

**Topic: Pan- African Christian Movements in
the Carribean**

**Focus: The Influence Of Pan-Africanism In
Carribean Christian Movements**

George Padmore And Walter Rodney

Introduction

- Pan-Africanism in the Caribbean evolved primarily through the shared experience of slavery, where enslaved Africans from diverse backgrounds developed a sense of unity and common identity despite their forced dispersal across the islands, leading to resistance movements and a strong desire to reconnect with Africa, with significant developments occurring during the Haitian Revolution and later through intellectual and political activism that connected Caribbean people of African descent to the broader Pan-African movement.
- Pan-Africanist ideas first began to circulate in the mid-19th century in the [United States](#), led by Africans from the [Western Hemisphere](#). The most important early Pan-Africanists were [Martin Delany](#) and [Alexander Crummel](#), both [African Americans](#), and Edward Blyden, a West Indian.

- Those early voices for Pan-Africanism emphasized the commonalities between Africans and Black people in the United States. Delany, who believed that Black people could not prosper alongside whites, advocated the idea that African Americans should separate from the United States and establish their own nation. Crummel and Blyden, both contemporaries of Delany, thought that Africa was the best place for that new nation. Motivated by Christian missionary zeal, the two believed that Africans in the New World should return to their homelands and convert and civilize the inhabitants there.
- Although the ideas of Delany, Crummel, and Blyden are important, the true father of modern Pan-Africanism was the influential thinker [W.E.B. Du Bois](#). Throughout his long career, Du Bois was a consistent advocate for the study of African history and [culture](#). In the early 20th century, he was most prominent among the few scholars who studied Africa.

- For Du Bois, “the problem of the color line” was not confined merely to the United States and its “Negro Problem.” Du Bois made it clear that many Africans living on the African continent suffered under the yoke of European colonial rule.
- Among the most-important Pan-Africanist thinkers of the first decades of the 20th century was Jamaican-born Black nationalist [Marcus Garvey](#). In the years after [World War](#) Garvey championed the cause of African independence, emphasizing the positive attributes of Black people’s [collective](#) past. His organization, the [Universal Negro Improvement Association](#) (UNIA), boasted millions of members, [envisioning](#) and then making plans for a return “back to Africa.” Garvey’s Black Star Line, a shipping company established in part to transport Blacks back to Africa as well as to [facilitate](#) global Black commerce, was ultimately unsuccessful.
- From the 1920s through the 1940s, among the most-prominent Black [intellectuals](#) who advocated Pan-Africanist ideas were [C.L.R. James](#) and George Padmore, both of whom came from Trinidad. From the 1930s until his death in 1959, Padmore was one of the leading theorists of Pan-African ideas. Also influential were [Léopold Senghor](#) and [Aimé Césaire](#), who were natives of Senegal and Martinique, respectively. A [disciple](#) of Padmore, [Jomo Kenyatta](#) of Kenya, was also an important figure in Pan-Africanist thought.

LIFE OF PADMORE

- Padmore was born in 1903 in Trinidad and Tobago. His father, James Nurse, was a prominent Pan-Africanist on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1924, Padmore moved to the United States to further his education and became deeply involved in student activism at Fisk and Howard Universities. In 1927, Padmore joined the Communist Party of the United States because he believed that this organization could help him achieve his political goal of freeing Africa from European colonial domination. At the time, he believed that the capitalist system was the root cause of all global problems and that "the oppressed races and classes will be emancipated and the brotherhood of man established by abolishing this nefarious system."
- In 1928, Padmore was particularly impressed by the Soviet Union's progress on the issues of race, self-determination, and support for the colonies' labor and anti-colonial movements. When Soviet leader V.I. Lenin presented his Draft Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1920, he made it clear that all Communist Parties should directly support revolutionary movements in the colonies and in dependent and underdeveloped countries
- The World Negro Movement was organized on the basis of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922, which established a Negro Commission. "A vision of Black internationalism that could transcend without negating a completely racialized view" was made possible by the Comintern.

- Padmore rose to prominence as one of the top black Communists in the United States and the Communist International in a comparatively short amount of time. He held the positions of Editor in Chief of the Negro Worker, Executive Secretary of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW), and Chairman of the Red International Labour Union. As the editor of the Negro Worker and the Executive Secretary of the ITUCNW, Padmore aimed to use these organizations to create a black international and to free all Africans from the horrors of colonial and capitalist exploitation.
- Padmore departed from the Comintern in 1933 due to his belief that the rise of fascism and the subsequent changes in international relations confront the Soviet Union, which posed a threat to the black international movement. Before his resignation, Padmore had started to question the practicality of proletarian internationalism in liberating Africa and the Caribbean from colonial domination. He began to theorize that two revolutions would occur in the colonies: a racial uprising against the white imperialists followed by a class-based revolution which the party would initiate shortly after the first.

