis first appeared in the June-July 1935 issue of *The Keys*.⁵⁴³ In an article entitled, “Italy Returns to Abyssinia”, Reginald Reynolds observed that in the past European rivalries had preserved Ethiopia’s sovereignty.⁵⁴⁴ However, he noted that “... recent events in Berlin” have affected European politics, pushing both Britain and France closer to Italy.⁵⁴⁵ In light of the new political alignments in Europe Reynolds explained that, “the ring is cleared for a straight fight between Italian aeroplanes and Ethiopian huts.”⁵⁴⁶ Reynolds’ summary of events gave no indication that Europe cared for Ethiopia, intimating that maintaining Ethiopia’s sovereignty was not a priority of the European powers. Moreover, the injustice of the invasion was emphasized by his depiction of aircraft being pitted against native villages, an image that detailed just

⁵⁴³ *The Keys* did have an article entitled “What is the Ethiopian Sin?” that appeared in a 1934 issue, but the article did not concern the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. Instead, it discussed the state of “the coloured man” in the world, noting that he had made phenomenal progress and that he was now fighting for social equality. The author, E.N. McKenzie, explained that “the coloured man” would settle with simply being tolerated “after his schoolmaster – the white man – has taught him the difference between a palace and a hovel.” Unfortunately, rather than be proud of “the coloured man’s” progress, McKenzie claims that the white man has erected barriers. Furthermore, McKenzie attacked the lack of unity amongst blacks, arguing that many care only for themselves and not for the race as a whole. See E.N. McKenzie, “What is the Ethiopian’s Sin?” *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 39.

⁵⁴⁴ Reginald Reynolds, “Italy Returns to Abyssinia,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 70, 84-85.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

how uneven the two nations' military capabilities (and morals) were. Reynolds anticipated that, once the Italo-Ethiopian war started, the death of each Ethiopian child would be seen as "a blow struck against slavery."⁵⁴⁷ He also predicted that once "Italian Fascism" turned Ethiopia towards "slavery of empire" that newspapers would "... no doubt applaud the destruction of thousands of human lives and the soul of an ancient nation as another victory for civilization."⁵⁴⁸ Reynolds' commentary portrayed Europe as morally depraved for associating civilization with the destruction of an entire nation, including its citizens. He also charged Italy, and by inference Europe, with instituting "slavery of empire", illustrating the hypocrisy of embracing a practice that it had condemned.

Like Reynolds, W. Arthur Lewis also discussed Europe's political maneuverings in the July-September 1935 "Current Comment" section of *The Keys*.⁵⁴⁹ Lewis wrote that the League of Nations had "virtually asked Mussolini to postpone his imperialist designs while Europe settles some current tribal quarrels."⁵⁵⁰ Lewis distinguished between Italy's aggression being stopped altogether and it being postponed, asserting that Europe favored the latter. By portraying European affairs as "tribal quarrels" Lewis, like Reginald Reynolds, challenged the perception of Europe as civilized. Lewis' article went on to argue that Ethiopia's sovereignty depended on Europe's inability to settle its own affairs. Indeed, as Lewis made plain, "the bank cannot be burgled until the thieves come to a

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁴⁹ W. Arthur Lewis, "Current Comment: Abyssinia," *The Keys* vol.3, no.1, July-September 1935: 2.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 2.

working agreement.”⁵⁵¹ Lewis portrayed the European powers as conniving, illustrating their propensity for double-dealing. He showed that they were delaying Ethiopia’s invasion, not out of principle, but in order to secure their best interests. *The Keys’* readers, therefore, were given the sense that upholding justice did not factor into discussions about Ethiopia. In fact, Lewis lowered expectations that Ethiopia would be saved in his article’s conclusion, noting that there was little chance Britain would take a “definitive stand” against Italy. There was little reason to hope Britain would protect Ethiopia.⁵⁵²

The January-March 1936 issue of *The Keys* built on images of Europe as indifferent to the fate of Ethiopia and to people of African descent in general. In his article, W. Arthur Lewis summarized a League of Coloured Peoples meeting that had discussed and passed resolutions regarding the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.⁵⁵³ Lewis wrote that, according to the L.C.P., the “... attitude of a European country towards an African people is expressive of a deeply seated conviction in the minds of most European peoples that African peoples were ordained to be their serfs.”⁵⁵⁴ Lewis wrote that the League

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 2. *The Keys’* sense that Ethiopia was of little importance to Europe, coming second to other more urgent matters, was reiterated by W. Arthur Lewis in April-June 1936’s issue. Lewis explained that the Italo-Ethiopian crisis was losing its importance as an issue between European states. He wrote that because of the “urgent necessity for cementing the friendship of Italy, Britain and France, the rights of Abyssinia should cease to count.” See W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: Abyssinia,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.4, April-June 1936: 43-44.

⁵⁵² W. Arthur Lewis, “Current Comment: Abyssinia,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.1, July-September 1935: 2. In the article, Lewis also summarized British feelings towards the conflict that were expressed in the newspapers. While he did not name the papers he was reading, he cited feelings of “jingoism” and of “sickly sentimentality.”

⁵⁵³ W. Arthur Lewis, “The League of Coloured Peoples: Resolution Re: Abyssinia,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.3, January-March 1936: 31. The League of Coloured Peoples’ meeting was described as “crowded” and during the session resolutions were passed that expressed support for and cooperation with Ethiopia. As well, the L.C.P. expressed its hope that the British government would do all it could to stop the “terrible catastrophe.”

