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## **Politicising In/Security, Transnational Resistance and the 1919 Riots in Cardiff and Liverpool**

David Featherstone

### **Introduction**

In 1919 James Sergeant, “a repatriated Seaman from Cardiff, Wales” from Port Royal in Jamaica, noted in a submission to the Colonial Office that in “the month of June 1919” he had been “living at No 253 Bute Street where a riot took place between the coloured and white men.” He noted that the “white men” had broken “into the houses of the coloured men with mistles of various kinds with an intention of doing greevius bodily harm to the inmates. The coloured inmates had to run away for refuge.” He further observed that “Since the riot started all the coloured men were refused work. I was told that we would have to stay there until we becomes destitute and then we will be sent home. On the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1919 we were then warned by the President of the Marine Board to be ready to embark on board *SS Santille*. On the 27<sup>th</sup> June we were then taken to Barbados and was sent ashore to await another ship to take us to Jamaica. [...] We were then sent away on the 31<sup>st</sup> July on the HMS *Cambrian* and arrived Jamaica on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Augst 1919. [We] arrived Jamaica in a destitute condition.”<sup>1</sup>

Sergeant’s account of the riots in Cardiff positions these events and their aftermath as being shaped by transnational colonial geographies. The events were part of a wave of riots against seafarers of colour in British ports which in turn were linked to a transnational context of white supremacist violence, positions these events and their aftermath as being shaped by transnational colonial geographies. Sergeant’s account of the conditions of those deported to

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<sup>1</sup> The UK National Archives (hereafter TNA) CO/318/349.

Jamaica on the *Santille* speaks to the destitution of those who were “repatriated” in the wake of the riots many of whom had already lost most of their possessions in the riots and had also faced unemployment. In this paper I argue that engaging with the testimonies of seafarers like Sergeant can provide important lens on the transnational politics around “race,” resistance and agency which were constituted in relation to the riots. While testimonies such as Sergeant’s appear in official Colonial Office sources, they nonetheless can be used to trace aspects of the oppositional agency formed in relation to the intense racialized violence of the riots. This is significant as while existing scholarship has engaged with some transnational elements of these riots including their links to unrest in Jamaica and Trinidad and Sierra Leone these events have been primarily understood in national terms.<sup>2</sup>

The first part of the paper locates the argument about the politicization of in/security in relation to understandings of the contested racialized articulations of conjunctures, drawing on Stuart Hall’s work. The section then outlines some of the context of the riots in Cardiff and Liverpool, locating them in ongoing campaigns of the National Seamen and Firemen’s Union (NSFU) which demonized seafarers from racialized minorities. The second section explores some of the ways in which the racialized violence were contested and negotiated by Caribbean seafarers, particularly in relation to processes of “repatriation.” The paper explores how resistance to this violence was itself produced through significant transnational connections and routes, engaging with on disturbances aboard ships which were deporting Black seafarers from Cardiff and Liverpool to Barbados and Jamaica. I conclude that these events offer a key

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<sup>2</sup> Neil Evans, “Across the Universe: Racial Violence and the Post-War Crisis in Imperial Britain, 1919-1925,” *Immigrants and Minorities* 13, no. 2-3 (1994): 59-88; Tony Martin, “Revolutionary Upheaval in Trinidad, 1919: Views from British and American Sources,” *Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 3 (1973): 313-32; Ayodele Langley, J. (1973) *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes* Oxford: Clarendon Press, Charlotte Williams (2002) *Sugar and Slate* Aberystwyth: Planet.

lens into the contested dynamics of racism and resistance in an imperial context and suggest how globalised ideas around racialised in/securities were shaped and negotiated through situated trajectories and relations.

