

Nationalism is a modern form of consciousness

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A few weeks ago the topic of nationalism was presented to me. So I asked myself " What is nationalism? " and " How did it come about? " This led me to an essay stating that " Nationalism is a modern form of consciousness (Greenfeld 2006: 64-92). " It went on to say that " Nationalism is the constitutive element of modernity and it provides the foundational form of consciousness in all societies defined as nations (Greenfeld 1992: 3-26). " With this brief insight on nationalism I wrote this paper. This essay will discuss the proposed question ' Nationalism is a modern form of consciousness.

What role(s) do you think that this form of consciousness play(s) in the identity of Caribbean people? Do you think that this modern form of consciousness contributes to the motivation of Caribbean people? ' But before we talk about nationalism in the Caribbean we must take into consideration the history of the Caribbean in order to identify the role that this form of consciousness plays in the identity of Caribbean people. While growing up, I can vividly remember my primary schoolteacher, Mrs Khan, stating that " The Caribbean is a group of small islands encircled by the Caribbean Sea".

That same afternoon I asked my mother about the small islands that make up the Caribbean and how far they are from Trinidad. She told me that " The Caribbean is made up of countries such as Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Island (BVI), Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Christopher & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines and the republic of Trinidad and Tobago and that they share a common history.

It is enriched with variety of cultures, religion and dialects, which were mixed and created new forms such French Patois; that's why the Caribbean is comprises of such rich diversity. " This information encouraged me to dig deeper and find out more about nationalism and to my astonishment I realised that there are multiple perceptions on the theory of nationalism. These perceptions varied because of the overall modifications in life and the roles that different persons took on the idea of nationalism.

Nationalism, a modern form of consciousness, emerged in the sixteenth century after the War of Rose in England (Greenfeld 1992: 3-87). This war resulted in the annihilation of the aristocracy creation a void at the top of the social pyramid which needed to be filled thus a new aristocracy. This new aristocracy was comprised of talented and educated individuals of the lower social strata. Although I had all these information the question still remained " What is nationalism and how it related to the Caribbean? Ernest Gellner (1964) stated that nationalism " invents nations where they do not exist even if it helps to have some pre-existing cultural traits. " He went on to say that the nation has become a sociological necessity for modern, industrial society. This form of modernisation eats away traditional society and its role relationships, uprooting and mobilising the peasants and swelling the cities. These urbanised peasants and workers who experiencediscriminationformed a new nation of their own and consequently, nationalism generates new nations. Now I'm faced with a new question " What is a nation? According to dictionary reference a nation is " a large body of people, associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own. " Eric Hobsbawm (1994) viewed

the nation as an invented tradition. He argued that in order to understand the concept of nationalism this invented tradition must be explored. Furthermore, she understood that the fundamental part of nationalism is the nation. The perception of nationalism deals with the creation of consciousness of human mind, shared beliefs, popular sovereignty and equality.

This then led me to think that nationalism has played a role in the Caribbean identity. When discussing the historical background of the Caribbean you should know the difference between individualistic nationalism and collectivism. Before the 19th century, most of the Caribbean islands were colonized by the European Union such as Great Britain, France, Spain and Portugal to a lesser extent. The enslaved individuals of these colonies fought against the whites for improved working conditions among others.

This is one of the examples whereby enslaved individuals felt that mental consciousness. Together they saw they needed a better life and so showed resistance. After the emancipation of slavery and countries obtaining their independence the beginning of nationalism has been felt greatly by countries. For example, in my birth country, Trinidad and Tobago, a French Creole, Andrew Arthur Cipriani, was responsible for the beginning of national consciousness. He was responsible for the formation of the Workingmen's Association, now called Trinidad Labor Party.

The party's motto "Agitate, Educate, Confederate" motivated individuals to overthrow the Euro-British Colonialism which appealed to their sovereignty. Now there is a place called Cipriani Boulevard in honour of Andrew Arthur Cipriani's contribution in Trinidad and Tobago nationalism. Additionally, many

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countries migrated to foreign investment for economical stability to maintain their nation shows that this form of modern consciousness has been developed. A contribution of nationalism that is currently growing throughout the Caribbean is loyalty.

People are becoming more and more devoted to their individual countries which are seen especially around independence time. For instance, in Grenada most buildings are decorated in their national colours and children are being educated about the history of Grenada. This gives them a sense of who they are as a country. Before, people of various countries would wear their flags in an unmannerly fashion and no one would say anything but now they wear it with pride. This modern form of consciousness also brought about by the political directorate and the trade unions. Individuals such as Dr.

Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago, T. A. Marrayshow of Grenada and Jacob of Guyana are but a few who promoted self-reliance and walking together for the betterment of each other and it played a profound role in Caribbean identity. Some of the things within the Caribbean that contribute to the identity of the Caribbean people are education, sports, CARICOM/ CSME and the CCJ. In education there are areas such as University of the West Indies (UWI) and Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) which contributed to the Caribbean identity and who we are today. In sports there are areas such as cricket.

The West Indies cricket whether they are winning or losing is a major factor that influenced Caribbean identity. Dr. Hon Denzil Douglas the Prime Minister and St. Kitt's and Nevis stated that , the West Indies cricket team removed

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the Caribbean from the clutches of colonialism and that is the real form of nationalism. Nationalism, a modern form of consciousness, has contributed to the motivation of the Caribbean people. For instance, after the abolition of slavery ex-slaves educated themselves to the highest level possible as well as their children because they did not want them to be like them.

Many times I questioned why it is my parents are pushing us to attain the highest possible educational level and now after reading and researching for this paper I see the importance of an education. They also were motivated to cease free labour and to acquire better paying jobs so that they can provide for their families. I concur that nationalism played an important role in the shaping of the people of the Caribbean. The Caribbean people rebelled against their oppressions for betterment. Thus, it can be said that nationalism a modern form of consciousness did play apart in the development of Caribbean countries identity.

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