

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

How British Colonization Shaped Race Relations in Guyana's Politics

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SPRING 2023

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degrees
in History and Political Science
with honors in history

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the cultural and political impacts of British Colonialism in its former colony of Guyana. It argues that the racial divide in Guyana's colonial and contemporary society directly results from British behaviors and attitudes. Formerly known as British Guiana under British rule, the nation is home to diverse people. This paper examines the relations between formerly enslaved Africans and Indian Indentured Servants. Studying British behavior and the colonial mindset using British parliamentary documents that consist of official records and correspondence displays the inherent racial attitudes created by the British to divide the country on ethnic grounds to retain control of the country's people and commerce. Due to the racial attitudes embedded in the social stratification of Guyana, there was a struggle for independence. The British successfully separated the two majority groups in the country, leading to a lack of national unification. The result was a political party system that separated based on race. Guyana's two-party system held between the People's Progressive Party and People's National Congress exists because of British intrusion on efforts for independence and the society created from British racial attitudes to sustain influence over the country despite it becoming a sovereign state.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a project that brings my culture to light, so to start, I wanted to thank my parents. My parents immigrated to this country and gave me all the opportunities I can access today. This thesis is my homage to where they come from and the country they left. I hope to demonstrate to them how proud I am of where they came from and the efforts to understand their country more. This thesis is for my culture and my parents. I also wanted to acknowledge where this all started when I took HIST 302W with Professor Catherine Wanner when I learned that history is something to be interpreted and that I also have a voice to tell it. It sparked my interest in the narratives of colonization and that there is more to the story that still has to be told. I would not have brought this thesis to life without the desire to tell this narrative that the class and Professor Wanner gave me. To the faculty that helped me along the way, Professor Edwards and Dr. Cahill, thank you for guiding me through this. Professor Edwards especially understood the topic personally and helped make it the representation of my background I wanted it to be. Lastly, thank you to the people that supported me along the way. My roommates, Catalina and Sonia, dealt with every struggle I pushed onto them, and I'm so grateful for their support. And my brothers, Brandon and Tyler, that shared my connection to the topic to fully understand what I hoped to accomplish.

Introduction

Colonization and Imperialism displaced cultures throughout the globe, allowing for the cultural diffusion of multiple backgrounds and leading to clashes of cultures and races perpetrated by the disfigurement of white European imperial forces. A notable imperial force is the British Empire, arguably the most successful imperial power. Their territories expanded from the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the islands of the Caribbean. As colonies brought economic stimulation for the metropole, the subjected territories became home to oppression and induced conflict for capital gain.

We see today a split between the developed world and the developing world. In hindsight, these labels split the world between countries that were the colonized and the colonizers. These countries have struggled in nation-building, dealing with the ongoing effects of their occupied years. In addition, colonial legacies have entrenched them with societal and political problems hindering their ability to develop. For example, a common dispute has been between various ethnic groups and the conflicts that arise from that. Broad examples of this are the Rwandan genocide and the ongoing India and Pakistan conflict. These events are directly correlated to the colonial behaviors of imperial powers that continued to affect countries after independence. These are two prominent examples of what colonization impacts, but there are many more whose link to colonization is not as clear. In this paper, I will focus on the much lesser-known nation of Guyana.

Guyana is located in the Northern coastal region of South America, but its history and demographics make it part of the Caribbean region. Today the country has a small population of under a million people. However, their societal and political climate is unique. In Guyana, there continues to be a conflict of race between the two majority ethnic groups, the Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese people. Each group divides itself from the other, making a clear distinction that although they call the same country home, they are two different groups of people. The separation goes so far as to divide the country's political parties based on race. Their two-party system consists of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which represents the Indo-Guyanese, and the People's National Congress (PNC), which represents the Afro-Guyanese population. The relationship between each group is nothing less than racist.

As an Indo-Guyanese American, I have seen first-hand the attitudes each group holds toward each other. An instance that first made me more aware of the issue occurred in a Caribbean history course when I met a classmate who was also Guyanese. Upon telling her that I'm Guyanese, she looked at me and said: "oh, but you're Indian; that's not the same thing," as she was Afro-Guyanese. Instead of uniting in the fact that we shared the same background, she established a clear division between the two of us. That interaction is just one micro example of the groups' attitudes toward each other that in Guyana's border is amplified.

Nonetheless, racism is not inherent. People are taught it. This sparks the question: How did two ethnically oppressed groups grow to hate each other? Literature on the topic mainly discusses the conflict between the two groups, giving little explanation of the learned behavior. My paper seeks to explain that. The ethnic conflict in the state started much earlier than the formation of the two parties. The beginning of the division comes from the labor framework set

up by the British and the colonial mindset they instilled in every aspect of life. To reap the benefits of the colony and ensure monetary gain, the British pitted each group against each other from the arrival of Indians to the colony up until negotiations for independence.

This thesis will target major events in Guyana's history to understand the full effect of British Colonization and its impact. The first chapter will be used to discuss the system of slavery that occurred in Guyana. Slavery was crucial to the country's settlement until the eventual abolition of slavery in 1833. The Second chapter describes how the British dealt with the loss of a free exploitative labor force and began their system of indentured servitude. This brings the second major ethnic group to the country, Indian indentured immigrants. Quickly signs of ethnic conflict arose, which is discussed in chapter three. Chapter four then jumps to the era of decolonization after World War II and what that meant for the British. Finally, it discusses Guyana's independence process and the struggles faced along the way. As Guyana's struggle for independence continued, Chapter Five will analyze how the creation of the PPP and PNC separately formalized the racial divide in Guyana. Using the party's segmentation to establish how the British villainized the groups against each other to continue their colonial mindset even with independence looming.

Chapter 1

Slavery and Abolition in British Guiana

Introduction to the Territory

Today, Guyana encompasses territory from the Atlantic Ocean coast to the Amazon rainforest's depths bordering Brazil. Before Guyana became what it was today, Amerindians lived in the territory. However, they inhabited the forest areas closer to the Amazon and were not involved much in the colonization of Guiana. Guiana was originally home to native Taino and Carib people. This paper will not discuss this population of Guyana, but it is important to note that they lived here before colonization. As Europeans “discovered” and opened up the new world, the Dutch became the first to establish their power over the territory in 1616. The Dutch centered themselves along three critical rivers in the region. These rivers became known as the Berbice, Essequibo, and Demerara rivers.

The Dutch considered each river and the regions around them separate territories because of the geographical divisions. The Dutch established trading posts alongside the rivers under the Dutch West Indian Company. The Dutch began their time in the colony trading with the indigenous people, offering goods such as knives and fishhooks in return for the natural goods of the land, like food and indigenous enslaved people that Amerindians provided.¹ Over time the

¹ Randy M. Browne, *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017) 20.

trading post developed to the establishment of sugar plantations. In October 1656, the Dutch opened the region to colonization and would no longer only serve as a trading post. The following year March 1657, Guiana officially became inhabited by Europeans and marked the first arrival of enslaved Africans to the coast². Indigenous groups had inhabited the region, but upon settlement, the Dutch pushed them down toward the interior, closer to the Amazon rainforest. The forced migration left the coastal region of Guiana relatively uninhabited and underdeveloped. The indigenous population left the land virtually untouched, relying instead on the natural landscape. To the European standard, this left the coastal area underdeveloped and needed support and infrastructure. The coastal region was seemingly swamp land before colonization brought infrastructure. The land was barren and provided nothing but open space. It had little geographical advantages for planting. However, the open land was all a nation needed to form a colony. The intended labor force would build the land to bring durability and appropriate measures to help the Dutch and those who would come after capitalizing on this barren land. Thus, governments promoted the rise in sugar plantations.

As the colonization of Guiana was picking up and the slave trade was entrapping more Africans to become laborers in the territory, tensions began to grow between the Dutch and the English, who were competing for capital gain. As the English began to look at gaining territory in the Guiana region. Britain was growing their empire in the 18th century, especially after losing the North American colonies. The British had territory in the Caribbean region since the 1600s, establishing St. Kitts in 1624 and growing to include more islands. The establishment of these

² Sir Clementi Cecil, *Constitutional History of British Guiana* (London, Macmillan and Co., 1937), 16.

colonies created what is generally known as the British West Indies. British colonies in this southern region of the world were very limited to island regions and did not include any mainland regions. The Spanish, Portuguese and the Dutch had already claimed most of the mainland of Central and South America. All were strong colonial empires at the time, but the Dutch remained the biggest competitor for the British. This is primarily due to the series of Anglo-Dutch wars. These wars occurred in response to the Dutch aiding the North American colonies for independence. Defeat in these wars, the French revolution events, and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars weakened the Dutch. However, British strength continued growing at home as geographically Britain was removed from central Europe and the havoc from the French Revolution. The British took control of the former Dutch Guiana region in 1796 and officially purchased Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice in 1814. Previously three separate colonies, the British united them into British Guiana in 1831. Now the entire region was officially under British control and, at this point, carried over 100,000 enslaved individuals.

Slavery in Guyana

Before a wide array of ethnic groups encompassed Guyana, the two major ethnic groups were British Colonizers and enslaved Africans. As the British and the Dutch dispossessed the native populations from the land. British Guiana became an essential part of the expansion of the British empire. To sustain it and build commerce from it, they relied on the slave trade from Africa for all their Caribbean colonies. In this age of colonialism, all European powers relied on slave labor, not just the British. Slavery allowed these countries to acquire vast wealth and

power³. Colonial powers acquired products for trade and commerce to bring to the market that required no cost for labor. Colonization grows to be more than expanding a country's influence onto people and their territory; but is also a race for monetary gain. The European powers sought colonies to broaden their country's economic value.

From the start, Europeans, specifically the British, argued that their supposed racial superiority justified their efforts to dominate the rest of the world. All of the systems of colonization inhibited a built-in systematic racial hierarchy. This was also true in British Guiana, which became a society built between the British and the enslaved Africans. The British dehumanized the enslaved people, using excessive violence to force them to obey their will. The efficiency of the sugar plantations relied entirely on enslaved people. In written observations of plantations by Europeans, they expanded hundreds of acres and the amount of enslaved people corresponded to the size of the plantation. An eight-hundred to one thousand acre plantation would encompass five-hundred to six-hundred working enslaved people, all overseen by “one white man, assisted by as many white overseers deemed sufficient.”⁴ The enslaved people brought all productivity to the colony. However, British attitudes deemed the work of the white plantation owners as the most significant responsibility in the West Indies. The colonial belief argued that the work of the white plantation owners allowed for the sustainability of the enslaved people on the plantation. The enslaved worked through demeaning conditions as “few consider the slaves in any other light than that of mere machines.”⁵ Slavery was a functioning force in British Guiana. British Guiana alone produced one-fourth of British Caribbean sugar. The hard

³ Guillaume Daudin, “How Important Was the Slavery System to Europe?” (*Slavery & Abolition*, 2021).

⁴ Miscellaneous, “NEGRO SLAVERY.--no. I. SLAVERY IN BRITISH GUIANA” (*Christian Observer, Conducted by Members of the Established Church 1802-1842*), 1.

⁵ “Miscellaneous, “NEGRO SLAVERY.--no. I. SLAVERY IN BRITISH GUIANA” 1.

work of bonded laborers brought sugarcane crop yield to the British. British attitudes credited plantation owners and other British settlers for creating a colony that brought economic gain to the country instead of those whose hard work was to be credited. Slavery was the foundation of the economic system created in the British colonies.

Without forced labor, plantation owners and other British settlers would not have sustained the colony. The plantations in the Berbice region of the colony became the most fruitful plantations. However, Guiana's physical environment made conditions in the villages nearly inhabitable for a substantial life, in addition to the treacherous working conditions created on sugar plantations. In the early years, the lack of infrastructure to protect against flooding and excessive rainfall created a disease-ridden environment in Berbice. Contaminated waters and mosquito-borne diseases killed enslaved people at extreme rates⁶. Before land could provide services to the colony, it had to be made habitable for planters and the enslaved labor force. The British forced the enslaved people to build the necessary irrigation systems to accommodate the water before plantation society could commence. Now the British relied on slave labor for two significant responsibilities. The first initially being sustainability of the plantations. Then before that could even happen, British officers wanted enslaved people to build the necessary infrastructure for a hospitable environment. Creating this environment was necessary for the officers because they needed proper living conditions and a high mortality rate for enslaved people would diminish their workforce.

For decades the British colonies functioned because of the reliability of forced labor. Forced labor became the breath of British capitalism itself. The system worked for the British

⁶ Browne, *Surviving Slavery*, 24.

until people began to question the sustainability of slavery. In the 1820s, the British public began to call for abolition. Parliament had already abolished the slave trade in 1807. Eventually, in 1833, the crown began to abolish slavery slowly across its empire. The Abolition Act of 1834 then formalized the decision. The British were among the first imperial forces to abolish slavery beyond terminating the slave trade. The British system worked and allowed them to become the most extensive imperial power in the world at the time. If this was the case, why did the British decide to abolish slavery when the entire plantation system relied heavily upon it?

