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Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

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Permalink

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Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 5(1)

Author

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Publication Date

2013

DOI

10.5070/T851019717

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SPECIAL FORUM

Good Enough for Booker T to Kiss: Hampton, Tuskegee, and Caribbean Self-Fashioning

FAITH SMITH

Mrs. François Pierre, who, since her marriage seems to have become left-handed, is no longer in their service. “Her infant son,” she says, “is to be an agricultree and botanner; for Dr. Johnson wrote in the days of King George the Third that too many frock coats and beaver hats are detrimental.” Her ambition is due to the proposed erection of a Negro-Industrial Institute in the West Indies.

Booker T. would not have been afraid to kiss me on both cheeks. And I would have a place in *Ebony*.

These epigraphs from two Caribbean novels are striking examples of the ways in which Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee project have figured in projections of the region’s identities and futures. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Smith 2010), such fictional representations constitute a critical site for exploring Caribbean people’s engagement with US African Americans more generally; here I am interested in teasing out their investments in the educator who was perhaps the most powerful African-American in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the two educational institutions with which he was associated.¹ In the first epigraph, from the conclusion of Stephen Cobham’s 1907 novel *Rupert Gray*, the newly-married Edith Pierre has withdrawn from doing domestic work for the upper-

class white heroine in order to preside over her own marital home. This reinforces the novel's invitation to readers to snicker at her malapropisms and to read her inflated sense of self-importance as precisely the sort of misuse of intellectual capital that is better left to Trinidad's rising professional, black middle class. This latter constituency, or its men at least, will persuade the colonial authorities to share political power, while Mrs. Pierre, her husband, and other black working-class characters will pledge their allegiance to their leadership and accept that their own aspirations are properly vocational. The mere idea of a future Tuskegee-like institution in Trinidad inspires Edith Pierre's dream that her son will be a member of the professional middle class, but more importantly a *botanist* whose practical development of agricultural resources will save him from being diverted by the sartorial excesses of "frock coats and beaver hats."

In the second epigraph, from Maryse Condé's 1976 *Heremakhonon*, published in a period of the ascendancy of global black feminisms, Veronica Mercier imagines that her father and the rest of her respectable middle-class family would be proud to welcome her at the airport, in a fantasy of a visit home to Guadeloupe from her travels to Europe and West Africa. Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* confirms her family's achievement in overcoming the perils of enslavement at great odds, and *Ebony* magazine models the ideal of a glamorous North American black modernity packaged and exported globally. Her father, a bookish civil servant, is aligned in her mind with Washington, and they act as a psychic reminder that to rebel against her social group's limiting norms of respectability is to resist the forced amnesia about working-class and African antecedents foreclosed by discourses of "uplift" and moving "up" from slavery.

For Veronica, the sexual contradictions are almost unbearable. To win the affections of her father, Washington, and other race men, she must look the part: the beautiful object of desire who would "have a place in *Ebony*." She must make herself sexually and maritally available to men of the prescribed race and class while being a paragon of virtue. While Mrs. Edith Pierre embraces her role as a maternal vessel of middle-class masculine leadership in *Rupert Gray*, Veronica not only rejects her prescribed place as helpmate and womb of Guadeloupe's black Talented Tenth, but she also consorts with mulatto and white male lovers. Veronica and other women will have to work out the sexual paradoxes of being ideologically and intimately aligned with good race men. Moreover, it is precisely women such as Mrs. Edith Pierre who could be said to police the boundaries of masculinity that Veronica and others will find so problematic generations later, since an undue interest in frock coats and beaver hats may be read as not just intellectually frivolous but as flirting with the sexually and morally suspect identity of the dandy.²

These fictions, then, suggest some of the stakes in the training of young men and women of the period for various racial, imperial, and local-"national" projects. In what follows I want to examine the raced and gendered investments of early twentieth-century Caribbean subjects in Washington himself, as well as the Tuskegee

and Hampton Institutes.³ Whereas Washington is often invoked in the context of turn-of-the-century debates pitting his championing of vocational training and entrepreneurship, and his reputedly accommodationist, even servile attitude towards whites, against the cosmopolitan, internationalist, and diasporic W. E. B. Du Bois' advocacy of liberal arts education for professional careers and social equality, such ideological distinctions can distract us from their similarities. Both men were classist and reformist, with institutional affinities that were national and international. Moreover, Caribbean people were not necessarily invested in these presumed ideological differences. In *Rupert Gray*, for instance, the proposed "Negro-Industrial Institute" will have an endowed professorship of Rhetoric, and the eponymous protagonist, a black middle-class accountant, has the intellectual instincts of the Du Boisian model.