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 31.

wanted to see this particular attitude changed so that Africans were seen as equals and not “a country and people merely to be exploited.”⁵⁵⁵

C.L.R. James also depicted Europe as fixated on exploiting Africans in the same January-March issue of *The Keys*.⁵⁵⁶ To James, the Italo-Ethiopian conflict was an invaluable lesson for Africans and people of African descent, revealing the “incredible savagery and duplicity of European Imperialism in its quest for markets and raw materials.”⁵⁵⁷ He asserted that European imperialists had wanted to conquer Ethiopia for half a century because of its natural resources and economic potential and now they had succeeded.⁵⁵⁸ James explained that Africans’ subjugation was not owing to their colour but, was because “the Imperialist, despite his guns and cruisers, is in such mortal fear of the indignation of these people that he builds up in every possible way a wall of defence between himself and them.”⁵⁵⁹ It was for this reason that battleships, aircraft and armies were continually needed. Moreover, James claimed that imperialists always insist that they are superior and that the “exploited races” are inferior. These assertions, he explained, work to reinforce the imperialists’ “power of arms by demoralizing the mentality of those whom he uses for his purposes both at home and abroad.”⁵⁶⁰ Furthermore, James focused on Britain’s role in the crisis, specifically noting how “many well-meaning people in Britain took the British Government seriously when it announced itself as converted to the League” only to be disappointed when the Hoare-Laval plan was

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁵⁶ C.L.R. James, “Abyssinia and the Imperialists,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.3, January-March 1936: 32, 39-40.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 32. James explained that the imperialists would make natives buy their goods and impose taxes on the natives. Meanwhile the imperialists would build a few schools and hospitals, allow richer natives to work in the government and to study in Europe in order to show how it was developing Ethiopia, moving it towards a higher civilization.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 32. Capitals in original.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 32.

made public, showing they were duped.⁵⁶¹ James explained: “British Imperialists were prepared to support the League on behalf of Abyssinia and collective security, and even fight, as long as British Imperialist interests were threatened.”⁵⁶² He admitted, however, that “[t]hose are now safe, and all that they are concerned with now is dodging out of their promises as quickly as they can!”⁵⁶³ In his conclusion, James wrote that “Mussolini, the British Government and the French have shown the Negro only too plainly that he has got nothing to expect from them but exploitation, either naked or wrapped in bluff.”⁵⁶⁴ James’ article portrayed Europe as scheming and committed to exploiting others, claiming it cared only for its own interests and with doing whatever it took to secure them. His image of Europe, therefore, gave Africans and people of African descent a clear message about the necessity of coming together in mutual self-help since Europe, dominated by imperialist⁵⁶⁵ ambitions, could not be trusted.⁵⁶⁶

The remaining articles on the Italo-Ethiopian dispute in *The Keys*’ during 1936 and 1937 resigned themselves to the reality of an Italian victory. In a bluntly entitled

⁵⁶¹Ibid., 40.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 40.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 40. James did acknowledge that public opinion was against the British government but explained that it made little difference. He claimed that just as the British imperialists governed the colonies, it also “governs the British people in its own interests.”

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁶⁵ By using the language of “European Imperialists” James was leveling his criticisms without indicting the whole continent, making it clear that the “imperialists” were greedy and untrustworthy. Nevertheless, his article argued that imperialists wielded considerable power since, as in the case of Britain, for example, it governed both the colonies and public opinion.

⁵⁶⁶ The next issue of *The Keys* offered a rebuttal to James’ opinion of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict in its “Correspondence” section. W. Arthur Lewis explained that Dr. Moody invited a member of the League of Coloured Peoples, Major Brunskill, to submit a letter criticizing James’ article. Brunskill explained that he did not wish to challenge the article, but he stated that “[t]he article does not ring true to me, for the truth is seldom so one-sided.” Brunskill also felt that Ethiopia’s emperor, Haile Selassie, would have nothing to do with Britain and its government if it behaved as James described. Thus, according to Brunskill, “the author’s zeal for a good cause led him into inaccuracy.” By inviting Brunskill to write in, Dr. Moody evidenced his discomfort with James’ scathing portrayal of Europe and Britain which, potentially, could tarnish the League’s wish for interracial cooperation. See W. Arthur Lewis, “Correspondence: Abyssinia and the Imperialists,” *The Keys* vol.3, no.4, April-June 1936: 60.

article, "The Rape of a Black Empire", W. Arthur Lewis wrote that, after fifty years, Italy had finally taken Ethiopia.⁵⁶⁷ Yet, according to Lewis, Italy did not conquer Ethiopia on its own, but rather "... in May 1936 Italian poison gas and British oil defeated the Abyssinians", a description that underscored Britain's role in Ethiopia's defeat.⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, Lewis predicted that since Italy assured Britain that it would not interfere with its special interests, sanctions would be ended and a deal brokered that would stake out British, French and Italian interests in Ethiopia.⁵⁶⁹ Lewis depicted Britain and France working alongside Italy to execute the "shameless rape of a coloured empire", a charge that portrayed the European powers united against Africans.⁵⁷⁰ Furthermore, in an article entitled "The New 'Italian Empire'", Lewis attacked the results of Italy's victory explaining that "[i]t is now clear what this new dose of European civilisation will mean for Africa."⁵⁷¹ Lewis proceeded to describe the collapse of administration within Ethiopia and the government's reliance on mass shootings, which he deemed "the terrorist

⁵⁶⁷ W. Arthur Lewis, "Current Comment: The Rape of a Black Empire," *The Keys* vol.4, no.1, July-September 1936: 2.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. Indeed, a similar feeling was expressed in a lecture given to the League of Coloured Peoples by a Member of Parliament, Rev. Reginald Sorensen which was summarized for *The Keys*' readers by editor, Charles E. Collet. Collet wrote that Sorensen responded to a comment about the Italo-Ethiopian conflict that stated: "Abyssinia did not justify the loss of one British seamen." Sorensen used the quote to underscore his feeling that England was "more concerned in protecting peoples who exploit the colonies than the people who inhabit the colonies." Sorensen, just as Lewis and James had done, depicted Britain on the wrong side of justice. See Charles E. Collet, "British Public Opinion," *The Keys* vol.5, no.1, July-September 1937: 17.

