

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

### **A COLLOQUIUM AND BOOK PROJECT ON “HEROINES AND HEROES OF BACK TO AFRICA MOVEMENTS, PAN AFRICANISM, AFRICAN NATIONALISM AND GLOBAL AFRICANISM: THEIR PHILOSOPHIES, ACTIVITIES AND LEGACIES”**

Hosted by  
The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus and  
Barbados and Pan Africa Strategic Policy Research Group (Panafstrag)

People of African descent who were forced to leave Africa over 400 years ago have always had Africa etched in their consciousness and some have had a desire to go back to Mother Africa. There were African communities and individuals in the Caribbean, England and North America who returned or were repatriated back to Africa during slavery and after emancipation. Under the leadership of many unsung heroines and heroes, there are accounts of many who returned from the USA and the Caribbean to Liberia and from England to Sierra Leone and have made valuable contribution to those societies. In the nineteenth century, spearheaded by African descendants in the USA, the back-to-Africa movements encouraged persons of African descent to return to their African homelands. They spurred similar movements in the diaspora. They are not only concerned with physical repatriation but with socio-political and economic conditions on the African continent. The unsung heroes and heroines who led this movement questioned the status quo and called for African unity.

In the nineteenth century, Trinidadian Lawyer, Henry Sylvester Williams was a key figure involved in the formation of a Pan African Association which has been sustained by others. Williams through his wife, met a South African woman who narrated the story of Apartheid in South Africa, brought together a group of individuals who wanted to change the lives of Africans living under colonial rule. He was supported with moral and financial contributions from various individuals and the Church of England to initiate what he called a Pan African Movement not in Africa but in the heart of the Colonial Empire in London. He and the pioneer members of this movement went on to organize the first Pan African Congress. It included Africans living in England, Africans from the continent especially Anglophone West Africa, African descendants from USA and the Anglophone Caribbean. This took place in July 1900 in London with the purpose of giving political rights for self-determination for the then subjects of the British colonies south of the Sahara especially South Africa. This movement acted as a forum of protest against the European savagery in the African pacification projects and was consolidated as a Pan Africanist Movement.

William Dubois from USA, championed the cause after S. Williams, by organizing a series of Pan Africanist Congresses in 1919, 1921 and 1923 in Paris, Lisbon and other capitals of the colonial powers of Europe. The fourth PAC was organized in 1927 by the Women's International Circle for Peace and Foreign Relations, a black women's club in New York led by Addie W. Hunton, Nina Du Bois, and Minnie Pickens. In 1945, George Padmore organized the watershed Pan African conference of 1945, which brought together the future leaders of the future independent British African colonies like Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Hastings Banda of Malawi and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The Second World War had led to an almost universal feeling among Africans and people of African descent of colonial liberation. The consciousness of the racial and undemocratic reality as well as popularity of black internationalism had increased in the inter-war years, this contributed to the militancy of the conference by Africans and persons of African descent. The 1947 Pan African Congress was the last of its kind to take place during the first half of the twentieth century.

In between 1930 and the 60's there was the Francophone entry on to the Pan Africanist Movement led by Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aime Cesaire propagating their philosophical perspective and concept of Negritude. The Lusophone Africans were left behind until Amilcar Cabral as part of the Africans and African descendants group of the anti-colonialists, activists and freedom fighters, gave impetus to further defining and strengthening the framework for creating synergy between those descendants and the mother Africa. This is evident in both Cabral and Fanon who introduce culture as a construct of struggle and vice versa. Cheikh Anta Diop also came on to the scene with his studies of Egypt (Egyptology) and its connection to the Africans as the rulers and builders of Egypt. In addition he called for a United States of West Africa. Nkrumah considered the father of Pan Continentalism, brought in the North of Africa as an extension of the Pan Africanist Movement. These persons were committed to total emancipation of Africa from colonialism and neo-colonialism, self-reliance, self-determination and Pan African solidarity. They however, subscribed to different ideological paths that were to lead to emancipation, while Garveyites were in favor of capitalism, the Du Boisian ideology, similar to George Padmore were socialist in orientation.