As Frank Guridy has argued about Cubans specifically, the region's people sought to leverage their Tuskegee education into social mobility through careers that were both vocational and professional, when they returned to their homeland. *De Esclavo á Catedrático* (*From Slave to Professor*), the Spanish translation of Washington's *Up from Slavery*, enchanted Cubans: "Washington and the Tuskegee story tapped into the deep desires of people of African descent to obtain an education in the Age of Empire" (Guridy 35). This was the case across the region—V. S. Naipaul discussed the impact of the autobiography's philosophy of self-help on his father in Trinidad.

That Caribbean-based educators kept a keen eye on Tuskegee is suggested by the remarks of J. J. Mills of Mico College, Jamaica, as he delivered an address to Tuskegee's visiting principal on behalf of the Jamaica Union of Teachers: "[Tuskegee] teems with absorbing interest for West Indian educators generally, and had time permitted you might have found proofs that the efforts of Hampton and Tuskegee to uplift the status of the race have been and are being copied, if ever imperfectly, by members of the teaching fraternity of the island." "As a result of varying local circumstances," Mills continued, "our method of education may differ in the letter from your system in America. Be assured, however, that we are one with you as to the aim, that is the betterment of the community among whom we are placed" (*Daily Gleaner* March 1916). The specificity of Mills's reference to "the status of the race" is set off here by invocations of mimicry, imperfection, and difference. What did it mean to be "one with you" but have "varying local circumstances"? Was the statement carefully fashioned to refer to "Negroes" in particular, while not offending others? Here one recalls Naipaul's reflections on Washington's autobiography as he travels through the US south in the 1980s: "I began to see it as a painfully coded work, making separate signals even in a single paragraph to Northerners, Southerners, and to blacks" (153). Notwithstanding that "blacks" are here unmoored from the regional identification granted to undesignated whites, Naipaul's insight suggests a shared characteristic of colonial Caribbean territories (whether formal or de facto colonies), and students of Hampton and Tuskegee: understanding and

working within the confines of the exercise of racialized and imperial power, and to survive and even thrive in so doing.

“Obtain[ing] an education in the age of Empire,” to return to Frank Guridy’s phrase, entailed becoming adept at discerning and operating within and across multiple imperial codes. Not all Caribbean people admired what Tuskegee and Hampton stood for, of course. Claude McKay left Jamaica to study at Tuskegee in 1912, and finding it “semi-military” and “machine-like,” moved on to Kansas State College (Cooper). Neither did all students return to the region upon graduation, or pursue professional careers when they did. For many, however, these two institutions provided important alternative paths to social mobility for Afro-Caribbean people when they returned to their respective territories.

Caribbean papers followed the exploits of students, as when a July 4, 1917 notice in Jamaica’s *Daily Gleaner* announced that not only did the annual graduating classes of Tuskegee include “quite a few from the ebony island of Jamaica, but they excelled and were valedictorians; an indication of “their foundation training which they receive in Jamaica.” In this particular case, Robert Scott from Falmouth in western Jamaica, “as ambitious as he is a most loyal Britisher,” planned to pursue further studies in tailoring in Chicago. “I hope the day is not far off when the boys and girls of that island shall find the education there that they now have to come to this country to get, because when they study here they get lucrative positions and so don’t return to give it the benefit of their training.” Thus in an early reference to a “brain drain,” the writer connects students’ success to a formation that *precedes* their training in the US and that therefore properly ought to culminate in their return.