The Decision to Abolish Slavery

The British abolishing slavery was not something they did to be a better country and help the lives of those they took advantage of. Parliament had multiple self-interested reasons for abolishing slavery to then entirely go through with it. One of the reasons did rely on a moral standpoint. The debate about slavery continued throughout Europe for years, beginning with the expansion of Enlightenment thought⁷. Enlightenment thought brought up questions about humanity and what that meant. It's what inspired the revolutions of America and the French. While these countries tore down the whole foundation of the government to secure the blessing of liberty, Europeans would only now register Africans as human beings as opposed to the machines they had viewed them as prior. Nations abolished slavery because it made the European countries look less hypocritical. They were fighting for liberty while limiting liberty

⁷ Lucy Mayblin, "Never look back: political thought and the abolition of slavery," (Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 2007), 94.

and enslaving a whole race of people. The period became a time of expanding the natural rights of predominantly white men, and freedom from tyranny was a crucial part of that. The British ignited these views after losing their American colonies in the American Revolution.

However, the morality of abolition may not have been the primary driving force. An example of this is how even after the initial Abolition Act of 1834, the British continued to fund slavery. Marika Sherwood researched this. In her book *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807*, she highlighted how the British used ships under the Portuguese and Spanish Flags while slavers continued to rely on British funds⁸. They did this after the British discontinued the slave trade and even after the abolition act. The British wanted to hide their role in bringing enslaved people to the colonies. However, they understood the nefarious act of slavery. Despite their comprehension, the contribution slavery brought to their colonial system was still significant.

Further slavery continued in other British colonies beyond the Caribbean, like India, until 1848⁹. The British needed to take action to abolish slavery in the Caribbean as opposed to their other colonies because years prior, in 1804, the largest slave revolt took place, ousting the French and creating the nation of Haiti in the Haitian Revolution. The rise of the formerly enslaved people in Haiti sparked fears in other colonial powers in the region, like the British, that enslaved people in their colonies might be inspired and commence a revolution of their own. The British hoped that if they abolished slavery, it would prevent uprisings and ensure that the colonial

⁸ Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807*, (London, U.K: Tauris, 2007).

⁹ Stephen Shapiro, "After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807" , (*Current Events in Historical Perspective*,2012).

forces maintained control over the territory. This was the case for the entire British West Indies, not just British Guiana.

Through a combination of moral and economic interest, an antislavery abolitionist movement began in Britain in 1787-88. Historian Eric Williams, former Prime Minister of Trinidad, argues that economic conditions also influenced the need to abolish slavery. British began to consider abolition after 1776 when the British West Indies began to decline in “profits, imperial significance, and metropolitan economic support.”¹⁰ Williams credits the new ideas of American capitalism developed by Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and the ideology of laissez-faire. Adam Smith's laissez-faire economics was connected to slavery by the belief that “The invisible hand in societies which allow slavery operates in such a way that increases in the wealth of the rich, leads to increased misery for the poor citizens as well as for the slaves themselves.”¹¹ Since the economic productivity of the British West Indies was declining, it demonstrated the adverse effects that Smith referred to. However, getting abolition on the table did not happen overnight, and abolition was not the automatic answer for British officials. Initial measures instead focused on efforts to improve the conditions of slavery.

In 1832 officials from the Council of Policy in Demerara decided that they would set up ordinances that would ban the mistreatment that took place in the system, such as “prohibit the flogging of female slaves, to discontinue carrying the whip in the field and to take some measures for the control of female slaves.”¹² These measures would instead promote a system

¹⁰ Barbara L Solow, and Stanley L. Engerman, *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 192.

¹¹ Spencer J. Pack and Robert W. Dimand, “SLAVERY, ADAM SMITH'S ECONOMIC VISION AND THE INVISIBLE HAND,” (*History of Economic Ideas*, 1997), 253.

¹² Cecil, *Constitutional History of British Guiana*, 100.

more similar to serfdom as promoted by Thomas Fowell Buxton in Parliament¹³. The proposed system of serfdom would still allow for plantation productivity because it would still work the existing enslaved people while freeing younger groups of Black children in the British colonies. The only thing this measure added to the life of the enslaved people was that their children would not be born as enslaved people but as free people. Since the family network was still on the plantation by default, the children would still end up working on the plantation. Enslaved people still must work the land to provide for the emancipated children. The British still wanted to ensure they would get the capital gain from slavery while trying to humanize the system more for public display. However, plantation owners never implemented these suggested regulations. Instead, due to these efforts, rumors spread amongst the enslaved that the King would grant them freedom. When the conditions on the plantations remained the same, and freedom was not underway, the enslaved people revolted. Disrupting the productivity of the plantations.

Laws and ordinance made further efforts to humanize the system of slavery in the colony. However, plantation owners did not abide by any ordinances that would have benefited the enslaved. Due to the lack of agreement between Parliament and the plantation owners, the only option became total abolition. Parliament abolished slavery in the British colonies on October 19th, 1833, but officials in the colonies did not implement it until 1834. Even then, the British continued to benefit from slavery, despite their actions.

The British credit themselves with creating an entire planting society out of nothing and at little cost, but this was only due to the abuse of slavery. As discussed earlier, the Guianese coast was underdeveloped, especially for plantation agriculture, before the British brought slave

¹³ Cecil, 100.

labor there. Enslaved people created the frameworks that needed to be built to create the sugar plantations that sustained the colonies. Without an expendable labor force, the British would not have been able to do much with the colony. British idealism at the time believed the British subjects to be responsible for creating sugar plantations. A popular British-Caribbean publication at the time described, “It was by means of newly imported Africans supplied by this country, Trinidad was partially settled as a sugar colony, and the cultivation of sugar, and the cultivation of sugar in Demerara, Berbice, and Ipequibo(Essequibo), pushed from insignificant beginnings to its present large extent. Not only the importers but the purchasers of enslaved people, and the settlers of sugar estates in Guiana, were almost exclusively British subjects .”¹⁴ As the enslaved people were doing all the heavy lifting and having their life drained, the British saw themselves as the provider of this colony. They were bringing together a territory that had nothing before, and for that, they deserved praise. The British reaped every possible benefit from slavery, so their decision to abolish slavery raises the question of why they would abolish something beneficial to them. The British cared that much about being seen as humane in a world where they viewed the rest as barbaric. This follows the pattern of seeking out a system that would resemble serfdom before considering total abolition. Further, if they cared more about treating enslaved people as human beings and doing better morally, they would not have continued to fund and support it secretly as they were discovered to do.

In 1834, The British began the gradual emancipation of enslaved people within their colonies. It is important to note that once Parliament passed the act, enslaved people were not immediately granted freedom. It was done in stages till the majority were free around 1838. The

¹⁴ *St. Christopher Gazette; and Caribbean Courier* (Basse-Terre, St. Christopher), July 5, 1822: 3. *Readex: Caribbean Newspapers.*

British reason for gradual emancipation was to allow for a transition into civil society. However, the systematic reasons were much different from that¹⁵. Slave systems took components of civil society away from the enslaved people. They did not lack social awareness because of their race but because slavery and the slave trade perpetuated by the colonial powers took away any quality of life from them after years of being treated like a machine and not a person.

The British did not expect the formerly enslaved to join colonial society as free people. The British had a vision of what freedom meant in their colonies. In a moral and economic sense, they would promise this idea of freedom, but the British wanted little change in their plantation societies. Plantations were still the main economic engine of a colony, so these could not just stop functioning. Formerly enslaved people were now going to be free in a land where the only thing they knew was the plantations. The formerly enslaved were not indigenous inhabitants of this land, so gaining freedom opened up a whole society they had little understanding of. Instead of rejoicing in the freedom and the opportunities that would come with that, formerly enslaved Africans were displaced in British Guiana. Now the formerly enslaved people would become a paid, free labor force. However, being free did not mean they unbounded themselves right away from the plantation lifestyle. Planters still needed labor on the plantations and there was little to no opportunity outside of farming to start a life . After abolition, plantation owners began an apprenticeship program for free labor, keeping the newly freed Africans tied to the plantation¹⁶. The British established apprenticeships simultaneously upon emancipation. From a British point of view, establishing the apprenticeship program was necessary “as a transitional preparation for

¹⁵ Padraic X Scanlan, "Aug. 1 is Emancipation Day. but the End of British Slavery didn't Mean Freedom." (The Washington Post), 2.

¹⁶ Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1910*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 32.

liberty” before being allowed to be completely free¹⁷. However, the most probable reason would be that the plantation systems still needed labor. The apprenticeship system served the transitional purpose of the British. It gave the British time to accommodate the changes in the labor system and even seek out other forms of labor. This kind of labor still involved treacherous work conditions and expectations. The apprenticeship was constrained to a nine-hour work day, but this schedule involved “digging canals 12 feet by 5 feet, and throwing the ground on both sides-600 cubic feet in nine hours and throwing back 6-foot parapets from the above 72 feet in nine hours¹⁸”. The work done in the apprenticeship system still had unattainable productivity measures, like during slavery.

Although slavery was over, the British still had the upper hand. British Guiana at this time was mainly sugar plantations, so Africans did not have alternative opportunities to seek out. Undergoing these conditions and recognizing they now have some semblance of rights, African agrarian workers began demanding better pay. The planter class could not just resort to pure labor rights for the workers because that would harm the productivity that comes from the colony. Some records state how in some parts of the colony, the new rules and regulations of free labor were not even in place¹⁹. For territories in the settlement that did exercise the proper rules and regulations, productivity was halted by workers’ strikes for better wages. Strikes began in 1842, a precarious time for the British standing in the colony. Brazilians were beginning to encroach on British Guiana territory. Brazil was becoming a competitor for British sugar²⁰ in the

¹⁷ Cecil, *Constitutional History of British Guiana*, 104.

¹⁸ Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People*, 3.

¹⁹ *Palladium, and St. Lucia Free Press* (Castries, St. Lucia), January 20, 1842: 3. *Readex: Caribbean Newspapers*.

²⁰ *Palladium, and St. Lucia Free Press* (Castries, St. Lucia), April 28, 1842: 4. *Readex: Caribbean Newspapers*.

colonial export markets. Now simultaneously, the British were dealing with the domestic strife on the plantations harming their productivity and territorial endangerment. To combat the Brazilian threat, the British armed troops successfully pushed back the Brazilians further into Brazil, away from the border²¹. Colonial officers could not just use force to de-escalate the violence perpetrated by the infuriated Africans. The problem was much more complex than that. The Africans were now working on the plantations but were also starting to move away from farm work and entering other sectors. The labor pool was depleting, and the supply from the colony was collapsing while being threatened. The British empire was vast at the time and had other resources that could be used to counteract the faults of the territory. To combat this, the crown used false pretentions to lure a whole new labor source to their Caribbean colonies²².

²¹ *Palladium, and St. Lucia Free Press* (Castries, St. Lucia), January 13, 1842: 3. *Readex: Caribbean Newspapers*.

²² Kamala Kempadoo, "'Bound Coolies' and Other Indentured Workers in the Caribbean: Implications for Debates about Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery," (*Anti-Trafficking Review*, 2017), 51.

Chapter 2

Indian Indentured Servants, the New Labor Force

Indentured Servitude, the Introduction of Indians

This began the era of indentured servitude in British Guiana. The system of servitude was on a contract basis for a fixed number of years that varied. The incentive to sign up was free transportation with a set wage. Servitude has accompanied slavery in the colonies for decades at this point. It was used first with other Europeans in early periods beginning in the 1700s. These individuals came willingly because of their appeal to this ‘new world.’ It was captivating and offered a new opportunity. After the abolition of slavery, indentured servants mainly came from Asia and some from Europe. Groups came largely from Portugal, China, and, most notably, India. This paper focuses on the inclusion of Indian migrants but will still discuss the nuisances created by other diverse ethnic groups that migrated to the colony. Indians quickly became the majority among these groups. Between 1851-1917 there was a total of 228,743 Indians migrated to British Guiana as indentured servants²³.