### **The Politicisation of In/Security, the Global Colour Line and Colonial Labour Geographies**

In their reflections on the relevance of W.E.B. Du Bois's arguments about the 'global colour line' for the field of International Relations, Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda and Robbie Shilliam argue that 'the utility of revisiting Du Bois' work lies less in the claim that it provides an off-the-shelf theory of international relations and more in the fact that it signal a rich and venerable research agenda for the interrogation of international relations through an episteme that focuses upon the operation of race and racism.'<sup>3</sup> Their engagement with the "global colour line" offers an important focus on the ways in which race and racism are constitutive of the unequal and contested spatialities through which political relations are shaped. Such an approach to the articulations between space and politics can challenge dominant geopolitical imaginaries and approaches. As Pat Noxolo has argued the "re-centring of in/security means that the Caribbean can be understood as an alternative prism through which wider questions of global in/security can be refocused."<sup>4</sup>

A key way in which such questions of in/security can be re-focused is by a scrutiny of the dynamic spatial practices through which opposition to forms of racialized oppression and violence has been shaped. In this regard the immediate period after the First World War is a very

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander, Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, . and Robbie Shilliam (2015) 'Confronting the Global Colour Line: An introduction' in Anievas et al, ed. *Race and Racism in International Relations: Confronting the Global Colour Line* London, Routledge,

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Noxolo. 'Caribbean in/security and creativity: A working paper'

significant conjuncture for understanding the spatialities through which a ‘global colour line’ was challenged and contested. Critical here was the ways in which racialised crisis narratives and politics were constitutive of the terms on which this conjuncture was articulated and politicised. Crisis as Stuart Hall argued can be experienced in directly racialised ways, one of his key and enduring contributions being to make understandings of different contested articulation of race central to understandings of conjunctures.<sup>5</sup> This approach can help to elucidate the particular terms and spatialities through which racialized class formation can be constructed and the practices through which questions of in/security become politicized.

David Scott’s elaboration of Hall’s account of conjuncture defines it as “the particular condensation of distinct contradictions in multiple registers moving uncertainly according to different rationalities, and differently structuring temporalities.”<sup>6</sup> Scott’s account by drawing attention to the differently structured temporalities in accounts of the conjuncture also speaks to different ways of thinking about the spatialities of the political conjunctures. Theorising the multiple and unfinished construction of space, as Doreen Massey suggested, enables forms of agency to be articulated, as in this context it permits a sense of how spatialities of in/security can be shaped and produced otherwise.<sup>7</sup> In this sense tracing the spatialities through which racialized form of in/security are generated and contested can be productive. As Kate Derickson has argued, “seemingly geographically disparate and unrelated events”

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<sup>5</sup> Stuart Hall, “Racism and Reaction: A public talk arranged by the British Sociological Association and given in London on 2 May 1978,” in *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain*, London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1978, pp. 23–35, see also Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. *Policing the Crisis: ‘Mugging’, the State and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> David Scott, *Stuart Hall’s Voice: Intimations of an Ethics of Receptive Generosity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 68.

<sup>7</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London, Sage, 2005) see also David Featherstone. and Lazaros Karaliotas “Challenging the spatial politics of the European crisis: nationed narratives and trans-local solidarities in the post-crisis conjuncture” *Cultural Studies*, 32: 2, 286-307.

can be “connected at the intersection of the cultural logic of racism, white supremacy and the carceral/security state.”<sup>8</sup>

Mindful that articulations of the “global colour line” can involve the abstraction of racialised relations from particular placed dynamics here I seek to trace situated forms of translocal solidarity, agency and identities. The paper does this by exploring the ways in which seafarers deported from Cardiff and Liverpool in the wake of the 1919 riots constituted both opposition to these riots and the subalternized mobilities adopted by the imperial state in their aftermath. Through doing so the paper engages with ways in which forms of in/security became politicized and the spatialities through which this was done. Such transnational routes and trajectories were shaped through particular racialized imaginaries and solidarities. As Adam Ewing has argued, a key characteristic of “interwar labour radicalism in the greater Caribbean” was the way that “black workers viewed their struggle for economic justice through a prism of racial solidarity.”<sup>9</sup>

Ewing contends that the “period of radicalism following the end of the first world war” was a key factor in shaping this “blend of labour politics and racial consciousness” and that this “was a politics that owed part of its articulation, and much of its persistence, to Garveyism.”<sup>10</sup> The transnational circulation of discourses around the riots against Black seafarers in port cities like Cardiff and Liverpool were a significant part of the emergence of this explicit racial consciousness. These circulations prompted official anxieties as is made clear in a despatch written on behalf of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, which noted that “it is unfortunately the fact that race antagonism has been fostered by the colour disturbances in

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<sup>8</sup> Kate Derickson, “Urban Geography II: Urban geography in the Age of Ferguson,” *Progress in Human Geography* 41, no. 2 (2017): 230-244.