In the early twentieth century Caribbean people were keenly aware of being subject to the intentions of imperial powers—Spain, England or France, as well as the new imperial kid on the block, the US. Like their mid- and late twentieth-century counterparts, we can see the region’s people weighing multiple visions of modernity and figuring out how to understand and even share power without being subsumed by the global power-brokers of the period. In her account of the longstanding engagement of anglophone Caribbean middle-class constituencies with the US, Belinda Edmondson notes the positioning of British values as outworn: “If England represents the dreary past of colonial conformity, America represents *the fulfillment of Caribbean singularity and difference*” (Edmondson 152, emphasis in original). “Fulfillment” suggests that the US aids the achievement of something already underway in the Caribbean, something which is stifled by—but which might also mean the re-visioning of—the European imperial project. Certainly, then, Caribbean people looked to Tuskegee and Hampton for their “education in the Age of Empire,” but this should be understood in part as turning to the US to aid in a more profitable negotiation of the Caribbean colony.

An incident from early 1916 suggests what such negotiations entailed. Booker T. Washington died in late 1915, and it was announced that his newly-appointed successor as principal of Tuskegee, Major Robert Russa Moton, would arrive in

Jamaica for a visit of a few weeks on February 29 (*Gleaner* February 18, 1916). The paper noted that a delegation of educators from the colony had visited Tuskegee and Hampton, “not so very long ago,” and thus “Major Moton is well known to these gentlemen.” Over the years, Washington had hosted various conferences at Tuskegee, to which he had invited US as well as international teachers and missionaries. He sought out the assistance of colonial administrators, as when he asked Jamaica’s Colonial Secretary to send him the “names of such natives as have come into prominence in helping to uplift their people, so we may write them directly” (*Gleaner* February 28, 1912). On the one hand, a powerful educator secured contacts, and showed colonial, educational and religious leaders across the world that his institution was a critical nodal point for civilizational work. On the other hand, Washington was careful to keep colonial officials in various territories abreast of his queries and activities, as if seeking out patriarchal authorization.

With Moton’s impending visit in early 1916, the head of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Marcus Garvey, wrote him an eight-page letter dated February 29 on UNIA letterhead (Matthews, Williams). The letter seems to have been written in Jamaica and delivered to Moton’s hosts upon his arrival. Garvey was on the cusp of leaving for the USA, and was therefore not yet the famed Harlem-based leader of a large-scale international movement of black masses that he would come to be known as by the early 1920s. He had returned to the land of his birth after traveling and working in Central America, and in England, where he audited university classes in London. As he sought to build an organization in Jamaica with the backing of local and expatriate whites, as well as the black and colored middle classes, he perceived the latter in particular to be hostile to his aspirations to political leadership.

Well before his 1916 letter to Moton, Garvey began to write to Booker T. Washington in September 1914, signing off as “President and Traveling Commissioner” in a letter written on the stationery of “The Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League.” Addressing the Tuskegee President as “Dear Sir and Brother,” he asked about Washington’s proposed trip to Europe to give talks on “The Progress of the Negro,” and noted that he himself had just spent two years studying the “Negro’s place” in Europe and intended to lecture in Europe the following year on “the condition of the European Negro.” A week before the appearance of the first issue of his newspaper *Negro World*, Garvey requested an exchange with Tuskegee publications, and asked Washington for a donation for his organization (Harlan).

Another letter dated April 12, 1915 thanked Washington for inviting him to visit Tuskegee, noted that he (Garvey) would soon be in the US, and asked for Washington’s help with introductions in the US (Harlan 261). Garvey actively attempted to draw Washington into his contentious relationship with the Jamaican middle class in a letter to the Tuskegee principal from Kingston dated September 27, 1915 (Harlan 372-373). Telling Washington of the success of a meeting he had organized, attended by four hundred “of the most intelligent and cultured of the

black people,” members and sympathizers of his organization, and presided over by an Englishman, he said that his critics were “colored men” and “narrow minded” journalists who were uncomfortable with his organization’s use of the term “Negro.” “Unknown” before this attack on him, Garvey thus indicated that they sought personal fame at his expense. He noted that he had sent Washington copies of the relevant Jamaican newspapers under separate cover.

