

# How the Racial Conflict was Displayed?

## 1. Employment

Appointments and promotion on the job, for example in the Civil service were made on the basis of family connections. Job security and permanent appointments were easily guaranteed to persons of the lighter hue (color) while others worked for decades as 'temporary' employees.

## 2. Laws

As we would expect, the laws had to be adjusted after Emancipation to reflect the 'new free' society. So, from 1838 to 1930's a series of laws were passed. In the main, these ensured the continued domination and progress of the ruling class at the expense of the working class. These were designed to tie the ex-slaves to the estates and keep them in their place as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. When we looked at the Morant Bay Rebellion, we saw where a new tax of eighteen (18) shillings was levied on donkey carts while the tax was removed from plantation carts.

What was also important were the laws that were NOT passed. You already know that it was not until after the 1938 riots that Trade Unions were legalized in the British West Indies. The ruling class was NOT interested in guaranteeing or protecting workers' rights.

## 3. Education

The Education System was reflective of all three areas of conflict: that is gender, class and race. Let us start with the gender. At the secondary and tertiary levels there were more places in terms of scholarships and more schools for boys than girls. In Trinidad, the then Governor Lord Harris established 'ward' schools for the Indians to attend. In terms of class, one would find that the 'free' elementary or Government schools were poorly equipped and less Government funds were allocated to them.

## 4. Ostracism

Members of the upper class completely ignored those of the lower class except in cases where the latter worked for them. In Jamaica, in the 1940's, 50's and 60's the practice was for those of the upper class particularly from the urban areas, to recruit young girls from the 'country': rural areas to work as domestic help. It was



a common thing to look in the newspaper and see ads for 'young girls from the country to work in the home'. These young girls were often treated very badly, in some cases they worked like slaves until all hours of the night and were referred to in the most disparaging way.

But ostracism was also practiced by the upper class against any member of their elite and privileged group who dared to marry outside the class. For example, **Norman Manley's** mother, a white woman got married to his father who was a black (colored) man. She was disowned by her family and forced to work as a postmistress at Belmont. In those days it was unheard of for a WHITE woman to be working to support her family. Only the working class did that sort of a thing!!

We see this same sort of ostracism taking place in the area of recreation. Even if they could afford it, the laboring class in general was excluded from participating in any of the organized sports or joining any of the members' only clubs that were in operation. If you were to go to horse racing in those days, it would be the privilege of the upper class to watch the races with their 'trophy' wives on their arms, with the signature parasol (umbrella) to shade them from the sun. Any blacks or lower class that would be seen would be the workers such as the stable boy.

## 5. Gender conflict

**a. Women** who worked on the sugar estates were **paid less than men**. This is ironic because during the time of their enslavement the men and women performed the same tasks in the fields. In Jamaica, men earned one shilling six pence per day while women were paid six pence. That is almost fifty per cent less than what the men were getting!



*6 Pence coin*

**b. Women** were excluded from certain professions and jobs. For example, they could not enter the police force.

**c. Sexual harassment** and physical abuse characterized the conflict that existed between the two genders. A number of domestic helpers had this sort of experience.



## 6. Religion

The Established Church (Anglican) practiced 'selective seating'. The blacks or members of the lower class were relegated to the rear of the Church.

## 7. Access to Financial assistance

Banks would not even consider lending money to the working class. The excuse would be that they "did not have the necessary collateral." Yet, in British Guiana in particular, preferential treatment of **loan concessions were granted to Portuguese merchants** and you can imagine that not ALL of them met the 'collateral criteria'. The poorer class had to resort to informal means such as the partner system, better known in some parts of the Caribbean as throwing box or susu.



*A Portuguese merchant*

## 8. Political participation

The political arena was seen as the exclusive domain of the whites or ruling class. Firstly, before 1944, the franchise- the right to vote- was reserved for those who owned a certain amount of wealth. This would be certain acreage of land, business etc., Now, we know that Britain had not yet granted Universal Adult Suffrage to her West Indian colonies. Jamaica was the first to receive it in 1944, Trinidad a year later (1945) and the others following in the 1950's. But, the fact of the matter is, the establishment of the Crown Colony Government (1865) paved the way for a certain group to monopolize the few positions that were available. Throughout the British Caribbean, the 'new' legislatures consisted of members that were nominated by the Governor. Who would he nominate? What class would these persons belong to? In essence therefore the system closed the door to those of a certain hue wishing to vote and or enter politics.



Let us look at what happened to Marcus Garvey, founder of the first modern political party in Jamaica from as early as 1929. He was imprisoned for three months for the tenth point of his manifesto which expressed the view of the majority of the population at the time. Garvey argued that there should be a provision in the law which allowed for the imprisonment of judges who dealt unjustly with the people.