After abolition and the end of the apprenticeships, plantations began to struggle, and with that, Britain’s economic growth. The Governor Barkley of Georgetown in the colony sent a letter to Earl Grey pleading for the expansion of “coolie” migration to the colony. Coolie was a word

²³ Rodney, *History of the Guyanese Working People*, 33.

that became synonymous with migrants from India that were to work in South America and the Caribbean as Indentured servants. Barkley referred to the “Cooly” or Coolie as poor and helpless foreigners, meaning that allowing them servitude could even be perceived as a favor to the Indians²⁴. He noted the system of coolie labor in the British colony of Mauritius and the benefits that Indian servitude had served there. Mauritius was another colony of the British located between the coast of Africa and India. Such close proximity to the Indian subcontinent allowed British officials to offer indentured contracts to Indians. Barkley also believed that a similar system could be brought to British Guiana. This was especially important for Parliament to consider as the sugar market was becoming more competitive with exports from Cuba and Brazil. Upon consideration of the diminishing yield from the plantations and the growing competition, British Guiana needed a new labor force. Using the experience of other colonies and the resources that could be exploited, indentured servitude from India proved to be the most fruitful option for the British.

British India

India at this time was under the grasp of the British East India Company until the crown established direct rule over the subcontinent in 1858. India was arguably one of the most essential lands held by the British. Under the East India Company, officials set up a slave

²⁴ House of Commons Papers, *Despatches on Condition of Sugar- growing Condition of Sugar- Growing Colonies. Part I. British Guiana*, 624: vol 39, (London, U.K: 19th Century House of Commons Papers), 98. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1851-027658?accountid=13158> .

network of Indians nationwide²⁵. Under the British raj, slavery in India would eventually end. Under British colonial control of India, Indians were mistreated. Unlike slavery, entering servitude was a choice. However, for the Indians who signed up for servitude, life offered no other choice. Indians immigrated to the colonies due to distress at home.

India was going through a period of famine from 1876-1878. The Monsoon season for India is essential; if it is long enough, the result is severe drought and barren land for farming. Drought is a natural occurrence, and little can be done to combat such an issue. The only solution was humanitarian aid, and the only entity that could help was the British. The famine has been estimated to have somewhere between 5-9 million casualties since there are few records to determine exactly how much. The considerable death toll can be substantially blamed on the British. The British tried to expand cotton production and developed a new irrigation system that cut off some parts of India²⁶. India already had a prosperous textile industry, but colonial powers wanted raw materials from their colonies, so the final goods were produced in England. This kept the needed revenue in the home country and was another way to minimize the opportunity for developed markets within the colonies. The Indians have lived with the monsoons and had proper systems already in place to fully harvest the benefits of the rains. The British came in and disregarded the native expertise and, in the process, disadvantaged the Indians. The British exacerbated the effects of the light rain season and provided little support or relief to the Indians. Dispatch documents from officials in India convey the actions and attitude of the British

²⁵ Maurice J. Bric, "Debating empire and slavery: Ireland and British India, 1820–1845", (Slavery & Abolition, 2016), 562.

²⁶ David Hall-Matthews, "Colonial ideologies of the market and famine policy in Ahmednagar district, Bombay Presidency, c. 1870-1884," (The Indian Economic & Social History Review, 1999),304.

government during the famine. One example shows how, in determining how to help the Indians so that they are sustained enough for labor, stating, “Another question that which occupied the anxious attention, both of your government and that of Madras, during the earlier stages of the famine, was the amount and quality of food which is necessary to sustain a Native of Southern India in a condition fit for labor.²⁷” The non-white people in the British colonies were not seen as people with their own lives but as labor sources for their disposable. They did not care that people were dying and losing loved ones but only cared because productivity would be harmed if they were dying. British mistreatment was rampant throughout all its colonies. This paper focuses on the effects of British attitudes in Guyana, but it is important to distinguish those similar effects in other territories occupied by the British.

The only exit to this famine was time for resources to rejuvenate or to leave home Indians affected by the famine. Instead of helping alleviate the famine, the British offered transportation to leave India. The catch was that it involved a contract of indentured servitude. Laborers from China were also being introduced to the territory and around the Caribbean as indentured servants. Nonetheless, the majority of the indentured coolie labor did formerly reside in India. Indians began to leave the subcontinent and leave for territories throughout the British Empire. Guyana received the most amount of Indian labor in the Caribbean. Besides the domestic struggles that led to the emigration, recruiters were quoted for using “malpractice” to get Indians

²⁷ Command Papers, *Despatch from Secretary of State for Indian to Governor General, January 1878, on recent Famine in W. and S. India*, C.1918: Vol 59, (London, U.K, 19th century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1871), 3. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1878-054393?accountid=13158>.

to sign the contracts²⁸. This type of malpractice was especially seen towards women laborers. In these cases, recruiters “resorted to such illegal practices as kidnapping and forced detention.”²⁹ Recruitment came from regions in India with heavy British Influence, like the capital region of Calcutta. Recruiters even took advantage of the social characteristic of Indian society. Beyond conversion, Hinduism was the most followed religion. A fundamental principle of Hinduism is the caste system which has a distinguished social hierarchy appointed to families. This placed man people in lower castes that were oppressed by higher society. Recruiters targeted these vulnerable populations because of their unhappiness with their lives, which would bring more willingness to leave³⁰. Despite indentured servitude being a voluntary contract-based job, circumstances in India and coercive recruiting techniques made servitude the only option for many who signed contracts.

The Arrival of Indians in British Guiana

When Indians arrived to British Guiana in 1838, their life of servitude was not much different from that of a formerly enslaved person. They were bound to their contracts and bound to the plantation. The contracts required five years of work with an option to add another year,

²⁸ Command Papers, *Emigration From India to the Crown Colonies and protectorates. Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown colonies and protectorates.* By Thomas Henry, 1st Baron Sanderson. Cd. 5192: Vol 27, (London, U.K: 20th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1910), 9. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1910-012453?accountid=13158>.

²⁹ Basdeo Mangru. “Indian Labour in British Guiana,” *History Today* 36, no. 4 (April 1986), 43.

³⁰ Mangru , 45.

and at the end of the service, the British intended to have the coolies return to India. A British abolitionist compared emigration for servitude as no different to the outlawed slave trade³¹. There were high mortality rates when embarking on the journey from India to the colony. After the long trip overseas, the indentured were put into the plantation system to start their work. In the plantations, laborers worked seven hours a day for six days a week, expected to complete their appointed four tasks³². If laborers did not complete their task, they could be prosecuted and imprisoned for not abiding by their contract. Although it was not the same as the physical abuse during slavery, the fear of imprisonment and being stuck in the colony was an ordered way to keep the laborers in line, revoking free will. Becoming an indentured servant was signing your life away, and any breaches of the contract risk legal percussion for the Indians.

Further measures that bonded them to the land was the “pass” system. In this, if an Indian left the plantation territory to venture off and then became discovered, they would need to display a pass of approval issued by the plantation owner³³. An owner was not incentivized to issue such passes, so Indians rarely got to leave the plantation area. The circumstances shockingly resemble those that existed under slavery. As Indians were bonded to the plantations, productivity increased once again as it had during slavery. The British successfully revitalized the plantation system even after the abolition of slavery.

Since the system of servitude was based on a contractual agreement, it gave the indentured some semblance of control. In reality, the plantation system and the supervision of the planters stripped away the privileges that the indentured believed they had. An example of this was that indentured were under the impression that they could fairly contest any unjust work

³¹ Kempadoo, “‘Bound Coolies’ and Other Indentured Workers in the Caribbean”,55.

³² Mangru, “Indian Labour in British Guiana,” 46.

³³ Mangru, 47.

expected of them. To challenge the given task, the laborer would have to bring the claims before a magistrate with a manager from another estate to give evidence. In the end, the magistrates usually took the voices of the white individuals as truth, and the indentured had no ground for contention³⁴. This again left the Indians powerless for the years of their contract. They had to accept any task assigned to them and would receive punishment if they refused to do so. The new labor system successfully created conditions allowing similar productivity patterns created under slavery.

Now British Guiana quickly became populated now by two major ethnic groups the formerly enslaved Africans and the newly introduced Indian migrants. As Indians arrived throughout the Caribbean, the region had a new cultural shift. Indians created their own social identity, separate from the white planters and the Africans. Indians were resilient to the indentured system and actively did not want to fall victim to the system the way the slave system preyed on Africans. They did this by retaining a solid cultural identity in the country. Roopnarine describes two ways that the Indians created their social identity to resist the grasp of the indentured system³⁵. The first more obvious measure taken by the Indians defied the planter's domination over them. However, defiance against a system created in the country for decades would not be as beneficial as cultural resistance. Indians' cultural resistance to them meant retaining their culture and ways of life and bringing it to the country. Indians held on to their Indian culture heavily, especially in relation to religion, traditions, and simple cultural practices such as cuisine. This was drastically different from the experience of Africans in which slavery

³⁴ Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People*, 42.

³⁵ Lomarsh Roopnarine, "Indian Social Identity in Guyana, Trinidad, and the North American Diaspora," (St.Croix:University of the Virgin Islands, St. Croix,2007), 95.

created a drift between creole Caribbean society and African society³⁶. Now the Indians established themselves in this new country as the new labor force. As the new labor force, they had to take over the position that the Africans once filled. Bringing two varying cultures together was bound to bring strife between the two groups.

³⁶ Roopnarine, 95.

Chapter 3

Clash of Ethnic Groups

The Beginning of Racial Tensions

Since servitude was almost as beneficial as slavery, officials began to prefer it over having to pay the free black labor force. The Africans were striking for better wages, while the Indians new to the land had no leverage or understanding to try and change the system. All they could do was fulfill the years they signed up for and hope for a return passage back home. In the meantime, Indian laborers were widely encouraged. Now the farmers did not have to deal with the threats of African labor to their production. There was no need to use African planters because the Indians were able to substitute that. Now Indian servants got jobs and opportunities that had formerly belonged to the black population. G.R Sandbach described why Indian labor was more beneficial, explaining that “so long as an estate has a large Coolie gang, Creoles must give way in prices asked or see the work done by indentured laborers, and this is a strong reason why the number of Coolies on estates must not be reduced³⁷.” The British farmers viewed the Indian laborers as more hardworking than the former African laborers. The more hardworking nature of the Indians was only due to the lack of any self-organization for the Indians. The Africans became frustrated by the higher employment of Indians. When the Indians

³⁷ Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People*, 38.

demonstrated any grievances through strikes and riots, the actions came with little to no success. The regulations placed on Indian laborers physically isolated them and hindered their mobility and organization needed to create change³⁸. Both parties had grievances with the wages. For the Africans, the low wages being offered to the Indians depleted their employment rates. At the same time, the low wages for the Indians were just another factor of control over them by the plantation owners.

The British disregarded the surplus of labor in Guyana. Now there were two affluent groups all seeking a living wage. The Indians, although not enslaved people, were bounded to the farmers. They could be controlled by working from sunup to sundown. The Africans would no longer be willing to do that. In some attitudes, the white farmers began to view the blacks as “unreliable.” Farmers wanted a labor force that could be abused. Ending slavery did not mean they were willing to deal with the repercussions of the market. This idea that the Europeans were on a mission of humility and the expansion of liberty was not as strong as their desire for income.

Creation of the Social Hierarchy

Since the Africans could no longer work on the plantation, they had to enter other sectors. This involved moving away from the rural areas to the more urban areas. The British did not give much attention outside of farming in the colony. They only cared about supporting the

³⁸ Mangru. “Indian Labour in British Guiana,” 48.

plantations that benefited them. Anything else needed for lifestyle purposes was up to the colony's inhabitants to set up. Other options for work included carpenters, coopers, and other trades work. Even then, finding work was hard, resulting in unemployment³⁹.

However, the Indians were not the only group that disadvantaged Africans from seeking income. Another group of indentured was the Portuguese. The Portuguese were favored more than the Africans and the Indians. This is clearly due to racial identity. The Portuguese had shorter contracts for their servitude, and some were even released early. Now the Portuguese became competitors for Africans in the newly forming job sectors. Racially Portuguese were favored and even received government assistance, something that Africans got little of⁴⁰. The Portuguese level of immigration was not nearly as significant as the Africans and Indians, but they quickly rose up the social hierarchy. The social stratification of the Portuguese allowed them to open up businesses and buy land easier and effectively than Africans. The Portuguese became the leading business owners in British Guiana. Not only did this advantage them as business owners, but the racial lines existed within businesses as well. Shoppers would have to adhere to being customers of shops whose ownership followed their ethnic group because shopkeepers would only sell to those deemed "regular customers" or those that were of the same ethnic background⁴¹. This was a direct advantage for the Portuguese and other white settlers, who were more likely to be granted business permission. Not only were the Indians and Africans held back from expanding their employment option, but they were also discriminated against in acquiring certain goods and commodities. Instead, Indians and Africans had to rely on their own

³⁹ Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People*, 103.

⁴⁰ Rodney, 108.