- Following his departure from the Comintern, Padmore dedicated nearly twenty years to advocating for the liberation of Black individuals as a Pan-African activist and theorist. He was instrumental in organizing the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester in 1945, an event that is now regarded as the most successful of all the Pan-African Congresses held. Padmore served as the ideological guide for Kwame Nkrumah and acted as his Advisor on African Affairs from 1957 until his passing in 1959.
- Padmore was an extensive writer who produced numerous newspaper articles, pamphlets, and books that analyzed the imperialistic system in Africa and the Caribbean, advocating for self-determination for all colonized nations.

Political Praxis

- Padmore was significantly shaped by the Leninist approach to political organization that he encountered during his seven years as a communist. He worked within highly centralized vanguard organizations that adhered to the principles of democratic centralism. This was apparent in the American Negro Labour Congress, the Communist Party of the United States, the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, and the Red International Labour Union. The most progressive segment of the industrial working class, known as the "vanguard," was tasked with guiding the opinions of those who were unhappy with the socioeconomic and political circumstances that were in place. A limited group of professional revolutionaries who were fully dedicated to enacting the revolution that would result in the establishment of a socialist society were to lead the vanguard party. The vanguard party followed the principle of democratic centralism.
- After Padmore broke with the Comintern, he brought vanguard tendencies to the Pan-Africanist organizations in which he played a prominent role namely: the International African Service Bureau (IASB) and the Pan-African Federation (PAF). Padmore was cognisant of "how the ideas of the party became obedient to the Central Committee. He had seen the degeneration of vanguardism in the Soviet Union and the utilization of violence to stamp out any opposing ideas, positions or individuals.

- Padmore critiqued the resultant violence that took place in the Soviet Union during Joseph Stalin “purges and show trials” in the 1930s, by stressing that “democracy and brotherhood cannot be built on intolerance and violence.” Moreover, he described himself as a socialist and a democrat to demonstrate that he had severed ties with the dictatorship of the proletariat and vanguardism but these predispositions still persisted.
- Padmore's fellow IASB members regarded him in the highest regard and appreciated his expertise as a propagandist and strategist.
- Commitment and determination to liberating Africa and the Caribbean from colonial domination were clearly important to Padmore. These attributes are commendable and ought to be a cornerstone of any Pan-African endeavor.
- Padmore served as Editor in Chief of the Negro Worker, the publication of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, from 1931 to 1933. He was successful in achieving his goals of creating a well-known publication that addressed the problems that Black people face on a daily basis, criticizing capitalism, exposing the negative effects of colonialism, and advancing Black internationalism.

- Padmore wrote for many newspapers: *Crisis*, *Chicago Defender*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, *New Leader*, *Controversy*, *Forward*, *International African Opinion*, *Tribune*, *Survey*, *Socialist Leader*, *United Asia*, *Beacon*, *Public Opinion* and many more newspapers in the Caribbean and Africa. Though he was not paid, he continued to write because it provided a platform for him to attack colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean.
- Padmore also wrote six books *How Britain Rules Africa*, *Africa and World Peace*, *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire*, *Africa Britain's Third Empire*, *The Gold Coast Revolution: The Struggle of an African People For Freedom and Pan-Africanism or Communism*.

Conferences

- He participated in, and organized several international conferences starting with the Trade Union Unity League Convention in 1929. Padmore was one of the main organizers of the International Conference of Negro Workers in 1930; the International Seamen and Harbour Workers in 1932; and the Congress of the International Labour Defence in the Soviet Union in 1932.
- He was also intimately involved in planning the aborted Negro World Conference in France in 1935. He attended a European socialist conference in Paris in 1939. Padmore participated in two Subject Peoples Conferences that took place in London in 1945 and was the chief organizer of the historic 1945, 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester. He attended the British Centre Against Imperialism Conference, London, 1946 and attended the Paris Peace Conference that same year.
- Padmore was the main organizer of the Conference of Independent States in April 1958 and the All African Peoples Conference in December 1958, held in Accra. Padmore attended the Guinea-Ghana Conference in May 1959 and the Ghana-Guinea-Liberia Conference in July 1959.

- It was not accidental that Padmore attended and participated in numerous conferences because they were an important aspect of his politics. These Conferences provided a forum for interactive dialogue, where like-minded individuals shared information, experiences, disseminated ideas, made and reinforced contacts. They also provided an avenue for instant feedback and constructive criticism that were not forthcoming with a newspaper article.
- Padmore emphasized the importance of "advanced planning" for a successful conference. He was adamant that in order to steer the conference in a certain political direction, careful preparation was required.
- Padmore also had a link with Nkrumah by organising the All African Peoples Conference showing that "Ghana and Nkrumah had begun a new tradition," and he saw the Conference as a continuation of the 5th Pan-African Congress.