⁵⁷¹ W. Arthur Lewis, "Current Comment: The New 'Italian Empire'," *The Keys* vol.4, no.2, October-December 1936: 15. In *The Keys*' next issue, January-March 1937, the publication also followed up on the war's aftermath again, this time by summarizing the fate of various Ethiopian leaders. Charles E. Collet wrote: "Ras Nazibu is dead of tuberculosis in a Swiss resort. Ras Imru is in an Italian penitentiary. Das Desta with 10,000 men is still fighting although at his last gasp, and will probably end before a firing squad like many a patriot chief." But, it is his update on the fate of Ethiopia's Emperor that was most telling. Collet wrote that, "Haile Selassie is leading the life of a **retired gentleman** in an English country home." The emphasis appeared in the original and highlighted the contrast between the fate of Selassie, who fled as an exile to Britain, and his men. While not explicitly stated by Collet, the structure of his comments, insinuated that Selassie was leading the good life while his people and country suffered. See Charles E. Collet, "Current Comment: Gentlemen," *The Keys* vol.4, no.3, January-March 1937: 31.

foundation for 'order' so beloved by Fascists," to keep some level of control within the country as it plotted a similar settlement policy to Kenya.⁵⁷² In light of all this, Lewis concluded that, "to make a Roman holiday more white exploitation has been imposed on Africa and racial tension intensified by the destruction of the last independent state."⁵⁷³ Lewis' commentary illustrated that, once again, the interests of whites had triumphed over those of Africans. Aside from demonstrating that in Ethiopia European civilization had failed to live up to its name and that whites were guilty of exploiting Africans, Lewis' article also acknowledged the racially polarizing implications of the conflict. As such, he could not help but state that the independence of a black nation would not be tolerated in a world defined by white interests.

The Keys' coverage of the Italo-Ethiopian war constructed images of Europe that portrayed it as indifferent to Ethiopia's plight and committed to the subjugation of the world's Africans and peoples of African descent. Indeed, the European powers were depicted as self-interested and, despite their claims to the contrary, as uncivilized because they embraced warfare and instituted their own sort of slavery to Empire. Crucially, Britain was not exempt from these portrayals; it was defined by them. Yet, none of these images of Europe and Britain were new to *The Keys'* pages. The Italo-Ethiopian conflict simply reinforced portrayals of Europe and Britain it had constructed earlier, it did not create them. Before 3 October 1935, *The Keys'* carried articles that asserted that slavery still took place, charging Britain with an attitude of selfishness and the feeling that it

⁵⁷² W. Arthur Lewis, "Current Comment: The New 'Italian Empire'," *The Keys*, vol.4, no.2, October-December 1936: 15. Lewis did not condone the Kenya-like settlement plan that Italy wished to institute in Ethiopia because he felt that it had disastrous consequences to the natives of Kenya.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 15.

could subjugate others.⁵⁷⁴ The publication featured a portrayal of whites as committed to racial superiority by trying to convince blacks that they were inferior and by deadening their ambition and by applying “political screws” and “economic shackles” if necessary.⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, in some articles, Europe had been depicted as “neurotic” and the white man as convinced that he should “engage in inter-tribal warfare along highly scientific and diabolically efficient lines.”⁵⁷⁶ Finally, Britain’s hypocrisy had already been highlighted in articles expressing disappointment that Britain did not live up to its reputation for justice and fairness and thus, was not that which it professed to be.⁵⁷⁷ These images of Britain and Europe were simply reiterated (and reinforced) once Italy was allowed to invade and conquer Ethiopia. Therefore, S.K.B. Asante is only partially correct when he observes that “[t]he Ethiopia question gave the League the opportunity to express in violent terms its ideas about colonialism and imperialism”, because it had actually been expressing such ideas in its journal before the war broke out.⁵⁷⁸ If anything, the Italo-Ethiopian conflict gave *The Keys*, as it did with *Wasu*, an opportunity to see how accurate its portrayals of Britain, Europe and civilization really were.

⁵⁷⁴ Una Marson, “The Wilberforce Centenary Celebrations, Hull July 23rd-29th,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.2, October 1933: 22-23, 34-35.

⁵⁷⁵ Abe Desmore, “The Cape Coloured Peoples Today,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 78-79; George Brown “Editorial,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 65-66.

⁵⁷⁶ Harold A. Moody, “The President’s Message,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.4, April-June 1935: 66-67, 83.

⁵⁷⁷ J.B. Danquah, “The Gold Coast and Ashanti Delegation. A Gesture and Lesson,” *The Keys* vol.2, no.2, October-December 1934: 27, 27-38; Sylvia Lowe, “Disillusionment,” *The Keys* vol.1, no.2, October 1933: 28. In the case of Danquah’s article, he also argued that Britain had fostered resentment because of tightening its control over its colonies.

⁵⁷⁸ Asante, 47.

The Black Man

The Black Man's coverage of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis dwarfed that of *Wasu* and *The Keys*, nearly doubling the number of articles those journals published on the affair.⁵⁷⁹ Included in the journal's coverage were articles, poems⁵⁸⁰ and clippings from other newspapers that *The Black Man* reprinted with, at times, a few added lines of commentary from the editor, Marcus Garvey.⁵⁸¹ The journal's first article on the crisis appeared in its June 1935 issue and noted that Mussolini was looking to extend his "dictatorship power" in Ethiopia.⁵⁸² Garvey optimistically held that Haile Selassie was "capable of maintaining the tradition of his fathers" in defeating Italy.⁵⁸³ Moreover, he felt that public opinion in Britain was against Mussolini's invasion, citing English thoughtfulness and an "honest English attitude" as reasons that Italy's extension into

⁵⁷⁹ *Wasu* published the fewest articles with approximately 12, *The Keys* published 15 articles and *The Black Man* had 43.

⁵⁸⁰ Marcus Garvey authored three poems about the conflict that appeared in *The Black Man*. In "Mussolini-Scourge of God", Mussolini was called a murderer and it was asserted that Rome had "blessed the murderer's awful deed." "The Fascist Brute" noted that a storm was gathering in the world and called it "Mussolini's way of death" that would eventually inflame the world if not stopped. Finally, "The White Man – Spirit of Mussolini" depicted whites as a "murd'rous clan", with a "murd'rous gaze" who "envy at all wealth" and roam the world with "maxim guns and poisoned darts." See Marcus Garvey, "Mussolini-Scourge of God!" and "The Fascist Brute" in *The Black Man* vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935:4; Marcus Garvey, "The White Man – Spirit of Mussolini," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 10.