⁴¹ Brackette F. Williams, *Stains on My Name, War in My Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), 48.

groups, furthering the separation and cross-interactions. These actions affected both groups, but the Africans were more disproportionately affected. Since the Indians were already isolated more towards the rural areas, they could rely on self-sustained village networks to account for businesses that they could not be a part of and create their own within their villages. However, the Africans that coexisted with white settlers in the urban areas of Georgetown could not as quickly do their own businesses for their use. Again, opportunities were being taken away from the Africans. Sometimes, credit was taken from African loaners to be given to a Portuguese⁴². The racial lines were not just between the Indians and Africans. White/European groups were still getting the most opportunities. The frustration, however, was still directed toward the Indians. The jobs that the Portuguese took often required more skills and more experience. Although Africans were trying to procure more out of life, they still did not have the resources to enter these realms of labor successfully. The plantation system was dominant in society, and they were already pushed out of there, so the frustration was still directed there. Over time, however, Africans were already in the urban areas and had access to administrative jobs.

Since the Indians were the last to leave the plantations, they were subjugated to the rural areas, even after their contracts were over. Plantations still needed labor, and officials needed to figure out how to keep the Indians on the farms. When the contracts of indentured servants lapsed, it was a prior belief that they could return to India. However, the British instead offered land to the Indians if they stayed. This resulted in Indians staying in the colony instead of returning home. The Indians would then inherit lands to run on their own accords. It has been found that of the estimated 500,000 Indians that became indentured in British Guiana, only

⁴² Williams, 142.

175,000 returned to India, as 350,000 stayed and began an independent life⁴³. Even though 175,000 returned homes, it is also accounted that 30-40,000 of them went back to British Guiana and other territories in the Caribbean. Scholars state that the reason the British changed the policy of indentured servitude was the “planters’ reluctance to pay the obligated return passage for time-expired Indians and the colonial government’s desire to have a permanent Indian labor force in the Caribbean that would counteract the vicissitudes of the plantation system.⁴⁴” It is important to note that the Indians kept close to their culture and did not assimilate into the British colonial culture in Guyana. They kept their religion and traditions, unlike the Africans, who lost a lot of them due to the slave trade. This kept them culturally separate from the rest of the country and easily subjugated to colonial indoctrination. Indians also follow the Hindu religion, which involves a caste system. Although there have been changes in the interpretation of the caste system at this time, there was often one view of it. This meant that many believed that if they were born into a particular caste, that is how they were meant to live their life. They could not try and change caste. European elites used racial stereotypes to keep the provinces ethnically separate. When Indians were released from their contracts and became curious about other opportunities, colonial officials barred them from relocating outside the rural areas. Officials convinced them that they would become defensive if they were to enter the more urban provinces where the Africans were⁴⁵. The fear of conflict and unwillingness to push those social constraints kept the Indians in the rural areas. They created their life around this agrarian lifestyle and were reduced to being farmers, artisans, or mechanics⁴⁶.

⁴³ Lomarsh Roopnarine, “Indian migration during indentured servitude in British Guiana and Trinidad, 1850–1920”, (Labor History, 2011), 174.

⁴⁴ Roopnarine, 180.

⁴⁵ Williams, *Stain on My Name, War in My Veins*, 149.

⁴⁶ Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People*, 103.

The two groups were kept culturally and geographically separated. They had little interaction with each other. The lack of interaction meant they would believe whatever they heard about the other group. As a result, they became pawns for European elitism without even realizing it. The white European elites were always at the top of the social hierarchy. Brackette F. Williams, author of *Stains on my Name, War in my Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle*, describes how there was a space for who was second in the social hierarchy. Although the Indians were the populous majority, the Africans had a long history in the country. Africans were enslaved on the land that they now called home. At the same time, Indian servitude saved the colony from economic destruction. Africans built the territory from the literal barrens to what it is today, and they should receive some recognition and importance in the colony. Without the introduction of Indian labor, the colony would have fallen to ruins and provided no economic leverage for the British.

Stereotypes about each group became embedded in society. These stereotypes were nothing but claims of dislike towards each other. The groups were so separated that some of the stereotypes followed the same ideas about each other, but they did not know about the similar thoughts they each had. For example, it is found that both groups saw each other as “unknowing of how to make life.” In reality, the only reason Indians did not expand to more urban sectors of life was that the British kept them to agrarian lifestyles. The Africans struggled to gain social mobility because of the institutionalized regulations working against them that instead favored the white settlers. Stereotypes that the British instilled became a foundational characteristic of life for many people. These were just stereotypes, and the affected parties began to adopt these ideas. One of the stereotypes that British and Africans widely assessed amongst

Indians was that their life was work⁴⁷. They considered them so hardworking to the point where it was a fault. This stereotype helped the British plantation system by ensuring that the Indian laborers would be productive if they believed their work was the key to their success. This stereotype even began to affect Africans in the colony as people were labeled as lazy and not work-oriented. Aligning oneself with their respective stereotypes became embedded in their ethnic identities. For example, when an Indian was not work-oriented, they were not a true Indian, and if an African focused too much on work, they were imitating the lifestyle of the “coolies”⁴⁸. This also comes from the cultural resistance that the Indians instilled. Indians held their culture so close to them because it became important to their social identity when they first arrived in British Guiana. Suppose one were to lose that and creolize themselves, obtaining black and white European culture that was a loss of the Indian culture altogether⁴⁹. It was not an expected cultural diffusion bound to happen with such diverse groups but weak-minded assimilation with a loss of vital Indian culture.

The British created an environment that put the two races against each other for their own colonial gain. In colonies, the native populations, or in this case, the immigrated populations, make up the majority of the population. If groups could mobilize efficiently, they would be able to usurp the government and lead an uprising, like the Haitian Revolution. In Guyana, there was two major non-white ethnic groups. If these two groups could consolidate together, that could raise the possibility of them collectively uprising together. In a way, what the British did was

⁴⁷ Williams, 59.

⁴⁸ Williams, 58.

⁴⁹ Roopmarine, “Indian Migration during Indentured Servitude in British Guiana and Trinidad,” 98.

tactically savvy. Instead of allowing the two groups to realize the oppression of their colonial rule, they instead fostered attitudes that had them in conflict with each other.

Indians stayed in the rural areas amongst Indians, and the Africans were in the urban areas with the other various ethnic groups. If these groups were too busy competing with each other, they would have no nationalist pride beyond being subjects of the British crown. The white population understood what they were doing. They were using these new ethnic groups to divide further and prevent any unification against minority white control. In 1848 an estate manager from the Berbice plantation understood that the Indian, Chinese, and Portuguese population would keep the white class secure and safe as they would “stand by the whites” rather than unify with the African population⁵⁰. The whites were conscious of the division they were instilling among the classes to protect themselves. These populations were more likely to side with the white because they were still in this country intending to establish a new life, which they felt was only possible because of the “opportunity” that was given to them when they signed on to become indentured servants. For some of the Indians, if they had never left India, they would have been stuck in more dreadful humanitarian conditions. Some Indians, although in abusive labor conditions, may have still felt indebted. The white class in British Guiana successfully made a social hierarchy that still placed them at the top.

⁵⁰ Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer, *The Modern Caribbean*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1989), 96.

Racial Conflict

The embedded racial competition and stereotypes cascaded to induce racial conflict beyond bitter feelings toward each other. As the varying demographics began to adapt their appointed stereotypes through the intuitional misfortune that a group endured, the other groups did, in fact, become enemies. The result was a rise in racially motivated conflict.

In 1856 there was a series of disturbances throughout the colony. These disturbances, referred to as rioting, were done against the Portuguese and the shops they had the privilege of owning. Africans and some unindentured Indians mainly conducted the riots. The actions were in retaliation to the hierarchy of white settlers and the special treatment of the Portuguese people. Although the Portuguese were not classified as Europeans in British Guiana, racist attitudes against black and brown people gave them the upper hand. Although coming and becoming laborers in the country the same way the rest of the labor force had, the Portuguese were given many more advantages. The advantages gifted to the Portuguese demonstrated how the class system was not just on the premise of labor but on race. In retaliation, rioters struck the shops of the Portuguese owners. One statement by an African said, “When we have done with the Portuguese, we will attack the white.”⁵¹ These attitudes display the type of intensity to revolt against the colonial powers and the system they created. Africans were fighting against the disadvantages placed on them. However, what will prove to be an ongoing problem in the history

⁵¹ House of Commons Papers, *Correspondence between Governor of British Guiana and Secretary of State for Colonies, on recent Disturbances in Colony.*, 432:vol 44, (London, U.K: 19th century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1856), 11. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1856-032490?accountid=13158>.

of British Guiana, there was a lack of racial unity. Although some Indians partook in the rioting of the Portuguese shops, the support was not enough. At the same time, most Indians were still attached to their indentured contracts, so they were bound to the land and the laws of the plantation owners. Instead, Indians were used by British officials in the colony to help aid in resisting the strife of the rioters⁵². The Africans were all on their own, fighting against the colonial system. In the end, the rioting did nothing to weaken the system.

The African populations faced discrimination in the urban areas, and the rise in Indian laborers in the rural areas was diminishing the employment of Africans in the agrarian sphere. Indians were favored because the demands of their contracts allowed them to be paid a low salary with no social mobility outside the plantation. They helped bolster the plantation economy as African workers did not suit the desires of the plantation owners. The treatment they were facing bolstered hostility and unrest. The strikes initiated prior by the Africans for higher wages saw no changes and instead minimized their employment even more. The only option they were left with was to try to prove that Indian labor was not as efficient. To try and prove this, Africans tried to prevent the work of the Indians. British correspondences convey an incident “when a party of blacks had rushed into the buildings and prevented the remainder of the workmen from continuing work: also that at the moment of our arrival, the same party was picketed along coolie ranges threatening the inmates and preventing them from coming out to work.⁵³” These efforts still amounted to nothing and strengthened negative stereotypes against Africans. Now Indian

⁵² House of Commons Papers, *CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN GOVERNOR OF BRITISH GUIANA AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COLONIES, ON RECENT DISTURBANCES IN COLONY*, 39.

⁵³ Command Papers, *British Guiana. Correspondence relating to disturbances in British Guiana*, Cd. 2822:vol 77, (London, U.K: 20th century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1906),58. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1906-007001?accountid=13158>.

laborers viewed violent acts from the African population, making it easier for them to accept the narrative that the white class has painted in regard to the African people.

Indian laborers and Africans would continue to distrust each other and coexist socially separated. Altercations of violence were sporadic but not common. The actions were merely acts of prejudice and bitterness toward each other. This included bullying and harassment. Since Africans had entered administrative jobs earlier than Indians did, they held some positions of power. Positions of power, such as policemen, allowed Africans to make things difficult for Indians, like asking them to see their papers and giving them a hard time. Actions like this, although frustrating, were harmless. It is almost expected when groups are from different backgrounds that have not assimilated together. All be it, there was evident tension between the races, but acts of aggression and unrest towards each other would not pick up until the post-war period when British Guiana began its journey towards independence.

Chapter 4

Decolonization and Independence

The Nature of British Colonization and Decolonization

After World War II, there was a rapid era of decolonization. The world had just seen arguably the most horrific events they had ever seen. All of the major colonial powers were involved in the war and could no longer maintain their empires. Some willingly chose to give up their territories because it was easier than trying to retain them. Others still had to continue to fight. These countries fighting for independence were given time to find their nationalistic pride as their colonial powers were caught up in war. Priorities shifted during the war years, and less emphasis began to be put on the colonies. Colonies were still an essential part of the war effort, nonetheless. Imperial powers did not just leave countries right away. There was hesitation. These states have enforced their rule on territories for decades and relied on them economically. The colonial powers had a lot on the line in giving up their colonies. The countries involved in the war built themselves to their positions because of the benefits their oversea territories gave them. Losing these territories would be costly, but retaining them would be a struggle. Imperial powers had to shift focus back to domestic problems and struggles instead of using more resources on oversea territories that did not include their native citizens. Imperialism and everything that came with it began to be opposed by the international atmosphere of post-war politics. The competition for the acquisition of land was a fundamental cause of war. However, for the

colonies as well, independence and self-governing would be entirely new for them because of the decades of oppression they had faced.

The British Empire was at its height during the war period. It was the global hegemon of the time. However, with the conclusion of the second world war, its status began to decline. Instead, the United States became the front-runner, taking the status away from the British Empire. British superiority in the global world was primarily centered around the territories it had globally. Territories like British Guiana created a substantial economy and secular influence for the UK.