In a letter dated September 15, 1915, Washington told Garvey that he had abandoned plans to go to Europe because of the unsettled state of affairs there, though he hoped to go at some other time, and he invited him to Tuskegee to firsthand “what we are striving to do for the colored young man and woman of the south” when he visited the US. While he was happy to send the *Tuskegee Student* in exchange for the *Negro World*, and promised to read the publications that Garvey had sent, he regretted that he would not make a contribution to Garvey’s organization (Harlan 133-134). We might infer here that wartime Europe was the cause of the “unsettled state of affairs” to which Washington referred, but since he was dead by November, it is possible that health reasons were also in play. In the context of the significant volume of mail to which Washington and his colleagues responded—in late 1915, the recent screenings of *Birth of a Nation*, for instance—Garvey was just one more interlocutor claiming the busy principal’s attention. While Garvey sought to position himself as a race leader of comparable influence, albeit still *potentially*, these letters to Washington can be read in part as his jockeying for Washington’s patronage and soliciting his support as he sparred with and hoped to prove his superiority to his Jamaican compatriots in the colony’s public sphere. In this sense, his letters are not unlike those that Tuskegee’s students sent to Washington and other school administrators—cajoling, flattering, importunate. As so many did, Garvey wanted Washington in his corner, and to be identified with the literal and symbolic power of Tuskegee.

Garvey’s February 1916 letter to Moton three months after the Tuskegee principal’s death, therefore, could be read as an attempt to secure the ear of Washington’s successor. Moton’s visit to the colony was also, of course, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to show how much clout Garvey enjoyed beyond Jamaica’s shores. In the letter, Garvey warned Moton that “his reception” “would not be genuine,” and that “the people around him were hypocrites.” Since the Jamaican Negro had no “race ideals” as the American Negro did, and “the coloureds and whites had “unwritten and unspoken” “race ideals,” this meant that the Jamaican had been “sleeping much to his loss” while others “have gained on top of him.” A “plaything in the moulder’s hand,” the black man did not hold office and in business was a messenger or attendant, while whites and coloureds were clerks. The minority that was not “at the foot of the ladder” conceived of things “from a white and coloured mind.”

When the blackman received money and education, Garvey continued, he wanted a white and colored wife, believing that he himself was now white and

colored. “Our black girls” were taught to despise blackmen, preferring the “immoral suggestion[s] of white or coloured men” to the “good attentions” of a blackman; only when she had been “made a fool of” would she turn to the black man. Garvey encouraged Moton to visit the penitentiary, the asylum, and the alms houses to see for himself how “over crowded with our people” they were; to see how “our people” did not live in good houses but in “huts”; how they did not have good clothes or boots but were dressed in rags and were barefooted; and how “our women are prostituted.” If Moton walked the lower sections of Kingston he would see “hundreds of Black prostitutes” in the lanes and streets.

There was no sanitation, and if you “mix[ed] in a crowd on a hot day you would be stifled with the bad odour.” Garvey urged Moton to take note of the absence of men and the preponderance of women in Jamaica’s churches as he traveled around the country, and to see that the women who attended were “of questionable morality [parading] themselves in the garb of vice for [which] the men [had] to pay.” Garvey hoped that Moton’s visit would help the blackman, who was “a slave of destiny,” and in need of “bold and conscientious leadership.” Garvey addressed Moton “as a man with a mission from the High God,” knowing that “your education”—not literary education but “higher education” of “man’s love for his race”—would mean that he understood Garvey clearly.

Here Garvey represented himself as an important player in the colony’s affairs, so that significant visitors had to interact with him, but also as someone who spoke for the Negro, and who dared to do so forthrightly and truthfully. Whereas W. E. B. Du Bois had pronounced Jamaica a “paradise” on a visit there in the summer of 1915 (Du Bois, Matthews), Garvey portrayed himself as speaking with authority and integrity: “Black men here are never truly honored. Don’t you believe like coloured Dr. Du Bois that the ‘race problem is at an end here’ except you want to admit the utter insignificance of the black man.” It is interesting to note the use of “coloured” here, presumably a reference to Du Bois’s light skin that seemed to question his ability to speak incisively about the condition of black people in Jamaica or elsewhere. This distinction seemed not to trouble Garvey when he corresponded with the light-skinned Washington, suggesting that the latter’s racial credentials were unassailable. Furthermore, Moton was dark-skinned, in contrast to his predecessor, and one wonders if this gave Garvey license to write such a lengthy letter, and if Moton’s physical appearance heightened Garvey’s sense that Moton would heed the words of a fellow dark-skinned comrade in arms, or that he needed to give Moton armor for the terrors of the Jamaican middle class.