⁵⁸¹ *The Black Man*'s "News of the World" section was always composed of articles taken from various papers published in Britain and the United States selected by Garvey, an avid reader. Articles Garvey reprinted about the Italo-Ethiopian conflict were taken from the *New Statesman and Nation*, the *New York Sun*, the *News Chronicle*, the *Daily Herald*, the *Daily Worker*, the *Daily Telegraph* and a publication in Rome, though the paper's name was not given. I have chosen not to pursue these articles in order to focus on the journal's original writings instead, but a selection of the articles follows. See, for example, "The Abyssinia Rape. The Background of the Conflict," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 16-17; "Ethiopia Has Never Been Conquered," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.10, October 1935: 14-15; "Light and Peace in Ethiopia," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 15; "The Puzzle of War: British Efforts to Halt Italy Doubted," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 20.; "Who Answers for this Crime?" and "Struggle in Ethiopia – How it will Continue," *The Black Man* vol.2, no.1, May-June 1936: 11-12 and 17-18; "Italian Advance in Abyssinia," and "Pope's Plans in Abyssinia," *The Black Man* vol.2, no.2, July-August 1936: 15; "British Aid to Oust Silly Emperor", "Italy is Again Britain's Friend", "Haile Selassie, After Selling Gold, Sells Silver", "Emperor of Abyssinia", "The Land Haile Selassie Threw Away" and "Ras Kassa's Two Sons Shot," *The Black Man* vol.2, no.5, January 1937: 17-20.

⁵⁸² M. Garvey, "Mussolini and Ras Tafari," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 16.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 16.

Ethiopia would be opposed.⁵⁸⁴ Garvey's positivity spread from his flattering description of Britons to his assessment of Ethiopia's international situation. He wrote that Ethiopia "has millions of friends outside of her own borders in Africa" who would come to its aid if needed.⁵⁸⁵

Unfortunately Marcus Garvey's optimism about Ethiopia's prospects did not last as the 'millions of friends' he had described earlier developed a problem with Ethiopia's colour. In the publication's July issue, Africanus⁵⁸⁶ wrote that, "race prejudice stands out against the Emperor of Abyssinia."⁵⁸⁷ Based on the state of the world and its "heartless civilization" Africanus told his black readers that they had their own conquest to begin.⁵⁸⁸ While this did not include the use of "gases of aeroplanes" and "death rays" the black man's conquest, according to Africanus, would seek to "relieve the burdens heaped upon him by an unfair and unjust civilization."⁵⁸⁹ After portraying civilization as hostile to blacks Africanus sent a stern warning to Europe's biggest empires, Britain and France. He wrote that it was hoped that both powers would use their influence to stop Mussolini and noted that blacks would be watching "with keen scrutiny and real political analysis" to determine whether the empires and League of Nations were earnest in their dealings with Ethiopia.⁵⁹⁰ Concerning Britain, specifically, the note of optimism about its peoples'

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁸⁶ It is not clear who "Africanus" was. It is likely the name was a pseudonym for Marcus Garvey who was the journal's main contributor.

⁵⁸⁷ Africanus, "Italy and Abyssinia," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 17.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 17. In the same July issue of *The Black Man*, Marcus Garvey made a similar comment about the conflict's usefulness for uniting blacks and motivating them to action. He called Mussolini a "mad man" but acknowledged that he "may be an instrument in the hands of God to arouse the people to a full consciousness of themselves." See M. Garvey, "The World As It Is," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 10.

⁵⁹⁰ Africanus, "Italy and Abyssinia," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935, 17, 18.

thoughtfulness and honesty seemed to have changed. Africanus underscored how the black man had a claim on Britain because he had “helped to make the British Empire”, an assertion that depicted Britain as indebted to its black population.⁵⁹¹ And, if that was not a convincing reason for Britain to help Ethiopia, Africanus offered another. He wrote that England must realize that its’ “control of hundreds of millions of coloured peoples places her in a position where she cannot antagonize them.”⁵⁹² This threat was in stark contrast to earlier praise of the English people as honest and thoughtful to be found in the pages of *The Black Man*. Britain, it appeared, needed to be cajoled into helping Ethiopia.

Garvey kept up his pressure on the British government and continued his attack on civilization in *The Black Man*’s August-September 1935 issue. He explained that “British Negroes” had expressed their support for Ethiopia and made it known that they were watching their government closely.⁵⁹³ Garvey stressed that “British Negroes” had “always upheld the prestige of Britain”, arguing once more that their loyalty merited British action to protect Ethiopia.⁵⁹⁴ Furthermore he warned that, in regard to the conflict, British diplomacy better be “above board” and “clean” because, if not, it would show in the reaction of the “Negro intelligence” that was determined “to lift its race above the level of a people in pawn.”⁵⁹⁵ Aside from leveling more threats against Britain, Garvey

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 17.

⁵⁹³ M. Garvey, “The World As It Is,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 9.

Garvey also indicated that similar demonstrations of support for Ethiopia took place in Paris as well.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 9. Garvey’s sense that the Italo-Ethiopian conflict could strain race relations within the British and French Empires if not handled properly was given credence by J.S. McIntyre in a 1936 issue of *The Black Man* entitled “How the Young West Indian Feels.” McIntyre’s article spoke about West Indians’ growing sense of connection to blacks living outside the Caribbean through their common African heritage and by claiming that West Indians were becoming increasingly disappointed with their racial position. McIntyre wrote that the West Indian was becoming aware that “in the mind of the white man he is ever ‘a nigger,’ another victim of exploitation.” While the Italo-Ethiopian conflict is never explicitly mentioned, McIntyre does allude to it. He wrote that the conflict revealed “beyond doubt that this dastardly challenge by this

used the Italo-Ethiopian conflict to turn the tables on definitions of civilized in his article, “Gone Mad.”⁵⁹⁶ He portrayed Mussolini as wanting to “devour” Ethiopia and took issue with the dictator’s public statements that the invasion was necessary in order to civilize Ethiopians.⁵⁹⁷ According to Garvey, Mussolini’s behavior showed that it was he who needed “to be civilized” because he looked like a “barbarian” compared to the “gentleman” like Emperor of Ethiopia.⁵⁹⁸

