



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

SIR ARTHUR LEWIS INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES

Telephone: Direct: (868) 662-6965 PBX: (868) 662-2002 Ext. 82037/82038/82391/82392 Fax: (868) 645-6329

E-mail: the.salises@sta.uwi.edu Website: <http://sta.uwi.edu/salises/>

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BLACK POWER REVOLUTION A SALISES CONFERENCE 20-21 April, 2020 CALL FOR PAPERS

On 21st April, 1970, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago declared a state of emergency in response to a mass movement in the society in the name of “Black Power”. Many persons were detained. However, there were many reforms undertaken in the society in response to the demands of the protesters in the streets who were calling for “Black Power”.

This was not the beginning of the Black Power revolution as the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) had been formed before and had become a force with an anti-establishment focus against what they saw as domination by an old pre-colonial order despite the arrival of political independence in 1962.

The events of 1970 seemed to have started with a demonstration by some 200 persons, led by University of the West Indies students, on 26th February, 1970 who were protesting in Port-of-Spain in solidarity with West Indian students at the Sir George Williams University in Montreal, Canada who were charged with conspiracy to commit arson and malicious damage after a sit-in that ended on 11th February, 1969.

After the march, a number of events began to unfold such as Woodford Square being renamed “The People’s Parliament” on 7th March, 1970 and an NJAC march to Caroni on 12th March, 1970.

Dr. Eric Williams addressed the nation on March 23rd 1970, stating his support for Black Power as he interpreted it and announcing, among other things, having “our own bank.” On 1st July, 1970, the National Commercial Bank (NCB) was inaugurated.

On 6th April, 1970, NJAC activist Basil Davis was shot by the Police and his funeral was held on 9th April which saw some 30,000 persons taking part in the funeral procession from Port-of-Spain to San Juan.

On 13th April, 1970, ANR Robinson resigned as a Minister in the Cabinet of Dr. Eric Williams. On 15th April, 1970, all airlines operating services into Trinidad and Tobago were ordered not to allow Trinidad-born American Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael (who later changed his name to Kwame Ture) to land in Trinidad and Tobago after he had been invited by NJAC to visit. On 18th April, 1970, there was the NJAC march to Charlotteville in Tobago followed by the NJAC march from Couva to Caroni in Trinidad on April 20th. There was a plan for sugar workers to march to Port-of-Spain the next day. Instead, on 21st April, a state of emergency was declared.

While there has been much debate about the effect of the events of 1970 on the future development of Trinidad and Tobago in the fields of economics, politics, sociology, business, commerce, and gender and development studies, the movement highlighted vast socio-economic problems facing the population, much of which are still present today. This conference seeks to explore the issues, triumphs and tribulations from the 1970s and extract lessons for moving forward.

Abstracts of no more than 150 words are invited for this conference and should be submitted to Dr. Preeya Mohan, Research Fellow, SALISES, at Preeya.Mohan@sta.uwi.edu by Friday 6th March, 2020.

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