The territories were a part of what made the British empire powerful. The United States supported nationalism and anti-colonial rhetoric, expanding it internationally. However, the UK was not rushing to grant independence to its territories. The first example of this is the creation of the British Commonwealth. The British created the commonwealth before the era of decolonization in 1926, but it continues to demonstrate the colonial attitudes of the British. The first commonwealth involved what is referred to as the dominion's countries. The dominions included Australia, Canada, India, the Irish free state, New Zealand, and South Africa. In comparison to the other territories held by the empire at the time, these territories had the most British influence. The dominion countries were Britain's more highly regarded colonies. Upon being granted dominion status, it did nothing for the non-British in the territories. The first commonwealth was established to acknowledge all the countries as equals. However, this status of equality was in terms of governing power and the people in those roles. The people that held these highly regarded jobs were the white populations in the territories. The history of apartheid in South Africa is one example of this. South Africa was granted Union status far before the war years in 1910 but was still regarded as a British colony until 1961. The British gave the colony

self-government because those that were in power were the predominately white government, not the native black Africans of the country. Today the commonwealth describes the conditions of the commonwealth as “They all owed allegiance to the British king or queen, but the United Kingdom did not rule over them⁵⁴.” British cultural imperialism was already adamant, so even though they attempted to display these territories to have their own sovereignty, they ideally did not. The governing body would continue to be either British or those that are devoted to the British crown. The commonwealth of the dominions was not a creation of equal membership but a facade to embellish what is a sphere of influence.

At the end of World War II, is where there is some resemblance of an effort to grant countries independence. The British had some hesitancy to grant independence in some instances. British Guiana is a prime example. British Guiana became the problem colony of the Caribbean⁵⁵. British Guiana’s independence era continued to involve British deception and manipulation before being granted independence in 1970.

Stages of Guyana Independence

In Africa and Asia, there was no automatic process of decolonization. There was even some violence that prolonged independence and made it a struggle. The Caribbean did not see as

⁵⁴ “Our History.” The Commonwealth. January 1, 1970.

<https://thecommonwealth.org/history#:~:text=At%20the%201926%20conference%20Britain,Nations%20or%20just%20the%20Commonwealth>.

⁵⁵ William David McIntyre, *British Decolonization, 1946-1997: When, Why, and How Did the British Empire Fall?*, (Basingstoke England: Macmillan, 1998), 59.

much violence and restraint in achieving independence. Upon discussion of British territories in the Caribbean, the British did not suspect sovereignty to be sought out separately by the individual islands. The British had hoped to unite the British West Indies into one federation of states, which existed as the West Indies Federation. This was, however, short-lived because, geographically and demographically, the island nations did not hold together one nationality, and discontent began to rise. Discontent began with Jamaica, which was dissatisfied with the federal financial burden of the federation⁵⁶. Jamaica then voted to quit the federation. Since Jamaica was the most significant member, the federation fell apart after its self-removal and eventual independence in 1962. The British handed States such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados their independence with little hesitancy after the federation failed attempt of a unified state⁵⁷. Jamaica was the first British Caribbean territory to gain independence. Jamaica had a uniform goal regarding independence. There was little debate between Jamaica and the British Parliament on the conditions of how the plan for independence would work. The referendum was straightforward, and the government of Jamaica created a liberal constitution on its account once it left the federation in 1961. The measures presented were agreeable to the UK. Then at the Jamaica independence conference, parliament was willing to set up an early date for independence, February 9th, 1962, four years before Guyana would see its independence⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ McIntyre, 54.

⁵⁷ Basil A. Ince, *Decolonization and Conflict in the United Nations: Guyana's Struggle for Independence*, (United Kingdom: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1974), #.

⁵⁸ Command Papers, Colonial Office. The report of the Jamaica Independence Conference, Cmnd. 1963: vol 1, (London; 20th century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1962.) <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1961-050620?accountid=13158>.

Guyana's independence did not come as quickly as it did for Jamaica. Guyana never joined the West Indies Federation. Membership in the federation, although short-lived, was necessary for parliament. It demonstrated an alignment with British political beliefs and ideologies. British Guiana chose not to be part of the federation because it did not account for the demographic makeup of its country that was different from the majority of Caribbean territories, this being the various ethnic groups the country had. Significant issues with decolonization and colonization were the imperial powers' negligence in understanding the cultural boundaries within countries. If British Guiana were to have joined the federation and the sovereignty of the federation was a success, the country and its majority Indo-Caribbean population would be misrepresented. This is why British Guiana opted out of joining the federation because it did not consider protection for ethnic minorities in the Caribbean⁵⁹. Although the demographics of British Guiana were not the same as the rest of the Caribbean, each country still had various ethnic groups within them despite a majority of the population being Afro-Caribbean. With the dissolution of the federation, Parliament was only willing to grant the countries independence once they formalized a constitution that the UK saw suitable and held elections.

British Guiana would undergo a series of proposed constitutions for British approval. The first constitution was the Constitution of 1953, which was drafted at the Waddington Commission. The Waddington Commission was a Commission set up by the British government to go to Guiana and help draft a constitution. The draft of the Constitution of 1953 took three years after the commission, headed by Sir E. J. Waddington, arrived in British Guiana in December 1950. This referendum was created under the People's Progressive Party (PPP), with

⁵⁹ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 2020), 119.

its primary goal being universal suffrage. During this time, the primary party in Guyanese politics was the PPP. The country was united in its goal of independence. Cheddi Jagan was appointed as Leader of the House under this constitution. Jagan will become a critical political actor in Guyanese politics. He identified as Indo-Guyanese, while his chairman Rhodes Burnham identified himself as Afro-Guyanese. At this point in time, there was no separation between the races in politics. Although the two races have had cultural tension between each other since plantation society, these differences did not separate the groups. There was a disconnect between each race in which each race had low opinions about the other. Nonetheless, they existed peacefully amongst each other⁶⁰. The joint partnership in the early years of the PPP is able to display that. Jagan and Burnham understood the difference they had, but they also understood the power their unity could bring. In turn, the Constitution of 1953 was created under racial unity. Party leaders wanted independence and were willing to put any cultural differences aside. Despite the overall support of the Guianese public, which saw the idea of independence creeping up, Britain abruptly decided to suspend the constitution on October 9, 1953, and British authority remained in control of the country. The suspension of the constitution backtracked all plans toward independence. Parliament had multiple reasons for suspending the constitution. The two major ones worth discussing are the Parliament's response on the basis of race and political ideologies⁶¹.

⁶⁰ Knight and Palmer, *The Modern Caribbean*, 97.

⁶¹ Command Papers, *British Guiana. Suspension of the Consitution*. Cmd. 8980,: Vol, 23. (London, U.K: 20th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1952-53), 4. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1952-043684?accountid=13158>.

According to Parliament, the constitution and governing rules that the PPP initiated for a new self-governing Guiana held Marxist ideologies. The British insinuated this because Jagan had openly aligned with socialist ideologies. Jagan and the PPP sponsored legislation that allowed for the immigration of known communists into British Guiana and distributed communist literature⁶². When communist literature began to be circulated in the country, the Legislative Council passed the Subversive Literature Act in March 1953. This was before the suspension of the constitution. The British feared the uprising of such idealism in Guiana, and the PPP represented the growth of such ideas. As the constitution was suspended, British authority went even further to suppress the voices of the party and expansion of their ideas. In June 1954, the governor called for the temporary closing of any publishers that promoted disobedience of laws and critiqued the constituted authority of Guiana⁶³. This would put a hold on any publication that willingly voiced their disagreement against British colonial rule and the suspension of the Constitution. Parliament and the authority it held were actively quelling any efforts to oust their hold over Guiana.

The constitution and the beliefs held by the majority PPP power were not liberal enough for the British. Decolonization was happening simultaneously with the cold war. As countries gained independence, their two options, due to the international political climate, were between communism and democracy. Jagan and Burnham, however, wanted to ensure that the new government of Guyana would go against the old ways of governing British governmental rule.

⁶² Command Papers, *British Guiana Suspension of the Constitution*, 10.

⁶³ Colin A. Palmer, *Cheddi Jagan and the Politics of Power: British Guiana's Struggle for Independence*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 74.

They wanted to bring their own ideas to what Guiana could be under this new form of self-government. It is important to note that the constitution made with the Waddington Commission was not to grant Guiana complete independence but to give it a foundation of self-governing. The commission did not want to model itself directly from what the British wanted. Jagan and Burnham were more radical with their ideas for Guiana than the British would have liked. As a former British colony, the UK could not allow Guiana to fall to communism.

Decolonization was a vital part of the Cold War. Even though institutions like NATO and the Warsaw Pact demonstrated each country's strengths, the state-building of former imperial territories would show which country was more influential. The main goal of the United States and NATO during the cold war was upholding the fortitude of capitalism. As the United States led these efforts during the Cold War, what the UK did was just as important. After years of oppressive imperial rule, communism had its appeal to a developing state. Many former colonies have never shaped their own economy and governing before. They had been primarily reduced to this monoculture with a little economy of their own. British Guiana still relied on the plantation culture that was established at the beginning of history with Dutch colonization. Jagan noted that British control of the economy limited the country's economic growth and self-sustainability that it would have otherwise been capable of⁶⁴. At this time, the sugarcane industry still dominated the country's economy. Capitalism would require a foundation of competitive markets that British Guiana did not have because of colonialism. Colonialism limited these countries' economic diversity. Many people in these countries only knew life when imperial power was controlling it. Communism offered what seemed to be a more straightforward agreeable structure for state building under the circumstances. It is somewhat ironic how a colonial power like the

⁶⁴ Palmer, *Cheddi Jagan and the Politics of Power*, 161.

British advocated for capitalism and democratic foundations in these newly independent states when the system built by the British made the success of the system improbable.

It is also fair for a former colony not to want to mimic the beliefs of its imperial power. These countries oppressed them for decades and took away, for a lot of them, their own identity as a nation. Being offered independence should not be viewed as a gift to them. It was necessary. The UK did not provide independence to its territories because of this moral mission to offer them their own opportunity. They began to do it because it was not the norm anymore. The UK was no longer the hegemon, and the will of the British Empire did not govern the world. Instead, the United States advocating for a capitalist society now opposed the continuation of colonies⁶⁵. Britain not only just got out of a costly war but needed to satisfy its role of being a critical political actor on a global scale. The government had to give up its territories while maintaining its legacy and prominence. If countries were to be given their independence, they could only do so if they still held British principles.

Parliament wanted to ensure that if Guiana was given independence that it would align with the British principles already embedded in the country. In the suspension of the constitution of 1953, example "X" of misconduct, according to the briefing from the Secretary of State of the Colonies, asserts that Guiana's ministries were attempting to gain control of the Public Service. In this, they state, "It is fundamental, as it is in this country--and it is written into all Colonial Constitutions- that the public service should be free from all political influence⁶⁶." Parliament still wanted their territories to follow the model of constitutions that they had set up under

⁶⁵ Peter J. Hugill., "The American Challenge to British Hegemony, 1861-1947," (*Geographical Review*, 2009).

⁶⁶ Command Papers, *British Guiana. Suspension of the Constitution*, 5.

colonial rule. Not only just that, but they also wanted the countries to adhere to the principles within Britain. Britain was not expecting Guiana to create a whole new model of government the way it wanted to. Allowing the countries to make their own constitution was just a formality. It mimicked the aspirations of independence, but the colonial influence would always be there. This brings back the idea of post-colonial theory. Decolonization did not mean those territories would be free of imperial influence. In some cases, the metropole stripped colonies of so much identity that all it knows is what the colonial power taught them. Education in colonies was constituted by the imperial forces. Countries were not taught their history and culture but were suppressed by colonial powers' cultural dominance. Many had no choice or knowledge to bring forward their state-building ideas. Jamaica did precisely what the British wanted and continued the principles in place during colonial rule. Guiana did not follow that model accordingly, thanks to the anti-colonial advocacy from the PPP and its leaders. The Constitution that Guiana put forth threatened its colonial legacy. Guiana's constitution undermined Britain's global status and its empire's legacy.

Britain Formalizes Ethnic Tensions

It has been established that British politics upon decolonization were unsteady. In their view delaying independence and suspending the constitution was to protect the country from one-party rule. Even at the end of colonization, there was still this idea of The White Man's Burden. The White Man's Burden is often used to discuss the idea that white Europeans believed it was their duty to colonize and humanize these territories. Even though colonization did the opposite and degraded the way of life for many, this same idea is seen during decolonization and

the formation of the government. These states have never governed themselves, and the UK believed they still needed guidance on what to do. They did not trust countries to use their own discretion unless they followed the ideology of Britain. As a result of these colonial tendencies still in place, it is speculated that Britain was directly involved in the ethnic division of the formation of the two-party system in Guyana.