<sup>9</sup> Adam Ewing, “Caribbean Labour politics in the age of Garvey, 1918-1938,” *Race and Class* 55, no. 1 (2013): 23-45, quote at p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Ewing, *Caribbean Labour Politics*, p. 24.

Liverpool, Cardiff and London, by the racial troubles in the United States and by discontent among returned soldiers and repatriated seamen.”<sup>11</sup>

While Milner was anxious about the possibility of connections being shaped between these different racialized antagonisms and struggles, key black radicals were making these connections explicit. Herbert Hill Cain, a “black radical” based in Belize, for example, published an editorial in the *Belize Independent* “under the heading ‘Race Riots in the UK’, about the recent anti-black riots in Liverpool and Cardiff.” Nigel Bolland argues that “the subsequent commission of inquiry” into riots in Belize’ which involved returning soldiers from the British West Indies Regiment in July 1919, “concluded that the article had had ‘a considerable effect in precipitating action.’”<sup>12</sup> During a Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) rally at Carnegie Hall, New York, in November, 1919, Marcus Garvey himself drew attention to the brutality of the rioters at Cardiff.<sup>13</sup> This suggests the way that there were relations between antagonisms in different places and the formation of racialised solidarities. These were shaped by emergent forms of black internationalism which were articulated in opposition to the global color line.

The racialized imaginaries were shaped by particular articulations of labor organizing in the circum-Caribbean in this period as recent work on the strategies of Caribbean workers in Panama in the 1910s has argued. Thus R.L. Fausette in a compelling discussion of the activism of Caribbean “dockworkers during the 1919 Isthmian dock strike” has argued that this strike “revealed the boundaries of West Indian working class agency in the age of empire.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> TNA UK CO 318/348.

<sup>12</sup> Nigel O. Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean: the Social Origins of Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Labour Movement* (Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 198.

<sup>13</sup> Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2008) 192.

<sup>14</sup> Risa.L. Fausette, “Race, Migration, and Port-City Radicalism: West Indian Longshoremen and the Politics of Empire, 1880-1920” in Bentley, J.H., Bridenthal, R. and Wigen, K., eds., *Seascapes: Maritime Histories*,

Fausette traces how Black Caribbean migrant workers known as “‘silver men’ because they received their wages in silver rather than gold as white workers did, successfully established a local chapter of the ILA [International Longshoremen’s Association] and fought tenaciously to obtain higher wages that the union had secured in the war years.” This union organizing, however, was marked by the effects of uneven geographies as their assumption that ILA officials in Washington “desired that the silver employees receive economic justice” proved to be misplaced.

Fausette’s account usefully draws attention to forms of transnational agency shaped through these disputes. She argues that these black longshoremen were “[a]ware of their strategic importance to the expansion of maritime commerce” and “used their role at the hubs of imperial exchange to challenge the structure of the colonial labour market.” Further, she notes how “the maritime linkages they maintained with itinerant sailors, Garveyite followers, and migrant kinsmen, West Indian dockworkers utilized knowledge obtained from the maritime grapevine and circulating radical newspapers in an attempt to appropriate the benefits of continental wartime labor accords and to contest racial exploitation in the Canal zone.” The transnational impact of Garveyism was particularly important in this context, despite Garvey’s own ambiguities in relation to labour struggles and organizing. As Jacob Zumoff notes, the “political consciousness of the West Indian working class in Panama in this period was marked by extreme labor militancy and influenced by black nationalism, particularly Garveyism.”<sup>15</sup> He argues that chapters of Garvey’s *Universal Negro Improvement Association* (UNIA) played a particularly important role in “helping to link the disparate elements of the diaspora.”