Garvey’s letter to Moton spoke in reformist terms that were deeply classed and gendered. The purpose of education was to secure for black men the sort of livelihood which would assure them respectable and attentive black women, upward social mobility, and sufficient social distance from the Great Unwashed. In this sense, he showed himself to be of like mind with Du Bois and Washington. The latter’s *Up from Slavery* is obsessed with the need for the black working class to be taught at the

most fundamental level to clean up its act: “In all my teaching I have watched carefully the influence of the tooth-brush, and I am convinced that there are few single agencies of civilization that are more far-reaching” (Washington 75). The schooling of the daughters of laundresses, Washington notes, had merely inculcated a desire for expensive clothing: “The result of this was in too many cases that the girls went to the bad” (Washington 91). For his part, Du Bois countered white America’s criminalization of African Americans in part by addressing the need for the masses to be reformed. In particular: “For Du Bois, so-called sexual deviance must be rooted out by controlling and containing African American women’s sexual desires within the patriarchal African American family” (Shawn Michelle Smith 88). Garvey’s letter to Moton showed how girls going “to the bad” in Jamaica undermined the fortunes of aspiring black men, and therefore the future of the race itself.

For months after Moton’s visit, letters to the editor from residents of both Jamaica and North America criticized Garvey’s unsavory representation of the Jamaican population in his public statements at events organized by the UNIA. Such critics would seem to give credence to Garvey’s claim in his earlier letters to Washington that conservative forces undermined his work on behalf of the Negro race. But of course they were also evidence of the dismay at the route of defamation of Jamaica that he took: even if the middle class agreed with Garvey that the hygienic proclivities of the masses left much to be desired, this was hardly the image of the colony that they wanted aired abroad.

The press in Jamaica also made clear that it was *Moton*, as much as Garvey, who was under scrutiny. A March 3, 1916 *Gleaner* editorial noted that Major Moton must be an extraordinary man to have succeeded Mr. Washington as the head of Tuskegee since, had there been no coloured person of ability, a white would have been chosen. Hampton’s principal, the paper pointed out, was Dr. Frissell, “a man of pure European descent.” Such educational institutions were indebted to “the endowments and financial contributions of white men, and its trustees were white men who were responsible for [their] smooth and successful” operation. Major Moton was chosen because it was believed that he was “fitted to continue Washington’s work,” and like Washington he perceived that the “education and advancement of the Negro [depended] upon white and black alike”; Moton had told an audience of four thousand white and coloured people in New York that succeeding Washington would require the “efforts of *all* the Negroes in America” and the “cooperation and backing” of whites. We see in this, the editorial continued, an appeal to the Negroes, and an extension of the olive branch to whites. Washington’s work was not always “properly appreciated by the American coloured people.” Moton clearly believed in continuing Washington’s work—“practical education of the negro and the friendly cooperation whenever and wherever possible of the white and coloured man.” In welcoming him, Jamaica was therefore welcoming someone who “[stood] high above the level of the average American, whether black or white—a worthy successor to one of America’s greatest men.”

The *Gleaner*, then, assessed Moton's capacity for leadership in the context of white patronage, and its rhetoric in this editorial is also a sort of primer for the use of "Negro" in the public life of the colony: accompanied by frequent references to white guidance and racial harmony. The piece is in keeping with the views expressed in an article on Hampton reprinted in the paper some sixteen years earlier. Hampton, declared Rev. J. Fairley, MD, aimed "to preach [Thomas] Carlyle's gospel of work" to two races "that have never thoroughly gained the work habit." On the one hand, "the Indian was the aristocrat of the country who could only fight and hunt—it was well enough for the white man to toil"; on the other: the "negro came from a tropical country, where nature does everything for man, and where habits of work are not acquired. It is true, slavery compelled him to labour, but the work done never was for the love of it."⁴ Presumably such sentiments made "Negro" Jamaicans bristle, even those who might have thought themselves to be different from US African Americans, though an article such as this was also likely received in terms of the differences between Hampton's white-directed campus and Tuskegee which, while heavily scrutinized by white patrons, was dominated by African American administrators.