British Guiana's independence at this point was marked by racial unity driven by the goals of independence. However, after the British suspension of the Constitution, the ruling PPP began to weaken. The failures of the constitution depleted the unified path toward independence. The result was the breakdown of the PPP and the formation of a second party, the People's National Congress(PNC). It has already been noted that upon the Constitution of 1953, the only formidable party was the PPP. This party was headed by Cheddi Jagan. Jagan had been involved in Guiana politics since the 1940s before the creation of the PPP. In his political career, he was always noted for being more extreme and favoring Marxist-Leninist strategies for governing. Nonetheless, Jagan was appointed Leader of the House under the 1953 constitution. Alongside Jagan was Rhodes Burham as chairman. These two worked closely together in forming plans for Guyanese independence and what was to follow. Jagan and Burnham were active in their discontent with British rule. During this time, the PPP involved all ethnic groups within Guiana. They were able to work together despite the historic racial disagreement. Some scholars have noted that the British associated the power of the PPP with threatening one-party rule in the country(source). However, the power of the PPP displays something much different than that. It demonstrates how although these racial groups are undoubtedly indifferent towards each other, they are willing to work together towards one common goal, independence. They knew the only way to rid themselves of British rule was to be united and provide a strong front. Racial

unification is what Guyanese Scholar Walter Rodney had advocated for and was the only way for Guiana's advancement in opposition to the colonial legacies that shaped the state⁶⁷.

The separation in the PPP was induced by British authority, and the Robertson Commission is a clear example of this. The Robertson Commission refers to the commission sent to British Guiana after the suspension of the Constitution to assess what needs needed to be met for a new constitution. British officials spent one year visiting Guiana and gathering demographic information to decipher what issues needed to be considered when executing a new constitution. The commission looked at the country's economic, social, and political background. It is obligatory to state that the British did put in broad interest in what was best for the country, considering local circumstances. The commission concluded that the more significant underlying issues that affect the country are "their naivete and lack of appreciation of the economic situation of the economic realities of the situation"⁶⁸ The main goal of the Waddington Constitution focused primarily on expanding political involvement and a quality formation of the government to achieve independence. The commission argued that these measures were not enough to help counteract the economic struggles in the country and that they could not expect the country to come together through a distribution of wealth that would come with the mode of the government proposed. The inclusion of the economic factors in the report is arrogant on the side of the British. The economic conditions in the country are a direct consequence of the decades of

⁶⁷ Staff Reporter, "Walter Rodney on Race, Ethnicity and Class." (Guyana Chronicle, June 18, 2017). <https://guyanachronicle.com/2017/06/18/walter-rodney-on-race-ethnicity-and-class/>.

⁶⁸ Command Papers, *Colonial Office. Report of the British Guiana Constitutional Commission 1954*, Cmd.9274: Vol 10, (London, U.K: 20th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1953-54), 25. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1953-044476?accountid=13158>.

colonialism that set up the economic system to begin with. They are a direct result of the governing and political system that the British put in place, so if anything is to blame, it is the colonial framework in the country.

As the British thought that the conditions set up under the constitution would not benefit the country, the Guianese people that formed it were considering what was best for everyone involved. One of these included expanding the enfranchisement of voters. Governmental assistance was even added to help those that were illiterate and could not read a ballot. “The question of adult suffrage was complicated by the fact that in Guyana as in Trinidad, many members, or about 44 percent, of the Indian community were illiterate, compared with only 3 percent among Guyanese of African descent⁶⁹”. Under colonial rule, many groups in Guiana were underrepresented and subjected to harsher conditions than others. This is especially true for the Indo-Guyanese that continued to reside in the rural areas of the countries. These groups were more likely to be subjected to lower education, resulting in illiteracy. This coincides with how Afro-Guyanese entered administrative jobs before Indo- Guyanese had. Indo-Guyanese were more unlikely to be involved in political discussions. Contrary to what British officials believed, composers of the constitution were considering the domestic factors of the country. PPP leaders looked at the conditions that could be fixed with independence, which can be linked to imperial consequences. The Guianese people wanted to help alleviate the country of the condition set up by the British. However, the British did not see it that way and instead viewed the accommodation toward the illiterate as “unnecessary.⁷⁰” The PPP leaders aimed to make Guiana

⁶⁹ O. Nigel Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: The Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement*, (Jamaica : Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 604.

⁷⁰ Command Papers, *Colonial Pffice. Report of the British Guiana Consituitional Commission 1954*, 29

separate from what British imperialism subjugated it to be. British officials did not view it this way, and all the efforts made by the party to distance itself from the British were instead seen as counterintuitive towards independence.

The Afro and Indo-Guyanese populations were the most influential voices in Guiana at the time. The PPP was composed of the most critical voices in Guiana. Guiana was still composed of various ethnic groups, including Europeans, Portuguese, and Chinese. Afro and Indo-Guyanese made up a more significant proportion of the population, so, in terms of numerical advantage, their voices were represented the most. At the same time, they were the two groups that were the most marginalized by British rule. The Afro population endured decades of slavery, stolen from their homeland. While the Indo population had to leave their homeland as the British were the direct cause of a rapid deterioration in the quality of life in India. When it came to questions about division Jagan stated, “this division between the natives and the British, between black and white and as far as goes, between Indians and Africans, is being kept alive by the British themselves, not by us. Look at both of us. I am Indian. Burnham is African. The difference does not affect us.”⁷¹ Whether they were taught it or not, this would never be a history that these groups would forget. There was no capacity in which they should have appreciated British rule and were supposed to be willing to accept what the British wanted for them after taking the freedom of choice away from them. The party then, in fact, did adopt Anti-British and white rhetoric. Upon realizing this, the British officials felt that the party did not adequately represent the people of Guiana. By that, they meant the inhabitants of British and

⁷¹ Palmer, *Cheddi Jagan and the Politics of Power: British Guiana's Struggle for Independence*, 192.

European origin. The British felt that this population in Guiana would be subjected to mistreatment by the majority as if that was not what they did to the Afro and Indo-Guyanese⁷². It is fair to assume that the populations that had been historically the most marginalized and the majority in the country were going to lead the political movement toward independence under their discretion. The Robertson Commission undermined what was essential to the Guianese people and the PPP that represented that. The failure of the constitution made Guianese leaders look inwards at themselves. The self-doubt planted the seeds of racial division and the separation of the PPP.

⁷² Command Papers, *Colonial Office. Report of the British Guiana Constitutional Commission 1954*, 34.

Chapter 5

Racial Divide in Politics and Society

Split Between Jagan and Burnham

The PPP was united in achieving a self-governing British Guiana. Parliament used its one unifying factor to even further divide the country. The two majority racial groups had been divided almost entirely throughout the nation's history. However, with independence looming, they understood that they were not each other's enemies. They each wanted the same thing, enough to unite them under one political party. The enemy was the British and their continued role in the country. After the suspension of the constitution in 1953, Burnham published an article in the PPP publication titled *Thunder*. The article was published in 1955, before the creation of the PNC, in which he advocated that racial integration was essential. He stated, "another aspect to which we must pay careful attention is that of race. There are some of my race group (African) who express such sentiments as 'black man must be on top' and a similar tendency on the part of Comrade Lachman Singh's race groups (Indian). To say 'Coolie man must be on top.' Such sentiments are inspired by enemies of our party and movements, and the British government will give anything for them to gain wide currency."⁷³ This explains what party leadership under Jagan and Burnham were fighting for and what the constitution resembled

⁷³C. A. Nascimento and R. A. Burrowes, *Forbes Burnham, A Destiny to Mould: Selected Speeches by the Prime Minister of Guyana*, (New York: African Publishing Corporation, 1970), 7.

in the years prior. That is why according to the British, the Waddington Constitution contained anti-British rhetoric. The Robertson Commission saw the longevity of the party as weak. The Constitution under the PPP government only appeared to deal with Constitutional issues, not those that considered the quality of life in the country⁷⁴. This narrative that Parliament pushed does not consider the fact that the conditions that set up the quality of life in the country were due to British colonialism in the territory. The British continued to use bonded systems of labor. Indian servants' contracts were often breached and lasted much longer than initially intended. This limited their ability to settle their life outside the plantation, which is why most of them continued to exist in rural areas during this period. Africans were also kept to the land with few job opportunities outside of the plantations, and those that were there were given to Portuguese migrants. The majority population in the country was subjected to British rule and white superiority that limited the quality of life. The party's focus then became pushing out the British and the influence they had on the Guianese people. British colonialism and attitudes created any and all issues persistent in the country. Britain devalued the work of the party, describing it as "a mere temporally alliance having no object other than to secure complete self-government for British Guiana."⁷⁵

Britain was undermining the working of party leaders and those involved in drafting the Constitution of 1954. Even further, Parliament wanted to villainize PPP leaders, which would be critical in splitting the racially united party. As discussed, the era of decolonization was a proxy for the international fight between communism and the dictatorial rule that followed versus

⁷⁴ Command Papers, *Colonial Office. Report of the British Guiana Constitutional Commission 1954*, 35.

⁷⁵ Command Papers, *Colonial Office. Report of the British Guiana Constitutional Commission 1954*, 35.

flourishing democratic capitalism. The Robertson Commission pointed out that there was communist influence within the PPP. Distinctly Parliament labeled Cheddi Jagan, leader of the Party, as a communist, along with other party leaders. They argued that Jagan was blindly leading party members under Marxist-Leninist strategies of communism. Again, noting that the only thing uniting the party was the goal of self-government. They instead draw the party as being internally morally insufficient. The foundations of the party were displayed as weak and similar to an apparat. Parliament made it seem like the party had no fundamental foundational ideologies driving it other than anti-imperialist ones. The British even seem to find the tone of labeling the British government as no more than something running from capitalism and imperialism abhorrent. PPP party leaders were rightfully disguising what the British system was and used their truthful narrative to make them seem insufficient in governing. The creation of the PPP stated firmly that its goal was to establish socialism as the mechanism for political and economic systems in the country⁷⁶. They never once swayed from the goal of socialism, ensuring not to promote communism. In a joint statement by Jagan and Burnham, they describe the British government as aiming to “smear” their image by trying to label them as communist⁷⁷. This was a year before the Robertson report was published by parliament. Instead of labeling both Jagan and Burnham, the commission used Jagan’s anti-imperialist attitude and loose connections with communist sympathizers to label him as the sole communist threat.

The biggest leverage parliament used was labeling the party, and specifically Jagan, as a communist threat to the state. Party leaders did not try to distinguish between communism and

⁷⁶ Odeen Ishmael, *The Campaign for Socialism and Democracy in Guyana: Source Documents of the People’s Progressive Party(1965-1991)*, (Georgetown, Guyana: GNI Publications, 2010), VII.

⁷⁷ Cheddi Jagan and L.F.S Burnham to the British Labour Movement, December 2, 1953, in *Cheddi Jagan Research Centre*.

socialism, and the parliament in consideration would not either. However, parliament chose to distinguish Jagan as a communist seed and Burnham as a soulful socialist. In counteraction to Jagan, Burnham is characterized as fighting for the “moral leadership” of the party. As chairman of the party, Burnham was recognized as the socialist in the party. The party did not categorize socialism and communism as ideologies far from each other. This means that in terms of political ideologies, Jagan and Burnham did not have severe opposition towards one another. Their differences stemmed more from the racial and social differences between the two. Their racial differences were forced onto Guiana’s societal standards from British colonialism. Any conflict between the two racial lines directly resulted from the apparent racial division created by British rule from the beginning of its colonial history. Despite this, the two were working together politically, and they understood the difference and importance of doing so. Examples of their political corruption continued to exist even after the Report from the Robertson Commission. In speaking against the suspension of the constitution Jagan and Burnham call out the divisive actions of the crown, stating: “The White Paper on the suspension of the Constitution of British Guiana has built up a case based upon the familiar device - find something behind which to hide a which will arouse the emotionalism of people. Communism, in this instance, has been mad the bogey, and in order to fill in the familiar picture of Communist violence and terror and arson, the Government in the White Paper is attempting to fill in the details. Statements, many of thorn erroneous, have been lifted out of their context without giving the background of the situation in which they were made. Statistics have been used to distort the truth. A plot has been invented where there is none. The issue of British Guiana today is not Communism, What is challenged is the very right to vote - the basics of democracy. All that has been presented in the White Paper about Communist activity has been pointed out in very glaring terms before and during the

elections. The people were quite conscious of the issues in fact Communism was one of the issues. The people voted and now force and the threat of bullets have taken away their democratic rights. It has always been pointed out to us that Communism is sustained by force and violence - now we see that in the name of democracy, democracy is being destroyed by force.⁷⁸”

Politically there did not seem to be much disagreement between Jagan and Burnham. However, the racial difference between the two was enough to prompt Burnham and other party leaders to leave the PPP and form the People’s National Congress(PNC). The PNC was founded in retaliation to the suspension of the constitution and the discrepancies brought to light by the Robertson Commission. The Robertson Commission successfully painted PPP insufficiently in consideration of the social ramification of the country. Instead of racial unity being viewed as something positive, it was now naive for the party to believe that the difference between the racial groups was not imperative. They united against a common enemy and were reminded about their cultural chasm, making each other the enemy again. Afro-Guyanese were reminded that they did not want a country under Indo leadership. Guyanese scholar Clem Seecharan said that “African Guyanese would have opted for remaining colonials indefinitely rather than support independence under a party led by an Indian.”⁷⁹ The British once again successfully brought attention away from their oppressive nature and directed any anger towards each other. Sydney King, a former Afro-Guyanese leader in the PPP, left the party to join the PNC a year

⁷⁸ Dr. Cheddi Jagan and L.F.S Burnham, “Reply to the White Paper: British Guiana Suspension of the Constitution”, October 22 1953, *Cheddi Jagan Research Centre*, https://jagan.org/cjrc/document/cheddi_jagan/074.pdf.