It is evident [Garvey wrote] that from the behavior of a certain section of the white race their civilization will ultimately be destroyed, because it is barbarous, it is savage, it is ungodly, it is nearly everything that is bad, but for the behavior of the limited few who are disposed, without prejudice, to work with reasonable and peaceful men for the ushering of a new era of human brotherhood...⁵⁹⁹

Garvey gave a nuanced picture of the “white world” that differentiated between those who antagonized blacks under the banner of civilization and those who were genuinely interested in fostering brotherhood.⁶⁰⁰ His article, however, showed that it was the former

arch-plunderer of white imperialism, has been accepted.” Since “white imperialism” in Ethiopia was being condoned, McIntyre claimed that some West Indians viewed the conflict as “the prelude to the overthrow of white overlordship and despotism.” McIntyre’s commentary appears to hint that the Italo-Ethiopian conflict had stirred enmity between the races just as Garvey had predicted. See J.S. McIntyre, “How the Young West Indian Feels,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 4-6.

⁵⁹⁶ M. Garvey, “Gone Mad,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 1.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1. As yet another example of how a section of the “white world” had gone mad, Garvey cited a murder in the United States. Garvey reported that an American Senator, Huey Long, was shot and that men who witnessed the assassination, quickly shot and killed Long’s murderer. This shootout, according to Garvey, did not exemplify civilized behavior.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶⁰⁰ Garvey expressed the same ability to avoid generalizations that condemned entire races later on in *The Black Man*. He wrote that “we do not believe all the people of any race are bad” or, for that matter, good. Indeed, he wrote that there are white people “who are making it difficult for other races to entirely hate an oppressive race” since they have been “real friends of the Negro.” Insightfully, Garvey instructed his readers to balance Hitler and Mussolini with the good that Abraham Lincoln and Victoria the Good accomplished. See M. Garvey, “The World As It Is,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.2, July-August 1936: 20.

who possessed the ability to impose their will on the world and, consequently, would be responsible for bringing the “white world’s” civilization to its knees.⁶⁰¹

Articles appearing in *The Black Man*’s October⁶⁰² and December 1935 issues built on depictions of Mussolini and Italy as uncivilized. In “The War”, Garvey portrayed Mussolini as “the arch-barbarian”, and claimed that he had not only bombed and gassed Ethiopian soldiers but, women and children too.⁶⁰³ That Italy would attack civilians worked to underscore Garvey’s depictions of it as brutal and barbaric. In fact, in December he reaffirmed this image by calling Mussolini the “brute man of Europe”, stating that the, “savagery of Italy must be put down.”⁶⁰⁴ When it came to stopping Italy’s aggression Garvey praised the work of Anthony Eden, calling him “the most outstanding figure in the fight of civilization against a barbarian.”⁶⁰⁵ Eden had stayed true to “the traditions of British justice and moral philosophy.”⁶⁰⁶ As such, Garvey believed that Eden had “saved the British Empire in the face of hundreds of millions of coloured peoples of the world” because he had confirmed Britain’s “allegiance to a legal, moral, righteous

⁶⁰¹ In an article entitled “Our Lessons – Remember It,” Garvey emphasized how Mussolini’s behavior was not unique. Garvey noted that Mussolini was “doing to-day ... what thousands of other characters in history have done at other periods of human civilization” and would, undoubtedly, do again. As such, Garvey wanted his readers to see history as a guide that could “inspire them and point them to what they should and should not do for the future.” See M. Garvey, “Our Lessons – Remember It,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 11-12.

⁶⁰² October 1935’s issue of *The Black Man* featured the first of Garvey’s many criticisms of Ethiopia, and its Emperor especially, for being unprepared to defend itself. In this particular case, Garvey interpreted Ethiopia’s plight as a valuable lesson of “what unpreparedness means to a people.” He argued that Italy knew it could defeat Ethiopia because it knew of the “slackness, the indifference, the unpreparedness of the Negro.” Garvey asserted that blacks needed to prepare and take actions so that they could defend themselves in the future. See M. Garvey, “Lest We Forget,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.10, October 1935: 3-4.

⁶⁰³ M. Garvey, “The War,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no. 10, October 1935: 1. Garvey also claimed that Italy was using black native soldiers as “advance guards and shock troops.” As such, he argued, that Mussolini’s glory was not his but “the glory of Africa” since they were the ones winning victories.

⁶⁰⁴ M. Garvey, “The War Begins,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.11, December 1935: 9,10.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 10. Note how Garvey had cleverly characterized Ethiopia as civilized alongside Britain, whereas Italy is depicted as uncivilized once again.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

and philosophic system.”⁶⁰⁷ But Garvey did end his article by acknowledging the Hoare-Laval plan that contradicted the British policy he had praised a few sentences earlier. Rather than admit his praise for Britain had been premature, however, and his positive portrayals inaccurate, Garvey explained that what he had written of Eden reflected the “real representative spirit of the English people.”⁶⁰⁸ The Hoare-Laval plan, according to Garvey, was an aberration and “must not be considered as representative of the real English spirit” which was always “calm, judicious and deliberate.”⁶⁰⁹ Garvey’s response to the Hoare-Laval plan is surprising in light of earlier statements that warned Britain that its diplomacy would be carefully scrutinized by its black population. The Hoare-Laval plan was exactly the kind of double-dealing that Garvey warned against but, rather than take it as an example of Britain’s dishonesty and insincerity to its black population, as it was illustrated by the commentary in *Wasu* and *The Keys*, Garvey simply dismissed it and reaffirmed his positive image of Britons.

The December 1935 issue of *The Black Man* also marked the beginning of articles depicting the League of Nations in relation to its involvement in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict. In “Smiles for the Thoughtful”, “the Imp”⁶¹⁰ wrote of an imaginary conversation between a professor and a black student.⁶¹¹ The student characterized the League’s statesmen as deficient in “decent behavior” and as not displaying any qualities “of moral weight or value.”⁶¹² His negative portrayal of League statesmen compared them to

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 10, 11.

⁶¹⁰ It is not clear who “the Imp” was but, as with Africanus, it is more than likely that it was simply a pseudonym for Marcus Garvey. See Africanus, “Italy and Abyssinia,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 17.