We can see Garvey's letter to Moton as part of the web of material, emotional, and imaginative investments in the Tuskegee/Hampton complex. For Robert Hill, Garvey's letter to Moton indicated that "The deep hurt and frustration experienced by Garvey at the hands of the socially oppressive apparatus of colored domination had shattered his innocent expectations regarding his role in society" (Hill). It is at this point in his life, for Hill, that Garvey was really radicalized—"in the context of his struggle to cope with and overcome the rejection of the colored Jamaican middle-class. It was the repressive exclusion of the Jamaican 'browns,' as they were sometimes described, to keep Garvey in his social place and thereby maintain their monopoly of influence as spokesmen for the society to the Colonial Establishment; this fact triggered in him the beginning of a genuine radicalization" (Hill 68). Garvey had returned to Jamaica from his travels throughout Central America and Europe protesting the political isolation of this very group by the colonial authorities, he had hoped to join their ranks. But Hill shows that they rejected his attempts to organize along racial lines, and they competed with him for the attention of the ruling class.

For Hill, this disappointment within Jamaica explains Garvey's turn to diaspora: "In the long run, it was that failure which made him accept the awesome challenge of Africa." It is precisely at this historical period that Garvey migrates to the USA. In her discussion of Garvey's early years in North America, Michelle Ann Stephens stresses the threat that a leader such as Garvey posed within the USA: Garvey "had the potential to step outside of the national terms in which black racial identity could be understood in the United States. . . . Even more dangerously, his transnationalism spoke most powerfully to a specific segment of the black American population, the group least likely to find social acceptance and the rights of full

citizenship in America and, therefore, the group least interested in their cultural Americanization, the black working poor. . . . Through him, we may even go so far as to say that blackness itself in its multiplicity, multinationality, and hybridity, was never strictly national” (81-82).

Thus for Hill, Garvey is spurned by the middle class in Jamaica and he turns from the local to the international, while Stephens invokes Garvey’s transnationalism within the space of the US, as a counter to US nationalism. What happens, then to those in Jamaica including the so-called hypocritical blacks and coloreds excoriated by Garvey in his letter to Moton, who used Hampton and Tuskegee to advance their social mobility there in Jamaica, and across the Caribbean? For the irony here—perhaps we may even say the tragedy—is that it was the very middle-class browns and blacks against whom Garvey warned, who hosted Tuskegee’s principal on his visit to Jamaica.

As Jamaica heard about Moton’s visit, the press reported that Garvey had contacted Moton’s host, Mr. P. W. Murray, and informed him that he was going to host the Motons at a reception, and that invitations would be sent “to prominent friends and well-wishers of Tuskegee.” However, Mr. Murray had responded that their guest “would not appreciate any meeting that Mr. Garvey will convene without his being first consulted in this matter” (*Gleaner* February 26, 1916). A meeting would be held at the Mico Teachers College which everybody would have an opportunity of attending, “and at which representative men from the better classes will be present to meet Major Moton.” Garvey was being reminded, that he did not, in fact, speak with authority on anyone’s behalf, and that he was outside the sacred circle, even as he sought to position himself as Moton’s protector during his visit to Jamaica.

Soon readers learned about the whirlwind visit of Major Moton, whose visit was cut short, it was reported, because he had to rush back to the US to oversee plans for Washington’s memorial. After stopping in Santiago, Cuba, for a few hours, Moton landed in the northeast, where he toured the Titchfield school and hotel in Port Antonio and then headed to Kingston. Moton told one of his audiences that Jamaican students at Tuskegee and Hampton were doing well, and that the first Assistant in Tuskegee’s Commandant department was a Jamaican. He noted that he had been very happy to be hosted by Mr. Murray, who directed the Farm School, and to be reunited with Mr. Myers who directed the Lunatic Asylum, since both men had studied at Hampton when he (Moton) was the dean there; Murray had been like a son to him, he said (*Gleaner* March 4 and 6, 1916). Moton, new to his leadership of Tuskegee and visiting Jamaica for the first time, could count on longstanding, intimate ties with Caribbean people, in this case, Jamaicans. Even as Garvey’s letter to Moton distinguished between clueless, hostile, cowardly black professionals, and those like himself in Jamaica and North America who had a genuine interest in black uplift, Moton’s references to Murray and Myers clarified that the so-called cowards and the Hampton graduates were one and the same. To return to an earlier point, in fact, we may conclude that Hampton in particular, with its missionary faith in the