⁷⁹ Clem Seecharan “Whose Freedom at Midnight? Machinations towards Guyana's Independence, May 1966”, (*The Round Table*,2008).

after Burnham had formed it. In his view, Jagan did not understand the position of Afro-Guyanese in the country. The Afro-Guyanese were the population that would have to accept a leader of a different race, not the Indo-Guyanese. Allowing PPP rule under Jagan to lead the country to independence would disenfranchise the Afro populations. Despite the former diversity in the party, Indian leadership was still going to prevail. It was no longer about working together for self-government. The struggle now was for which ethnic group would lead the country as it gained independence. A publication summarizes the messages of the report in which it says, “the commission is satisfied that the setback to order constitutional progress in British Guiana is due not to defects in the constitution, but to the fact that the PPP leaders proved themselves to be relentless and unscrupulous in their determination to prevent the authority of government to their own disruptive and undemocratic ends.”⁸⁰ What the Robertson Commission did was secure the achievement of independence as long as whoever would lead could accommodate the changes the crown wanted. The problem now was no longer fighting against imperialism but for who could better lead the country. The Commission labeled the party as the reason the constitution failed. Since Jagan was the leader of the party representing the Indo-Guyanese population, it was that group that made the constitution fail. Once again, ethnic differences became the central conflict within Guiana. In 1955 Burnham left the PPP to form the People’s National Congress, which grew to represent the Afro-Guyanese portion of the population.

⁸⁰ <https://jagan.org/Archives/Clippings/1954%20Nov%203%20-%20Commission%20report.pdf>

Racial Violence

Now the races were once again separated, challenging each other for control. Even after a significant breakaway from the PPP, the party could still win the majority of votes and keep control of the government. Jagan and the PPP won a majority of the seats in the 1957 election and again in 1961. Despite the division, the PPP continued to win with the Indo-Guyanese votes. In 1961 the country was getting closer to independence as a conference in London proposed a new constitution that accepted the principle of independence. This meant that if the country were finally to gain independence, it would be under PPP leadership. However, the relationship between the PPP and PNC was getting more divisive. Those belonging to the PNC viewed the prospective constitution as independence for the Indians but slavery for the Afro-Guyanese⁸¹. The efficiency of the conference then became futile when PNC leaders refused to agree with the objectives of the PPP. The disagreement spanned three key points (1) type of representation, (2) voting age, (3) and if fresh elections were needed before independence⁸². These three points were the only things holding back complete independence. The main grievance for the PNC was the calls for a new election upon independence.

The PNC had strong personal feelings against prospective Indo-Guyanese rule. Each side had racial stereotypes that continued to influence how they viewed each party and what they would bring when British Guiana was granted independence. Afro-Guyanese believed that if the PPP ruled, they would steal the whole country away from their population and control every

⁸¹ Seecharan, "Whose Freedom at Midnight?," 724.

⁸² Command Papers, *British Guiana Independence Conference, 1962*, by Duncan E. Sandys, Cmnd 1870: Vol 10, (London, U.K, 20th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1962-63), 3. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1962-051386?accountid=13158>.

aspect of their lives. The seeds were beginning to develop for the PNC and its members to fight against the PPP rule. After the election of 1961, when there was no sign of the PPP slowing down, the PNC felt no choice but to resort to violence to deter independence under PPP rule. The results were the Riots of 1962. On February 16, 1962, rioters linked to the PNC party looted and burned businesses and shops mostly belonging to Indo- Guyanese people. Jagan and the PPP saw these events as a disturbance to prevent the succession of their rule in an independent British Guiana. The February attacks would be the first spark in a series of back-and-forth acts of violence toward one another. Upon the rioting, British forces had to enter Georgetown to quell the disturbances, but not before four lives were lost and forty injured⁸³. Although Jagan was the elected official then, his position as Indo-Guyanese also made dealing with the riots difficult. Jagan had no control over stopping the violence in predominantly black Georgetown. Historically, the police force continued to be predominately Afro-Guyanese people. Indo-Guyanese were not a large portion of the population in Georgetown as they continued to reside in rural areas and were objectively denied the chance to join security forces⁸⁴. The rioting successfully displayed an unequipped society for independence to the crown. Upon the London Conference in 1961, the Commission hoped that the parties in Guyana could come to their resolution without having to appoint their measures for an independent constitution. These acts of violence displayed a lack of collaboration between the parties and the Guianese people. The

⁸³ Command Papers, *Colonial Office. The Colonial Territories 1961-1962*. Cmnd.1751: Vol 11. (London, U.K: 20th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1961-62), 46. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1961-050733?accountid=13158> .

⁸⁴ Stephen G. Rabe *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana : A Cold War Story*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 91.

aggression weakened any trust parliament had in the Guianese people to navigate themselves to independence successfully.

Although the riots can now be linked to party involvement, the initial mechanism for the organization was done through the labor trade unions network in the country. The colonial nature of the country made the entire population a working-class of people. The working-class people were the power of the country. Burnham stated, "But the fact that ours is a worker-based party must not prevent us from having the intelligence to learn from the history of other countries and other liberation movements. We must be able and prepared to draw our strength not only from the workers but from all sections of Guianese; workers, farmers, businessmen, intellectuals, and civil servants, regardless of their race."⁸⁵ The systems of labor were vital for the building blocks of Guianese society. As a colonial society, the Guianese people had little representation in the Legislative Council in the shadow of British authority. Their voice came from the leverage of the trade unions. Before the political parties were divided based on race, trade unions were divided along ethnic lines⁸⁶. The largest union was the Man-Power Citizens Association which represented the Indo population. Who continued to be field workers in the sugar industry despite the lapse of indentured contracts that kept them tied to the plantations. The Afro population had more class stratification because varying degrees of status existed in the urban areas they resided in. Other unions that existed represented the Afro-Guyanese populations. There were multiple occupations they had access to, which created multiple different trade unions. The trade unions were the most organized bodies of power the Guianese people had. Since they were built on the status of workers, the colonial labor separation that the British instilled meant that these unions

⁸⁵ Nacimiento and Burrowes, *A Destinty to Mould*, 5.

⁸⁶ Bolland, *The Poltics of Labour*, 601.

would be another form of separation between the two ethnic groups in the country. When the PPP and PNC existed separately, they had organized groups to align with each of them already built into society. The parties then used their aligned trade unions to foment social unrest and the riots that persisted based on racial differences.

After two more conditional conferences in 1962, the same year as the first riots, and in 1963, more events would convey an unfit PPP leadership. Beginning in April of 1963, before the constitutional conference planned for the year, there was still severe political deadlock from general strikes in which some became violent. The London Conference in 1963 labeled the strikes as “inter-racial violence ⁸⁷.” Racial violence in the state made British Guiana’s party leaders weak and unsuccessful in any measure for compromise. There have been multiple failed attempts at promoting a unanimous constitution with no signs of progress. Guiana was beginning to look like a country unfit for independence. Political leaders had gone from a fully approved functioning constitution suspended because of apparent communist influences. Now the country had no uniform plan for governance, with party lines split along ethnic identities. Once bright on its course towards independence, party leaders now had to agree to allow the British government to decide on the outstanding constitutional issues⁸⁸.

⁸⁷ Command Papers, *British Guiana Conference*, by Duncan E. Sandys, Cmnd.2203: Vol 10. (London, U.K: 20th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1963-64), 3. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1963-052315?accountid=13158> .

⁸⁸ Command Papers, *British Guiana Conference*, 4.

Foreign Involvement

The critique of the Robertson Commission was influential in developing the split between Jagan and Burnham and the creation of the new two-party system beginning to develop. However, the party split to some scholars was more deliberate than most narratives paint it to be. Jagan and Burnham had worked together for years despite their difference. They both actively understood the matters they disagreed upon but were willing to work through them because they hoped for independence. On multiple occasions, Jagan and Burnham noted how vital their racial unity was to fighting against the colonial powers. They both understood that the real enemy was the British, and ousting their rule was the first thing that needed to be done for a better future for their country. Despite this understanding, Jagan and Burnham had apparently believed that a party split would be a better alternative path toward independence. In reality, involvement by not only the UK but the U.S. as well deliberately instigated a split to benefit and secure their world status. It is important to note that some scholars still argue the validity of what occurred in Guyana at the hand of foreign involvement. This paper will discuss it as fact to demonstrate the colonial mindset of foreign involvement during decolonization.

As noted, there was global tension for everyone during the Cold War. The United States was at the forefront. The U.S. became involved in global problems that did not call for their involvement, crediting the life of democracy and the expansion of freedom for doing so. A prominent example of this is the Vietnam War. In which the U.S. unlawfully sanctioned its troops in Vietnam to protect the country against the communist takeover. The involvement of the U.S. failed, and Vietnam, in turn, became a win for Russia and communism. This is one known example of what the U.S. was willing to do to fight against communism and Russia. Concerning

British Guiana, the U.S., aided by the UK colonial power, intentionally used the break up of the unified PPP to place their more ideal candidate in power upon independence.

After the split of the PPP, the party lost an entire group of support. However, Jagan and his party continued to win the elections as Indo-Guianese still comprised most of the population. Jagan's party remained in power in the Legislative Council. Jagan's continued support in British Guiana became worrying for the British. One of the main disgruntlement of the British on the Constitution of 1953 was the communist influence they perceived. The British fomented the split within the PPP by once again shifting the blame inwards. Even though the party was united, the British drew on their racial differences, to target Jagan and Burnham, and treated them differently⁸⁹. The Jagan division of the party was labeled as communist because of Jagan's connection to communism. Although Jagan himself never labeled himself a Communist and made it a point to draw a difference between being a socialist sympathizer and a communist. In return, the British government labeled Burnham as the moderate in the party. Since the British began to treat the two leaders as ideologically different, Jagan and Burnham also began to look at each other with two different visions for the future of Guiana. Jagan and his alleged communist beliefs began to be perceived as what was in the way of independence. The British successfully villainized Jagan's party faction, which influenced the split, but he still won the elections despite it.

Since Jagan was still winning the elections, the British needed to expand their efforts to ensure Guiana would not gain its independence under alleged communist leadership. Jagan's leadership was not only a concern for the UK, but the U.S. also began to view Jagan as problematic for them. After the elections of 1961, in which Jagan had once again won, he visited

⁸⁹ Bolland, *The Politics of Labour*, 625.

the White House under John F. Kennedy's administration. After that meeting, Kennedy was "convinced that an independent British Guiana under Burnham would cause us (the United States) fewer problems than an independent British Guiana under Jagan."⁹⁰ The U.S. and the UK both agreed that Jagan was a threat because of the political climate of the cold war.

This was also a concern because of the events that occurred in Cuba during the 1960's occurring in Cuba in the 1960s. Fidel Castro had just overtaken the military junta in Cuba, becoming a powerful Communist influence in the Latin American region of the world. Although a dictatorship, the U.S. supported the military regime in Cuba so that it would not fall into the Soviet partnership. The Cuban revolution changed all that, and now one of the most developed countries in South America was under a communist regime. The U.S. was radically concerned about the communist regime in the region. This prompted what is known as the Bay of Pigs invasion. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a failed CIA operation to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba. However, the communist regime in Cuba remained in power despite U.S. efforts to oust the regime. As Jagan continued to garner support from the Guianese people, there was fear that Guiana could end up in a situation like Cuba. Then between 1962 and 1964, the CIA began proctoring support for Burnham in conjunction with British intelligence⁹¹.

In divulging their plan to place Burnham in power, the United States actively ignited the riots and acts of racial violence in the early 1960s. Initially, the British government did not support the U.S. goals to unseat Jagan. Despite not having support from the British, the U.S. continued to infiltrate British Guiana. Operatives are believed to have infiltrated unions and mobilized them to riot and provoke the violence that occurred in February 1962⁹². Before the

⁹⁰ Bolland, 626.

⁹¹ Bolland, 626.