⁶¹¹ The Imp, “Smiles for the Thoughtful,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.11, December 1935: 17-18.

⁶¹² Ibid., 17.

prostitutes, because of their willingness to sell themselves “for whatever they can get.”⁶¹³

The statesmen were also depicted as deceitful; very few of them, the Imp concluded, would have “been able to look the world in the face.”⁶¹⁴

The Imp’s criticisms of League statesmen were consistent with Marcus Garvey’s depictions of “white civilization” in his March 1936 article, “The War Continues.”⁶¹⁵ Here Garvey described the Italo-Ethiopian conflict as a “war within a war” because Italy’s quest for Ethiopia had caused “white nations to feel disturbed” by affecting “their righteous pretences”, while, at the same time, “white nations” were trying, to ensure that Italy was not defeated because that would tarnish “the white man’s prestige among people of colour.”⁶¹⁶ Garvey portrayed “white nations” as trapped by their own moral weakness, unable to decide between doing what was right and their desire to keep blacks subjugated. Moreover, Garvey described Haile Selassie as standing in the middle of the “white nation’s” quandary, “sandwiched between two war machines as a sacrifice for the League of Nations.”⁶¹⁷ Based on the League’s ineffectualness and the “white nations”

⁶¹³ Ibid., 17.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 17. In May-June 1936’s *The Black Man*, Garvey criticized European statesmen again by calling them “a broken stick” that Haile Selassie had depended upon for support and, of Britain specifically, he wrote that it “had more than her hands full in assisting Abyssinia and saving herself.” See M. Garvey, “The March on the Rhine,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.1, May-June 1936: 2.

⁶¹⁵ M. Garvey, “The War Continues,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936:1.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 1. In particular, Garvey asserted that nations pretend they are disgusted with Italy but, in truth condone Italy’s overtaking of Ethiopia as long as their interests are not affected.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid., 1. Garvey reasserted that the League had betrayed Selassie and was dishonest in its dealings with him in the same March 1936 issue of *The Black Man*. He wrote that Selassie had complied with the League, doing what he was asked, but that it had done nothing to help the country with its crisis. Garvey found the League insincere and actively involved in a “political scheme” to undermine Selassie’s power and to diminish an independent black empire from having influence in Africa. See M. Garvey, “The World As It Is,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 13.

moral ineptitude, Garvey claimed that the crisis had clearly revealed that “the prevailing virtues of white civilization” were hypocrisy, falsehood and deception.⁶¹⁸

Garvey built on his portrayal of white nations as dishonest in an article entitled, “Unpreparedness a Crime: The Negro is Guilty.”⁶¹⁹ Garvey claimed that Italy had been helped by governments which were “pretending friendship” with Ethiopia while, simultaneously, “assisting Italy to devastate the one remaining black kingdom,” Ethiopia.⁶²⁰ In fact, in *The Black Man*’s next two issues, Garvey blasted Europe and the League of Nations for their dual role in Ethiopia’s defeat. He wrote that the “brutal spirit of Europe” had sacrificed nothing to help Ethiopia and that Selassie had been “betrayed by the League” whose weak sanctions gave “tacit encouragement to the aggressor.”⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸ M. Garvey, “The War Continues,” *The Black Man*, vol.1, no.12, March 1936:1. Garvey’s attack on “white civilization’s” moral decadence went further in the article to assert that the “most holy men of our present century” would be found “far down in the remotest depths of Hell” for blessing the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

⁶¹⁹ M. Garvey, “Unpreparedness a Crime: The Negro is Guilty,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 7-8.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7. Yet, rather than put all the blame on the governments responsible Garvey asserted that blacks need to “re-adjust” and “think intelligently” in order to ensure that they were not “wiped out entirely from civilization.” Furthermore, Garvey’s article criticized Ethiopia, determining that Mussolini’s attack on Ethiopia was not the fault of the Italian dictator but the fault “of the Negro himself.” Garvey explained that blacks’ disunity and unpreparedness made them a target for attack. Of Ethiopia specifically, he cited a “lack of vision” as the reason that it was “left alone to fight a mightily equipped European nation” which possessed “modern scientific implements.” See M. Garvey, “Unpreparedness a Crime: The Negro is Guilty,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.12, March 1936: 7-8.

⁶²¹ M. Garvey, “The Misfortunes of Haile Selassie,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.1, May-June 1936: 4-5. In this article, Garvey also took aim at Selassie by blaming Ethiopia’s backwardness for working against it, claiming Selassie had not implemented reforms fast enough to prevent Mussolini from attacking. Furthermore, in “Italy’s Conquest?” Garvey attacked Selassie again, this time, for not developing Ethiopia fast enough and for not uplifting and fostering greater unity amongst blacks worldwide. He wrote that Selassie “allowed himself to be conquered, by playing white, by trusting to white advisers and by relying on white Governments, including the white League of Nations.” Garvey’s emphasis on colour underlined his message that Selassie had betrayed not just Ethiopia, but the entire black race. For more of Garvey’s criticisms of Selassie see: M. Garvey, “Italy’s Conquest?” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.2, July-August 1936: 4-6; M. Garvey, “Criticizing the Editor for Criticizing Haile Selassie,” *The Black Man*, vol.2, no.3, September-October 1936: 15-16; M. Garvey, “Fighting in Abyssinia – the Emperor Runs,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.5, January 1937: 1-2; M. Garvey “More Light on Haile Selassie,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.5, January 1937: 8-10; M. Garvey, “The Failures of Haile Selassie as Emperor,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.6, March-April 1937:8-9; and M. Garvey, “The World As It Is,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.6, March-April 1937: 17-18.