power of white paternal administrators, but also Tuskegee with its regimented curriculum and heavy dependence on white financial patronage, had given colonial subjects such as Murray and Myers the material and symbolic training they needed to thrive in colonial Jamaica. (Indeed, Garvey himself referred to the ways in which whites assisted him in Jamaica when middle-class non-whites would not.) Garvey reached outside of Jamaica to forge diasporic ties because he felt thwarted in his native territory, while Moton reached inside to Jamaican officials whose negotiation of colonial mores was carefully strategic.

It is worth thinking about the reasons for the brevity of Moton's trip: is it magnifying Garvey's clout unduly to assume that the trip was suddenly shortened because his hosts felt threatened enough to thwart his attempt to host Moton and thus usurp their influence? Why was Moton visiting at all? In one of his speeches he mentioned that he and Washington had long planned to visit the region, including Jamaica and Haiti (*Gleaner* March 4, 1916). This could have been an opportunity to visit the countries from which some of their students came, and solidify and expand alumni and prospective student ties. In this period just after US marines had occupied Haiti the previous year, perhaps the intention was to link Tuskegee to US state interests in the Caribbean. Given that Tuskegee's current and prospective trustees included US business interests, Washington and now Moton may have been enjoined to turn diasporic ties into lucrative business opportunities, or perhaps even low-key surveillance, given that this was a period of wartime in Europe. As Moton visited Jamaica in March, it was reported that former US president Teddy Roosevelt was visiting Trinidad and South America on a naturalist expedition – was this also a covert mission on behalf of the US state? Du Bois had visited Jamaica the previous summer; perhaps Tuskegee officials wished to show that they were as *au courant* with regional and international affairs as the cosmopolitan editor of the *Crisis*.

Perhaps the point here is that more than one of these factors—business, security, racial solidarity, education, diplomacy, imperial control—could have been in play at any given time, and that no single factor was purely distinguishable from another, or always so. With his phrase “Forging Diaspora in the Midst of Empire,” the title of one of his chapters, Guridy offers a useful way to think through the connections amongst diaspora, nationalism, and imperialism: “Rather than wage a counteroffensive to imperialism, the Tuskegee-Cuban connection shows how many Afro-diasporic subjects in Cuba and the United States attempted to take advantage of the opportunities created by the emerging imperial structure. Afro Cubans and African Americans reached across national borders as a strategy to negotiate the changing configuration of power in a moment of imperial formation” (20).

Certainly, Garvey mobilizes the rhetoric of diaspora explicitly in his letter to Moton as well as in his earlier letters to Washington, but his overtures are also to be understood as “diasporic” in the context of elite local and imperial patronage. If Garvey sought to distinguish between race-feeling and the lack of it, with himself as the adjudicator on the Caribbean side of the equation, the March 1916 incident shows

the extent to which he was an outsider in both Caribbean and North American contexts. Tuskegee and Hampton reached *beyond* him in this episode to hail Jamaican colonial subjects. Put another way, Jamaican subjects reached out to Tuskegee-Hampton just as he himself did, without his mediation. The so-called “cowardly” black professional class was in the process of being shaped in spite of Garvey. Perhaps, as he says in his letter, they did so to join the colonial regime and local elites in “trampling” on black aspirations; but certainly also to acquire the social capital that allowed them to return to the Caribbean and angle successfully for positions within the colonial regime. When Garvey complained to Washington that those around him in Jamaica were reluctant to use the word “Negro,” he was speaking to the very figure that was lauded or excoriated for his expedience, and for his coded discourse, to recall Naipaul’s terminology. Murray, Myers, and other Caribbean alumni of Hampton or Tuskegee had learned to speak in code, or had enhanced their ability to do so, and had successfully parlayed this skill into successful careers in their homelands.