Network of contacts

- It was claimed that Padmore had over four thousand contacts scattered across Europe, North America, the Caribbean and Africa. Although this figure seems somewhat inflated, it was clear that Padmore had numerous contacts many of whom he had cultivated when he was the chairman of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers and the editor of the Negro Worker. He used these contacts to assist with the distribution of the Negro Worker. Padmore also used his connections to help promote conferences and other political activity.

Student Activist

- Padmore became an activist because he thought that the only way to bring about change was to fight for it. In order to protest and struggle for a better society free from racism and colonial tyranny, he joined already-existing groups or founded new ones. Padmore was an active student activist at Fisk University.
- To "promote racial consciousness and a spirit of nationalism aiming at the protection of the sovereignty of Liberia," he played a key role in the establishment of a Pan-African student.
- He also became known as one of the most prominent anti-colonial speakers, both on and off college.
- Additionally, as the secretary of the Anti-Imperialistic Youth League at Howard University, Padmore was heavily involved in student action.

Communist Activist

- Padmore joined the American Negro Labour Congress in 1927, where he served as an organizer and contributed to the Negro Champion as an author and editor. He was also a member of the Harlem Tenants League at this time, which organized rent strikes, demonstrated against evictions, and worked to improve living conditions for Harlem inhabitants.
- He became a professional revolutionary and joined the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) . Padmore was characterized as "active, devoted, and fearless" as a CPUSA member.
- He used the same traits to further the Black International throughout his time working for the Comintern.

Pan-African Activist

- Padmore was a member of the International Friends of Abyssinia (IAFA} he emphasized that the fight "of the Ethiopians was a fundamental part of the struggles of the black race over the world for national freedom, economic, political, social, and racial emancipation."
- As the consummate political animal and political activist, he called several protest meetings whenever he discovered an issue affecting Africans in London or globally. At the meetings the gatherings would pass resolutions which Padmore or another member of the IASB would submit to the colonial office.

- In 1944, the IASB joined with about a dozen Pan-African organizations to create the Pan-African Federation. The PAF sought to build a united front of Africans and people of African descent in Britain and to establish links with Pan-African organizations in different colonial territories. Padmore continued to play the leading role in this united front. The PAF published a number of pamphlets dealing with specific colonial problems, authored by its members. During the Nigerian General Strike of June 1945, the PAF contacted a number of organizations in the colonies and inside the United States for support for the striking workers. The PAF held meetings in London, Manchester and Liverpool where they collected funds to send for the strikers.

A United States of Africa?

- Padmore and Nkrumah shared the same vision of the organic unification of the continent although their approach to the realization of this goal differed as Nkrumah favoured: i) national independence, ii) national consolidation, iii) transnational unity and community, and iv) economic and social reconstruction on the principles of scientific socialism and for Padmore i) First there is the struggle for national independence; ii) The second is the social revolution, which follows the achievement of independence and self-determination and iii) Africans are seeking some form of regional unity as the forerunner of a United States of Africa.

- Although Padmore acknowledged that the attainment of a United States of Africa would not be easily attained, and only a reality would be seen in his lifetime. Unfortunately, Padmore died in September 1959 when his dream of the realization of the continental state has not been seen.
- Nkrumah failed to convince the other African leaders who met in Addis Ababa in 1963 to unite and bring about the unification of the continent. This meeting led to the creation of the Organization of African Unity.

Conclusion

- Padmore's commitment and dedication to the struggle for over thirty years is still worthy of emulation. Padmore's dream of a continental African Union, under the banner of Pan-African socialism still lives in the hearts and minds of many Pan-Africanists on the African continent and worldwide.

Walter Anthony Rodney

- Walter Anthony Rodney was born on 23 March 1942 into a working-class family in [Georgetown](#), Guyana. Because of his working class background, the period in which he lived, and his parents political awareness. Rodney was introduced to issues of race, class and empire at an early age. He attended the [University College of the West Indies](#) in 1960 and was awarded a first-class honours degree in history in 1963. He earned a [PhD](#) in [African History](#) in 1966 at the [School of Oriental and African Studies](#) in [London](#), [England](#), at the age of 24. His dissertation, which focused on the [slave trade](#) on the Upper [Guinea Coast](#), was published by the [Oxford University Press](#) in 1970 under the title *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545–1800* and was widely acclaimed for its originality in challenging the conventional wisdom on the topic.
- Rodney travelled widely and became known internationally as an [activist](#), [scholar](#) and formidable orator. He taught at the [University of Dar es Salaam](#) in [Tanzania](#) within the period 1966–67 and 1969–1974 and in 1968 at his alma mater [University of the West Indies](#) at [Mona](#), Jamaica. He was also a strong critic of [capitalism](#) and argued that only under "the banner of Socialism and through the leadership of the working classes" could Africa break from imperialism.