Italy, according to Garvey, had proven that “you must first have might, and you must use it against those who do not possess it, and take for yourself the things you want.”⁶²²

Garvey, like W. Arthur Lewis in *The Keys*, advocated a *realpolitik* approach to politics in light of how Europe conducted its affairs.⁶²³ Geneva, he pointed out, had been ruthless and acted shamelessly.⁶²⁴ It had revealed that, “its only concern for the coloured peoples of the world is their exploitation and domination.” Pointedly, Garvey renamed it a “league of notions.”⁶²⁵

As the Italo-Ethiopian conflict wore on, Garvey’s depictions of the League of Nations, Europe and Haile Selassie remained consistently negative. Yet, his portrayals of Britain seemed to be as complicated and contradictory as ever. For instance, in “The Failures of Haile Selassie as Emperor”, Garvey wrote about what Haile Selassie would see while he was exiled in England, namely, that “men are not flogged and chained and kicked because of their colour” and, too, he will see a place “where true human liberty guarantees to every man the happiest pursuit he can bring himself.”⁶²⁶ In England, wrote Garvey, “men look at others as equals and not as masters by divine right.”⁶²⁷ Yet, as a man of colour, living in England, Garvey would have undoubtedly known about, if not experienced, the country’s colour bar. Equally puzzling was Garvey’s apparent exclusion

⁶²² M. Garvey, “The Misfortunes of Haile Selassie,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.1, May-June 1936: 5.

⁶²³ Indeed, in an article entitled, “More Light on Haile Selassie,” Garvey claimed that a “Machiavellian policy is evident to-day as in the day of the originator of the policy” and, therefore, diplomacy must be taken with a “grain of salt.” See M. Garvey, “More Light on Haile Selassie,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.5, January 1937: 8-10.

⁶²⁴ M. Garvey, “Abyssinia and After,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.2, July-August 1936: 6-8.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7. Garvey also repeated his claim that “the white man” could not be trusted, noting that he would not help in “any matter that would benefit the black man and put him on a level footing” unless it was in his interests.

⁶²⁶ M. Garvey, “The Failures of Haile Selassie as Emperor,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.6, March-April 1937: 8-9.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

of Britain from his criticism of the League of Nations and “white nations” for their duplicity and hypocrisy. Britain was a significant member of both of those groups.⁶²⁸ Thus, Garvey’s depiction of England as colour-blind and a place where true liberty and equality were realized seems contradictory and problematic. His portrayals, however, confirm that images were constructed to suit political aims. Garvey, perhaps better than any of the other authors in *Wasu* and *The Keys*, used his articles to create images of Britain, Europe and civilization that suited the messages he wished to communicate to his readers.⁶²⁹

The Black Man’s coverage of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict reinforced images it had already created in its pages before the war started. Indeed, prior to October 1935 the “white man” had been portrayed as ruthless⁶³⁰ and hypocritical⁶³¹ and the world as a place where powerful nations would always prey upon the weaker ones.⁶³² Such images appeared again in the journal’s commentary on the crisis that depicted the “white man’s” civilization as unjust, heartless and deceptive and international relations as governed by the mentality of ‘might makes right’ and not by any sense of justice. Moreover, *The Black*

⁶²⁸ In a late 1937 article entitled, “The Roman Lion”, Garvey wrote that Mussolini had “bluffed England and France out of their wits.” Rather than criticize them though, Garvey claimed that anyone who knows them would “imagine or believe that England and France are only giving Mussolini rope long enough to hang himself.” Eventually, according to Garvey, Britain and France would “collect on a bill that has been long outstanding – a bill of political impertinence that no self-respecting nation could well afford to see unliquidated.” Garvey, once again, reaffirmed his faith in Britain and France, claiming that they would make sure justice was served. This depiction, however, contradicted earlier portrayals of “white nations” and the League of Nations as hypocritical and dishonest. See, M. Garvey, “The Roman Lion,” *The Black Man* vol.2, no.6, August 1937: 1-2.

⁶²⁹ Laminah Sankoh was also good at manipulating images he created to suit his political needs, recall Sankoh’s ability to emphasize or to overlook slavery in Ethiopia. See Laminah Sankoh, “Is the British Government Not Guilty of Slavery?” *Wasu* vol.4, no.2, August 1935: 21; Laminah Sankoh, “The Words of Brave Men,” *Wasu* vol.4, no.3, September 1935: 37-38.

⁶³⁰ M. Garvey, “Marcus Garvey Opens International Convention with Great Speech,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.6, November 1934: 4-12.

⁶³¹ M. Garvey, “The World As It Is,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.8, July 1935: 9-11.

⁶³² M. Garvey, “Negro Psychology,” *The Black Man* vol.1, no.5, May-June 1934: 7-8, 14.

Man's portrait of Britons as thoughtful, honest, calm and judicious, and Britain as a place where equality and liberty were available to everyone was also not new. Before Italy invaded Ethiopia, the journal had characterized Britons as even-tempered, just and incapable of any inhumanity.⁶³³ Thus, like *Wasu* and *The Keys*, *The Black Man*'s coverage of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict did not inspire new images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization. Instead, the journal was able to reaffirm the depictions it had already developed, capitalizing on the opportunity to portray the crisis in a way that furthered its political aims.

Taken together, *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* afforded the Italo-Ethiopian conflict a considerable amount of space in their pages, a decision which showed that the journals deemed the crisis significant and worthy of their readers' attention. Yet, despite its importance, the conflict did not inspire new depictions of Britain, Europe and Western civilization in the journals' pages. As it turns out, the events of the Italo-Ethiopian crisis simply provided new opportunities for the journals to reinforce images they had already constructed, reaffirming their power to make their own determinations about the world in which they lived.

⁶³³ M. Garvey, "Silver Jubilee in England," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 2; the Spider, "A Good Rebuff," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.7, June 1935: 13-14. It is worth noting that Garvey did criticize the British media and public for being hypocrites because of how they responded to sexual assaults committed by black men versus white men. See, M. Garvey, "The World As It Is," *The Black Man* vol.1, no.9, August-September 1935: 9-10.

Conclusion

As objects of study *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* are remarkably insightful. The journals illuminate the sharp “social commentary and political dissent” of the West African Students Union, the League of Coloured Peoples and Marcus Garvey in the interwar years.⁶³⁴ They also reveal where ideas, which “were to receive widespread implementation in the radically altered climate of the post-war world war”, were “shaped, hammered out and broadly disseminated.”⁶³⁵ For the purpose of thesis, however, *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* are significant for a third reason: the publications constructed images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization for their readers that allowed them to make their own determinations about the world. Indeed, their depictions demonstrate that Africans and people of African descent were critical of the world in which they lived and took the opportunity to represent it in a way that made sense to them and the goals they wished to achieve.