⁹² Rabe, *U.S Intervention in British Guiana*, 91.

riots, the British got closer to granting the colony self-determination. However, after the event of 1962, the British accommodated the U.S. calls to delay independence⁹³. The British had no real incentive to align with the policy initiatives that were trying to be pushed by the United States. As discussed, Britain's status in the global sphere became the U.S. principal ally⁹⁴. For British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, it was in his best interest to align with the desires of the United States. The British then delayed independence and called for new elections to take place.

Before the new elections, a vital party realignment had taken place through intervention. Jagan continued to win the majoritarian represented vote because Indo-Guianese made up a majority. The majority representation and the numbers put Burnham and his party at a technical disadvantage. Although the PNC and PPP were the two major parties at the time, other parties and worker unions still represented the other demographic groups of the country. One of those parties was the United Force (UF) that Pete D'Aguir headed. This party encompassed the representation of small Guiana groups from Portuguese, Chinese, and Amerindian backgrounds. This comprised a small portion of government representation compared to the more significant PPP and PNC. The United States again intervened and proctored the collaboration between Burnham and D'Aguir, in which U.S. officials met with members from each party to get them to collaborate. Burnham himself also courted D'Aguir, when it was concluded that if they were to form a coalition government, they would gain a majority over the PPP, giving Burnham leadership⁹⁵.

Another constitutional conference occurred in London in 1963 after the violent acts that highlighted the years prior. Again this conference was looking unconceivable. Colonial Secretary

⁹³ Rabe, 96.

⁹⁴ Rabe, 97.

⁹⁵ Bolland, *The Politics of Labour*, 627.

Duncan Sandys' solution was to introduce proportional representation. Proportional representation was one of the critical grievances between the party. The PPP wanted to keep the majoritarian system because it gave them majority rule and would protect their position of power. However, that same system disadvantaged the PNC and other groups. Sandy's implementation of proportional representation solidified Jagan's and the PPP's decline and allowed for the rise of PNC leadership⁹⁶. After the change, it also called for new elections to take place in 1964 under the new system in which a date for independence would be determined.

The London Conference and the losses and wins for each group solidified the racial politics in the country. As a result, more unrest and violence followed from February to August 1964. This included strikes from the sugar industry, which still were the majority Indo-Guianese people. Since Afro-Guianese made up most of the security forces, they were sent to quell the strikes. Upon their arrival, racial violence erupted between the Indo-Guianese sugar workers and the Afro-Guianese forces. Beyond the strike, there was arson and bombings from both races. All the violence caused the deaths of about 176 people.⁹⁷ The violence was also met with racial relocation. Although the groups at this point were geographically separated, this was a loose separation and was not strict, so there still were some moderate interracial villages and towns. People began to relocate to communities that had one racial group within, creating even more homogenous communities that culturally separated people from each other⁹⁸.

Then in 1964, the new elections were set to occur on December 7th. The result was "the PPP received 45.8% of the vote and was awarded 24 of the 53 seats, the PNC received 40.5% of

⁹⁶ Bolland, 627.

⁹⁷ Bolland, 628.

⁹⁸ Bolland, 628.

the vote and 22 seats, and the UF 12.4% of the vote and 7 seats.”⁹⁹ Now, because of the new rules established after the London conference, the PNC-UF coalition was set to take power and did December 15th. Now Jagan was no longer in power, and the communist threat he represented to the UK and the United States was gone. British Guiana was now being represented by a coalition government that coincided with the policy initiatives of the British. Although racial violence was becoming an issue within the country at a much larger scale than it ever was in the 1950s, upon the first draft of the Constitution, the UK was finally ready to grant British Guiana independence. Then on May 26, 1966, the colony of British Guiana became the independent state of Guyana.

Guyana was now its own country, bearing the new cost of racial conflict for the price of independence. Although the British were not the direct interventionist involved in coercing violence and instigating a more significant racial divide in the country, they are to blame just as much as the United States. The British had a legacy to protect, as their colonial power directly generated their world status. Although the British did not condone the physical intervention by the United States, they did nothing to prevent it or protect the country against it. Disagreeing with the United States was one thing, but they were not willing to be the one to stop them either way. In the end, Parliament and the Prime Minister were swayed by what the United States wanted for an independent Guyana. Before the London conference in 1963, the British government left it up to the Guyanese parties to decide their representation. However, they contested the wishes of Burnham and D’Aquir because the United States was supporting them. They solidified the racial politics that would continue to highlight Guyana to this day.

⁹⁹ Bolland, 628.

Conclusion

Guyana's journey to independence was one of the most troublesome in the Caribbean. Its history was a shaping force that made the Guyanese experience different from the countries around it. After a series of political events between the Dutch and the British, the territory was left in the hands of the British, which embedded a racial class stratification because of the system of labor created in British Guiana. The British expanded the plantation system in Guyana and brought even more enslaved people to work the land. As a result, Guyana became an essential part of the sugar trade for the British.

The uncontested success of the plantation system was short-lived. Exports from Brazil and Cuba were threatening Britain's trade in the region. Alongside that, there was growing frustration by the enslaved in the state, provoking uprisings. Domestically at home, the abolition movement was gaining more traction. All of these factors led to the eventual abolition of slavery in 1833. The abolition of slavery was done gradually to accommodate to the economic repercussions total abolition would have on the plantation systems in the British colonies. Slavery was replaced with an apprenticeship system that required treacherous work from the newly freed African people. Eventually, this system would end, and the British had to look for a new labor force to sustain the colony.

The British pulled from the resources they already had at their disposal and began an indentured labor system from India. India was the most critical colony under British control. India had rich goods for trade and a large influx of people. Servitude was a voluntary process, but for the people of India that left and found themselves in oversea colonies of the British, this process was not always voluntary. In some cases, there was coercion and manipulation to get people to sign the contracts and leave their homes. Another factor that affected those that signed

the contracts was the Great Famine in India. Although a natural occurrence of the famine resulted from the British mishandling of irrigation systems in rural villages, they did not understand the effects of the monsoon season. The factors stimulated the migration, in which most Indians that signed these contracts were relocated to British Guiana.

Once the Indians arrived in Guyana is when racial relationships began to form. The Indian laborers were sent to work on the plantations that enslaved Africans formerly occupied. Now the planters replaced the Afro-Guyanese paid laborers with the indentured Indian laborers. Indian labor was a cheaper alternative than paying the Afro-Guyanese people an actual wage. This was the first occurrence of tension because the plantation industry was the only real opportunity in Guyana. Now the Afro-Guyanese did not have work options in order to sustain livelihood. The party to blame for the mistreatment of the Afro-Guyanese was the British. However, the British could sway that blame and anger toward the Indian laborers. Instead of blaming the British, the Afro-Guyanese began to look at the Indian laborers as a new problem introduced to their life.

Since the Indian laborers were new to the land, far away from the strong cultural ties of their homeland, this made them susceptible to British attitudes and beliefs. The British developed racist attitudes toward both classes of brown and black people that now existed in Guyana. The Indentured Indians, in turn, began to adopt the racist beliefs that the British held toward the Afro-Guyanese. This was used to keep Indians away from the Afro-Guyanese, so they would be unable to consolidate any national feeling of a collective group among each other. This worked as the Indian laborers even after servitude ended, and they were free to leave the plantations, still living in the rural areas of Guyana. In contrast, the Afro-Guyanese had to look elsewhere for work and opportunities and moved to more urban areas like Georgetown.

The racial attitudes became embedded even further into Guyanese society over time. The most evident example was the struggle for independence and decolonization in British Guiana. Although separated and disconnected, the two groups lived harmously together. After World War II, Britain began its era of decolonization. For Guyana to gain independence, they had to make a constitution that the British deemed appropriate. The first draft of the constitution was done in 1953. However, the following year in 1954, the British suspended the constitution and pushed back plans to finalize independence.

The constitution was suspended because it did not factor in the economic goals needed to sustain an independent state. This was due to the apparent communist influences and anti-white rhetoric in the constitution. The constitution was made under the unified party leadership of the PPP, which under Jagan and Burnham, was a racially united party. However, Jagan and Burnham actively threatened the British colonial legacy in Guyana. Their ideas were, in fact, radical, but it was done that way to be as far away from British influence as they could. This instilled fear amongst the British. Although the British were beginning to grant their colonies independence, they still wanted the colonies to rely on Britain to a certain extent. Colonies were almost expected to align with the wishes of the British ideologically and wanted to demonstrate how strong the British mindset was engraved onto their territories. This would prove that their colonial mission to bring knowledge and growth to these otherwise “underdeveloped” and “barbaric” places was indeed helpful to the people. If a former colony were to drift away from the goals of the British, this would express a failure on their behalf to the world.

After the suspension of the constitution, the British villainized each group against the other one again. The PPP, once unified, had a significant schism when Burnham left the party. He then created the PNC to represent the Afro-Guyanese people. The British painted the beliefs

of Jagan socialism and accused communist ties as one of the major issues in the party. The result was distrust between Burnham and Jagan, as they blamed each other for the failures of the constitution. This mimics how the British separated the Indian laborers and formerly enslaved Africans to distrust each other. Once united in their goals towards independence, party politics became much more complicated based on race.

The two biggest parties represented in Guyana drew an even starker line between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese people. Outside of the party, people began to blame each opposing group for the reason that independence was being withheld from them. The tensions grew so intense that Riots began to occur in 1962, and lives were lost. As much as the nature of British colonialism is to blame for the disfigured society, the United States was also involved in fomenting racial tensions. Further research has shown that the United States had infiltrated Guyana's labor unions to promote unrest and induce the violent acts that began to occur. The United States wanted to oust Jagan from control before independence was given to Guyana. The American people did not trust Jagan, and the US viewed Burnham as less radical and, therefore, easier to control than Jagan would.

Burnham successfully gained leadership in Guyana after the British agreed to change the representational system. The British knew that changing to proportional representation would give Burnham and the PNC control of the Legislative Council and the possible effects that could have on the country. However, they eventually chose to do it, abiding by the wishes of the United States, who wanted Burnham in power. After stimulating a racial divide in politics and then foreign involvement that promoted violence to systematically coup the government in charge, Guyana gained independence only after all this.

Guyana's racial and political history is coded with the impacts of British colonization. The British actively introduced two races of people that had never met before to further their capitalist agenda. For a colonial power to remain in safe control of a country, they had to ensure that there was no national pride to be found that would promote any kind of uprising or rebellion. Nationalist pride had proven to be a powerful mobilizer. By removing any connection and relationship between black and brown Guyanese people, it became a state of not just Guyanese people but a state divided between those who identified as Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese. The labels at the beginning of their racial class held more power to each of them than the country they each lived in. For a moment, it seemed like that mindset would get the better of them when the interracial PPP created the Constitution. However, once again, the British were able to monopolize the racial attitude that they had embedded in society and use it to divide the two races. Independence was given in the wake of this racial divide and would continue to affect it afterward. Burnham took office as the first Prime Minister of an independent Guyana. His rule was highlighted by the racial tensions created prior to independence and continue to affect Guyanese society today.

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ACADEMIC VITA

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania State University 2019-2023

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and History

Minor: Sociology

Scholarship: Schreyer Honors College

Paterno Fellow

University College London Spring 2022

Program: Political Science and International Relations

Experience

Dialogue Facilitator- World in Conversation; State College, Pennsylvania August 2021-present

- *Taught how to interpret information, communication, and interaction patterns between individuals. Use sociological factors to determine how people think together to produce productive conversation patterns.*
- *Oversee 3-4 dialogues a week for 90 minutes with groups ranging from 8-12 Penn State students, including the addition of global students under certain circumstances*
- *Helps to develop critical thinking skills through a Socratic method and assists peers with communication skills*

Operational Deputy- Elevation Strategies; New York, New York May-July 2022

- *Supervised interns with the political consulting tasks for clients that included state senators and city council members*
- *Modified projects for the team that included; Community Organization Guides, Client Deep Dives, and Electoral District Analysis*
- *Conducted interviews for company recruitment*
- *Organized canvassing and phone banking teams for clients*

Policy Work Volunteer- Felicia Sing Campaign; Queens, New York July 2021-Nov 2021

- *Included attending volunteer events for city council campaigning throughout the summer.*
- *Weekly/Bi-weekly meetings to discuss policy alignment and work on debate prep, and organize town halls.*
- *Boosted community development through relationship building, listening to what the residents needed and wanted*

Leadership

Co-Chair- Pennsylvania High School United Nations Conference (PHUNC) September 2019-March 2019

- *A three-day conference moderating and guiding around 30 local high school students in organized debate*
- *Delegated and organized student tasks by explaining the debate topic and participating in team-building activities.*

Service

Member-The Multicultural Undergraduate Law Association March 2019-present

- *Empowered to promote diversity and inclusion in the field of law*
- *Curated to include guest speakers, LSAT prep, and create a community of like-minded people*