- On 15 October 1968, the government of Jamaica, led by prime minister [Hugh Shearer](#), declared Rodney *persona non grata*. The decision to ban him from ever returning to Jamaica and his subsequent dismissal by the University of the West Indies, Mona, caused protests by students and the poor of [West Kingston](#) that escalated into a riot, known as the [Rodney Riots](#), resulting in six deaths and causing millions of dollars in damages. The riots, which began on 16 October 1968, triggered an increase in political awareness across the Caribbean, especially among the Afrocentric [Rastafarian](#) sector of Jamaica.
- In 1969, Rodney returned to the [University of Dar es Salaam](#). In 1971, he was promoted to be a senior lecturer and promoted to associate professor in 1973. He worked at the university until 1974 when he returned to Guyana. He was promised a professorship at the University of Guyana in Georgetown but the [Forbes Burnham](#) government rescinded the offer when Rodney arrived in Guyana.
- Rodney was close to [C.L.R. James](#), among others, and supported the socialist government of [Julius Nyerere](#). While his academic work contributed "to the emergence of decolonised African social sciences," Rodney worked to disseminate knowledge in Tanzanian villages, where he spoke in [Kiswahili](#), the language of the people. He continued his pan-African activism and, analysing the causes of the continent's underdevelopment, published [How Europe Underdeveloped Africa](#) in 1972. With a view to the Pan-African Congress of 1974, he prepared a text on the "international class struggle in Africa, the Caribbean and America." In this landmark work, Rodney denounced leaders who, like [Félix Houphouët-Boigny](#), [Jean-Claude Duvalier](#), [Idi Amin Dada](#) and [Joseph Mobutu](#), were turning to tribalism under the guise of "[negritude](#)."

- Rodney became a prominent [Pan-Africanist](#) and [Marxist](#), and was important in the [Black Power](#) movement in the [Caribbean](#) and North America. While living in [Dar es Salaam](#), he was influential in developing a new centre of African learning and discussion.
- Increasingly active in politics, he joined the [Working People's Alliance](#) (WPA), a party that provided the most effective and credible opposition to the [People's National Congress](#) government and aimed to "create political consciousness, replacing ethnic politics with revolutionary organisations based on class solidarity." In 1979, he was arrested and charged with [arson](#) after two government offices were burned. The trial was deferred three times and later dropped due to lack of evidence.
- On 13 June 1980, Rodney was killed in Georgetown, at the age of 38, by an explosive communication device in his car, a month after he returned from celebrations of [independence in Zimbabwe](#) at a time of intense political activism. He was survived by his wife, Patricia, and three children. His brother, Donald Rodney, who was injured in the explosion, said that a sergeant in the [Guyana Defence Force](#) and a member of the [House of Israel](#), named Gregory Smith, had given Walter the explosive that killed him. After the killing, Smith fled to [French Guiana](#), where he died in 2002.
- It is widely believed, but not proven, that the assassination was set up by Guyana's president, (Guyanese Government was found liable for Rodney's death in 2017 by Commission of Inquiry) [Linden Forbes Burnham](#). Rodney believed that the various ethnic groups historically disenfranchised by the ruling colonial class should work together, a position that challenged Burnham's hold on power.

- In 2014, a Commission of Inquiry (COI) was held during which a new witness, Holland Gregory Yearwood, came forward claiming to be a long-standing friend of Rodney and a former member of the WPA. Yearwood testified that Rodney presented detonators to him weeks prior to the explosion asking for assistance in assembling a bomb. Yet the same Commission of Inquiry (COI) concluded in their report that Rodney's death was a state-ordered killing, and that then Prime Minister Forbes Burnham must have had knowledge of the plot.
- Donald Rodney, Walter's brother, was convicted in 1982 of possessing explosives in connection with the incident that killed his brother. On 14 April 2021, the Guyana Court of Appeals overturned this judgment and Donald's sentence, exonerating him after forty years in which he contested his conviction.
- **Academic influence**

Walter Rodney's most influential book is [*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*](#), published in 1972 by [Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications](#), London, England and the Tanzanian Publishing House (TPH) Dar es Salaam Tanzania. In it Rodney described how [Africa](#) had been exploited by [European imperialists](#), which he argued led directly to the modern [underdevelopment](#) of most of the continent. The book became influential as well as controversial: it was groundbreaking in that it was among the first to bring a new perspective to the question of underdevelopment in Africa. Rodney's analysis went far beyond the previously accepted approach in the study of [Third World](#) underdevelopment.

- **REFERENCES**

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