Images the journals constructed are significant because they empowered Africans and peoples of African descent to engage with the white world around them at a time when racial discrimination limited the avenues of expression open to blacks in Britain.⁶³⁶ Writers in *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* capitalized on their location, in Britain, to represent Western culture according to how they saw it. Thus, while the journals serve as windows into “an emerging black internationalist and anticolonial perspective”, they

⁶³⁴ Matera, “Black Internationalism,” ii.

⁶³⁵ Macdonald, 167.

⁶³⁶ Marc Matera writes that “Africans and West Indians found their voices stifled in a variety of ways. Most continued to face significant obstacles to their attaining advanced degrees and securing academic positions afterward. In the rare instances in which their writings made it into print, the recognized, European ‘professionals’ in the field greeted them with skepticism, at best, and hostility, at worst.” See Matera, “Colonial Subjects,” 390.

deserve recognition for how they demonstrate the determination of Africans and peoples of African descent to be heard and to be recognized as authorities and commentators on the world.⁶³⁷

Moreover, the images of Britain, Europe and Western civilization that the journals constructed illustrate that it was not just Africa that was invented but Europe too. Indeed, *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* show that Africans and people of African descent created their own notions of Europe in the same way that “European knowledge of Africa, as of many other parts of the colonial world, was very much ‘invented’ and ‘imagined’ according to European needs.”⁶³⁸ The journals, with their diverging political interests, show that perceptions of Western civilization were just as malleable and susceptible to change as those of Africa. Yet, while the journals’ portrayals of Britain, Europe and civilization were never fixed, they did share a common theme: refuting the notion that Africans and people of African descent were inherently inferior. Images of Western culture, even before Italy invaded Ethiopia, were critical of (and repudiated) any attitude that condoned discrimination, exploitation and injustice on the basis of a dark skin colour.

Wasu, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* constructed images of Western culture that reflected their political interests. In the case of *Wasu*, its portraits show that the journal was not antagonistic to Britain despite its goal of West African independence. For instance, when authors wished to underscore the benefits of Empire, and what African institutions should adopt from Europe, they portrayed Britain positively. When *Wasu*’s authors wanted to promote West African independence and self-determination, they

⁶³⁷ Matera, “Colonial Subjects,” 389.

⁶³⁸ Zachernuk, 4.

depicted Britain negatively: both as hypocritical and untrustworthy. Lastly, images of Western civilization in *Wasu* emphasized its deficiencies in order to highlight the contributions Africans could make in the world and to attack the notion that Europeans were superior. Images in the journal that seemed contradictory, therefore, speak to *Wasu's* ability to paint Britain (and more generally, Europe) differently according to the message it wished to convey to its readers.

In *The Keys*, meanwhile, its images refuted negative perceptions of Africans and people of African descent, while also challenging the Empire to live up to its principles of fair play and justice. Britons, for instance, were depicted as conceited because it was believed that their sense of superiority was at the root of racial prejudice. Negative images of Britain and Europe put a spotlight on the reality of unjust and deceitful policies to demonstrate how they tarnished Britain's image abroad and fostered resentment against colonial powers. Finally, images in *The Keys* presented Europe as diseased, which illuminated Europe's flaws while it, simultaneously, outlined the need for blacks to exert their moral leadership in the world. Thus, despite the journal's loyalty to Britain and British ideals, *The Keys* painted pointed pictures of the Empire and Western civilization to facilitate its goal of equality between blacks and whites and to destroy the infamous colour bar.

In *The Black Man*, positive images of the "white man" highlighted what blacks needed to do in order to rise from their downtrodden position of subjugation in the world. Yet, the journal also portrayed the "white man" negatively when it wished to promote self-reliance and urge black unity. *The Black Man* characterized western civilization as mad and doomed. It detailed its flaws to warn blacks that they would soon become world

leaders and, thus, needed to be prepared. Thus, *The Black Man* was far from a repository for Marcus Garvey's "wearisomely repetitious views", as it constructed images that pragmatically assessed, and insightfully looked to improve upon, the position of blacks in the world.⁶³⁹

Wasu, *The Keys* and *The Black Man*, offer enticing possibilities for new avenues of study regarding blacks living in Britain during the interwar years. For instance, historians can examine whether each of the journals' constructions remained consistent from their first issues to their last. In the case of *Wasu* and *The Keys*, one could also ask whether the Second World War impacted their depictions of Britain, Europe and Western civilization since they both published into the post-war years. Moreover, London was only one city with a vibrant print culture in the interwar years; Paris and New York were also centers where blacks published journals and newspapers. Thus, comparative research could be conducted to shed light on whether black journals in France and the United States also constructed images of the white world around them that suited their interests and to evaluate how such images compared and diverged from one another.

More generally, research could be done to investigate how the journals' images further today's understandings of "... racial formation as ongoing and ever-changing", and of race as "... an historical process rather than a static, naturalized 'category'."⁶⁴⁰ The images that *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* constructed present an opportunity to examine how the journals contributed to and interacted with the understanding of race current in the interwar period. Indeed, more research is needed to study how the journals'

⁶³⁹ Ian Duffield, "*The Keys*. The Official Organ of the League of Coloured Peoples by Roderick J. Macdonald; *The Black Man*. A Monthly Magazine of Negro Thought and Opinion by Robert A. Hill," *Journal of African History* 19, no.3 (1978): 475.

⁶⁴⁰ Laura Tabili, "Race is a Relationship, and Not a Thing," *Journal of Social History* 37, no.1 (2003): 126.

portrayals of Britain, Europe and civilization, not only described and defined their white counterparts but also, contested and modified racial categories.

Taken together, *Wasu*, *The Keys* and *The Black Man* are important publications for more than what they reveal of the West African Students' Union, the League of Coloured Peoples or Marcus Garvey. The journals are a testament to the courage of Africans and peoples of African descent to overcome racial discrimination and to express their power to represent the world around them according to their own perspectives.

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