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*Littoral Cultures and Transoceanic Exchanges* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007) 169-185, p. 181-2.

<sup>15</sup> Jacob Zumoff, “Black Caribbean Labor Radicalism in Panama, 1914-1921,” *Journal of Social History* 47 no. 2 (2013), 429-457.



Fausette and Zumoff's work emphasizes the ways in which forms of in/security mobilized in relation to labour organization become articulated politically. This necessitates engaging with the relation between transnational racialized class formation and political mobilization. To understand the racialized dynamics at work in the 1919 seaport riots demands going beyond accounts which position the riots as a straightforward reaction by demobilized servicemen to being displaced from their work by seafarers from racialized minorities. Thus Jacqueline Jenkinson argues that the riots were a "product of general post-war circumstances and the particularly poor employment situation within the merchant shipping industry."<sup>16</sup> It is necessary, however, to position them in relation to longer histories and geographies of maritime labour organizing, which was inflected by what Jonathan Hyslop has termed "white labourism."<sup>17</sup> It is also important to locate the riots in relation to the significant racialized conflicts within/between soldiers during the First World War. These struggles were particularly significant in relation to the British West Indies Regiment which led to the Taranto Mutiny in December, 1918 where the men of the ninth battalion of the BWIR "revolted and attacked their officers" in protest at their degrading and humiliating treatment at the hands of racist white officers.<sup>18</sup>

These factors are important in explaining why seafarers from racialized minorities became key targets of white rioters in port cities. Central here was the role of trade unions, especially

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<sup>16</sup> Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Hyslop, "The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself 'White': White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1999), 398-421.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the development of national consciousness* (Manchester, Manchester University Press), 132; Glenford Howe, *Race, War and Nationalism: A Social History of West Indians in the First World War* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002), 155-171; Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (London, Verso, 1998), 62-3. See also Harry Haywood's account of his time as soldier in France in Haywood, H. *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1978), 36-80.

the National Seamen and Firemen's Union (NSFU) which was to later become the National Union of Seamen (NUS), in shaping and entrenching directly racialized understandings of maritime labor markets.<sup>19</sup> These racialized imaginaries of maritime labour markets were not, however, specific to the post-war conjuncture. The NSFU had been involved, for example, in campaigns against Chinese seafarers earlier in the decade and it is worth noting that these attempts to exclude racialized minorities could be produced through international circuits of organising. Thus in March 1914 Jimmie Henson a District Secretary of the NSFU wrote to Mr B Jochede the President of the International Transport Workers Federation in Berlin requesting assistance in relation to a dispute at the port of Barry, west of Cardiff, relating to "the carrying of Chinese labour."<sup>20</sup> Noting that the Chinese crews were being carried on vessels for Argentina he requested that Jochede get in touch with union officials in Buenos Aires to help prevent the vessels being unloaded. Jochede's response did not contest the veracity of targeting Chinese crews in this way, but pointed out that getting in touch with the officials at Buenos Ayres "would not help you much, as the Government during the last upheaval effectively scattered the organisations to the four winds."<sup>21</sup>

The role of the NSFU in relation to the post-First World War conjuncture was of a piece with this longer history of articulations between organised labour and racism. During the 1919 riots trade union officials of the NSFU and other maritime unions eg the Cooks' and Stewards' Union were directly implicated in acts of violence.<sup>22</sup> The union's most significant contribu-

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<sup>19</sup> For statements of the NSFU's position in 1918 on what they termed "Coloured Seamen," "Asiatics" and Chinese, see Modern Record Centre, NUS papers, MSS 175/3/16/2.

