

# The impact of historical processes in the caribbean



The Impact of Historical Processes in the Caribbean. Migratory movements and the establishments of patterns of settlements by different groups within the Caribbean from pre-Columbian times to the present. The development of systems of productions: Encomienda, Slavery, Indentureship and the plantation system. Responses of Caribbean people to oppression and genocide: resistance, development of peasant groups. Movements towards independence

Political enfranchisement Movement towards Independence “ From emancipation until the end of the nineteenth century Caribbean people were shaking off the mental, psychological and emotional trauma associated with enslaved and bonded labor.” (Mohammed, 2007) The abolition of slavery in 1834 in the British colonies did not result in any meaningful change in the social, economic or political wellbeing of ex-slaves. However, freedom from slavery created a demand for greater freedoms, and so began the movement to independence.

Universal Adult Suffrage/Political Enfranchisement “ Political enfranchisement refers to the right of a people or nation to determine their own affairs.” (Mohammed, 2007). This propelled the process towards Constitutional Decolonization, which is the process whereby the colony achieves independence. The widespread unrest in the 1930s forced the colonial masters to instate elected representation. There were no restrictions put on the population – except that of age in being eligible to vote and elect members to the legislature. 1944 Jamaica, 1945 Trinidad and Tobago, 1950 Barbados, 1951 Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Guyana and St. Kitts. Political Enfranchisement

This refers to the right of a people or nation to determine their own affairs. Once emancipation was achieved it was only a matter of time before Caribbean people start to develop the skills and expertise necessary to challenge the status quo; the first of which was the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. Caribbean people also migrated to different regions in the years to come to work for better wages. Some went to work on the Panama Canal, the modern sugar industry in Cuba, Puerto Rico in textile factories, the oil refineries of Curacao and Aruba and the oil fields of Venezuela. Returning soldiers who had served in the world wars were unwilling to settle for their low status in society and thus formed their own organizations to speak out against the injustices of the society.

Many were influenced by the philosophical ideas of Marcus Garvey black pride and consciousness. By the 1930s people launched riots and strikes in order to bring about changes. This time also saw the rise of charismatic leaders such Uriah Buzz Butler, Alexander Bustamante of Jamaica, Arthur Cipriani of Trinidad Nathaniel Crichtlow of Guyana and Grantley Adams of Barbados. Creation of political parties- JLP & PNP in Jamaica; Barbados Progressive Leagues; Peoples National Movement led by Eric Williams all assisted in the move towards self governance and Nationalism. The Moyne Commission had recommended that all colonies move towards Adult Suffrage that is, every adult should have franchise.

Adult Suffrage came into being in Jamaica 1944 which stipulated that every man/ woman over 21 should be given the right to vote. This gave them the opportunity to make laws to effect changes in the respective colonies. Adult Suffrage gained support from the Nationalist Movements such as Graveyism  
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and Pan African Movement; the intelligentsia, literary works of writers and the media in the decolonization process. Trade Unions were also formed to enable better working conditions and treatment of workers of which were the Barbados Workers Union and Jamaican Industrial Trade Union.

**Economic enfranchisement** This is a condition whereby a country or nation achieves the right to determine how it will develop its systems of production. The genesis of this enfranchisement can be found in the movement of the newly freed people to establish themselves as new proprietors and which evolved into the formation of free villages and peasantry. Caribbean people in their quest for self governance also wanted the opportunity to control their economy.

The plantation economy was diversified to include alternative crops such as banana, cocoa, coffee, arrowroot which were cultivated by peasant farmers on small landholdings. This strategy of economic diversification attempted to make small farmers self sufficient and resilient to face the economic hardship. It kept them independent of the planter and the low wages offered on the plantations. It gave them the opportunity to organize themselves for the export market and develop some sophistication in making trading connections with the wider world.

In spite of this yearning to become economically viable peasants were meted with oppression from the ruling class who charged high rents for land or face eviction. Planters refuse to sell lands to peasants in order to block their efforts to seek credit facilities; some were sabotaged. Efforts at economic

diversification did assist the colony in establishing a more balanced economy and provided the peasants with a sense of independence.

The Development of Systems of Productions: Encomienda, Slavery, Indentureship and the Plantation System. Encomienda System In 1498, Columbus introduced the encomienda, a practice which granted the natives to the Spanish for labor in return for food, clothes and Christian teachings. In 1502, Nicolas de Ovando arrived with a decree legalizing the encomienda and in 1509 Ferdinand decreed that it should be introduced throughout the empire.

The Laws of Burgos, in 1511, Antonio de Montesinos (or Antonio Montesino) was a Spanish Dominican friar on the island of Hispaniola (now the Dominican Republic and Haiti) attacked the encomienda and its abuses. The Spanish Crown decided that the system was necessary as the only source of labor but that it could be better organized and the rights of the indigenous people properly protected. The Laws of Burgos (1511) stated that; The natives were freemen.