The Negritude group was more concerned with the glorious past of Africa in the world than with ideological postures especially the socialist models for the Sub-Saharan countries of Africa. Marcus Garvey, a charismatic politico-economic visionary and an organic intellectual created the first and so far the best black empowerment and wealth creation project in history. This is yet to be replicated. Garvey gave a pragmatic economic underpinning to the ideological concept. He was successful in establishing UNIA Chapters in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, India, Australia and key

American cities but could have been better off but for the lack of support and solidarity from the African-American elites and leaders in USA. This later brought his movement into conflict with the US Government who jailed and deported him. The lack of solidarity, self-reliance and envy is still the bane of progress in the current 6<sup>th</sup> Region.

Post Marcus Garvey, the Williams, Dubois and Nkrumah era has led to continuous debatable intellectual discussions, activities and efforts in the African diaspora and Africa (South of the Sahara) on whether to build on Pan Continentalism (to include the Arabs in North Africa) rather than concentrate on the origin of the concept, Pan Africanism, which was for Sub-Saharan Africa. There is no doubt that there is no similarity in terms of philosophy, languages and history between Pan Africanism and Pan Arabism. These differences cannot be wished away.

Further, the struggle and sometimes the war for the independence in African countries from the European colonialists in 1950s, the independence of most African and Caribbean states (except Haiti), the creation of the OAU in the 60s led to heightened consciousness of the people of African descendant in Brazil, Hispanic and Dutch speaking countries of South and Central America of their connection to Africa. From the late 60s however, there was a recession of Pan African ideology which saw a slump in the synergy and interaction between Africa and its descendants. This was because of the rise of statist nationalism as well as economic crises in many African countries. It was not until the late 80s and 90s when the impetus for unity was revived through the push for the end of apartheid in South Africa. This became a global agenda and the African-Americans took the lead in getting the USA to take a stand and convince other western countries to bring that repressive system to an end.

By the end of 1990s and early 2000 a new crop of enlightened leadership were in control of key countries in Africa with Nigeria and South Africa pushed by Libya to create the African Union replacing the OAU. With it, the 6<sup>th</sup> Region, for all Africans living outside the Sub-Saharan African Countries was born. The AU's 6<sup>th</sup> Region comprises:

- a. Non-Resident Africans who in the last 50 – 100 years have voluntarily found themselves living permanently outside Africa in Europe, North America, Asia and the Latin America and the Caribbean.
- b. Non-Resident Africans who were taken by force centuries ago from Africa to those places mentioned above and including those from North Africa.

It is important to note that the UNESCO publication, General History of Africa - Volume 9, has covered the historical events but with some important gaps. This colloquium seeks to fill one of these gaps as the theme above demonstrates, through a book project.

This necessitates that we engage in discussion of the thought and practice of leading Africanist personalities responsible for:

- The Back to Africa Movements by discussing their intellectual and pragmatic philosophy, thoughts and legacies of pre 1900s
- The inception of Pan Africanism from 1900 to the first half of the twentieth century
- The post 1945 which saw the rise of African nationalism which led to the independence of African countries (with many liberation wars) and the birth of the OAU up to 1990s. During this period, the Pan African discourse was shifted from an anti-imperialist one to a regional economic operation in alliance with and at the directive of imperialism.
- The post 1960s which also saw the independence projects of Caribbean states. Caribbean exiles and the new left shifted their focus on Caribbean national independence projects embracing nationalism, socialism and third world internationalism.
- Keeping Pan Africanism alive within this 1980s-1990s period which can be considered as an interregnum of the movement
- Transformation of the OAU into AU with the inclusion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Region and the beginning of another historical era of Global Africanism

These discussions will include the philosophical, political and economic thoughts activities and legacies of these historical personalities.

As a follow-up to the above, the objectives of the intended Colloquium at UWI Cave Hill Campus in Barbados, are to identify the sung and unsung personalities of those movements in global Africa (from the Continent and Diaspora) and discuss them in line with the theme above.

The 3 day Colloquium seeks to bring together but is not limited to Historians, Sociologists, Political Scientists, Economists, Philosophers, Anthropologists, Film-Makers, policy makers and activists from Africa, the America's, Asia and Europe.

It is expected to be held between 12 and 15 January 2016.