Garvey and the compatriots of whom he was so contemptuous, as well as Moton, Washington, and Du Bois, all understood that their status as middle-class men negotiating the often violent terms of US citizenship or European colonial subjecthood, was fraught. The institutions they directed and territories in which they lived required them to placate European or Euro-Creole donors, patrons from business community, colonial administrators, state or federal officials. Just as they assumed that they knew what was best for the lower orders, their own speeches, frock coats, table manners, and institutional decisions were being scrutinized by white patrons, who perceived them to be credible leaders, dangerous upstarts, or ridiculous mimics.

These race men did not necessarily fully acknowledge the loyalties of those over whom they felt themselves to be leaders—working-class (and to a lesser extent middle-class) students and their families from all over the USA, and migrants from the Caribbean, Central America and elsewhere. The letters of these students and their parents indicate that they did not surrender their own powerful conceptions of what a career at Tuskegee or Hampton ought to signify when they began their post-student lives. Clarence Bryan, a Jamaican student at Tuskegee, wrote to Washington in early 1907 and noted that he was sent to the school “wholely and soley” [sic] by his mother in Kingston. Paula Reyes wrote from Havana in September 1911 to ask Washington to “see after [her son], just the same as if you were his father,” and to insist both on photographic proof that her son was being cared for, and a receipt—her proof that the school had received her money, and her reminder to them that it was her resources from Havana that made her son’s education possible.

Letters to Washington and other school administrators at Tuskegee referred to events around the world—the Boer War or the 1907 earthquake in Jamaica, for instance—as students sought to position themselves in the interstices of “school” and “home,” homeland and USA, in order to maintain their good standing at the

institution. Their letters, as well as those of their parents, and of prospective students, reflected the dreams of people from all over the globe—dreams that exceeded territorial boundaries even as they also reflected the hopes of colonial and imperial subjects who sought more mobility and resources *within* the boundaries of their respective territories. This register of simultaneity—national and transnational, imperial and diasporic, vocational and professional, subservient and assertive, idealistic and expedient—is captured in their letters and subsequent careers but may also be helpful in understanding some of the encounters I have examined above. Even as each figure ought to show the other the extent of his influence, and to teach the members of the working-class over whom he had jurisdiction how to clean their teeth, he often demonstrated instead the limits of his authority. He, too, at some time, had to beg or placate someone with more power, and he could not really force resisting or willing teeth-brushers to share his vision of the future.

Fictional Edith Pierre, with whom we started, helps us to keep in view that she and her (nonfictional) counterparts across the region scraped together the money to send their children to the US south or invested in local institutions modeled on them, with the conviction that their faith in these educational institutes mattered, that they had dreams that were sometimes consonant with those of these race leaders, but not always so, and that as they managed to improve or consolidate their own lot in life, they themselves might in turn police the classed and gendered discourses and identities of aspiring students and leaders.

Notes

¹ The epigraphs are from Stephen Cobham, *Rupert Gray: A Tale in Black and White*; and Maryse Condé, *Heremakhonon* 15. While these novels make reference to Washington or Tuskegee-like institutions in Caribbean literature, references to the same topics in African American literature include Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*.

² See for instance Carby, *Race Men* and Miller, *Slaves to Fashion*.

³ While Hampton and Tuskegee accommodated students of varying ages, because they were Normal Schools their typical student at this historical period was in the later teens and early twenties. Washington founded Tuskegee, located in Alabama, on a model provided by his alma mater, Hampton, in Virginia. While Hampton remained identified with white administrators during this period, Tuskegee's faculty and administration were predominantly African American. The former institution trained African American and Native American students, while Tuskegee's students were drawn principally from across the south and elsewhere in the US, as well as from the Caribbean and Central America, the African continent, and Asia.

⁴ “Hampton: The Great American School for Colored Races.” *Daily Gleaner* 18 December, 1900. Page 7. The article is reprinted from *The Mission World*.

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