<sup>20</sup> Modern Record Centre University of Warwick International Transport Workers Federation Papers, 159/3/B/78

<sup>21</sup> Modern Record Centre University of Warwick International Transport Workers Federation Papers, 159/3/B/78

<sup>22</sup> See Jenkinson, *Black 1919* and Richard I. Lawless, *From Ta'izz to Tyneside: An Arab Community in the North-East of England During the Early Twentieth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 79-82.

tion to the riots, however, was to entrench the “racialised structures of feeling” that shaped the targeting of seafarers of colour and which important context to why economic hardship was articulated in this way. This racialized violence was not isolated, but was co-articulated with racialized practices of the national and local state. The contemporaneous struggles of seafarers’ of color for work also unsettles straightforward narratives around the displacement of white seafarers by and raises key questions about how unemployment came to be articulated in directly racialized terms. Thus the *Western Mail* of 14<sup>th</sup> June noted that “one of the principle subjects for discussion at a meeting of the Cardiff District Maritime Board to be held this (Saturday) morning is the question of the unemployment of large numbers of coloured seamen at Cardiff. Coloured seamen claim that as members of the Seamen’s Union employed on British vessels, they should not now be denied the right to earn a livelihood.” The next section explores the forms of resistance and agency shaped by seafarers of colour based in Cardiff and Liverpool in relation to forced ‘repatriation’ to the Caribbean in the wake of the riots.

### **Maritime Labour and the Politicisation of In/security**

Satnam Virdee has noted that faced with “significant elements of the white working class mobilizing against blacks and Asians, alongside industrial unrest throughout the country, the Government decided to act by establishing an inter-departmental committee to consider implementing a repatriation scheme to remove one of the so-called ‘threats’ to social disorder.”<sup>23</sup> The scheme built on provisions developed in February of 1919 for “repatriating black and Arab colonial workers” which were “initiated following reports to the Board of Trade about rising levels of unemployment at seaports around Britain.”<sup>24</sup> This earlier scheme had itself “formalized a post-war arrangement by which, under government instruction, local offi-

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<sup>23</sup> Satnam Virdee, *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2014), 80.

<sup>24</sup> Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, 157.

cials of the NSFU made maintenance payments pending repatriation to unemployed black colonial sailors who had come to Britain during the war.”<sup>25</sup> This emphasizes the role of the NSFU in shaping labour regulation in different ports and in regulating intersections of race/class too- something that was contested by more militant white seafarers such as George Garrett in Liverpool.<sup>26</sup>

The South Wales News reported on 19 June 1919 in an article headed “Repatriating the Negroes” that the “government will do all in their power to repatriate the negroes concerned to relieve the situation caused at Liverpool and Cardiff by the race riots in those ports” the reported note that the “great difficulty is to provide shipping for the purpose, but the matter is being dealt with by the Ministry of Shipping.”<sup>27</sup> As Jacqueline Jenkinson notes discourses around repatriation were both gendered and racialised with the “repatriation of white wives alongside black husbands” being “ruled out” as “a concession to white rioters and to those among the (white) general public who expressed displeasure at the existence of ethnically diverse marital relationships.”<sup>28</sup> Such discourses were also shaped by particular colonial geographical imaginaries. Frances Bates from Peckham Rye who had ‘resolved’ later in 1919 to accompany her husband under any circumstances to Barbados’ was “duly warned by colonial officials ‘of the conditions of life in a black colony.’”<sup>29</sup>

While the government used the term “repatriation” those involved are clear of the sense of threat and intimidation behind these schemes. Thomas Archer a seafarer who was “repatriated” to Jamaica from Liverpool on the *SS Santille* noted that while residing in Liverpool he had seen “advertisements in all the papers from the different presses. Statements of warning

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<sup>25</sup> Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, 157.

<sup>26</sup> George Garrett, “Sailors Beware,” *The Communist* November, 19, 1921, 11.

<sup>27</sup> South Wales News, 19 June 1919.

<sup>28</sup> Jenkinson, *Black 1919*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> TNA UK CO 318/ 350 folio 45.

to the Government to get the Coloured people out of England."<sup>30</sup> WN McIntyre who was similarly "a mercantile seafaring man in Liverpool" noted in a letter to the Acting Governor of Jamaica [check] that in "consequence of the Race disturbance" he "was forcibly deported or repatriated from England (British soil)." He argued that "being a British subject my constitutional rights and privilege denied me and I was ill-treated" and directly drew attention to the racialized character of his treatment arguing that "my ill treatment was no fault of mine, but all because I am not white."<sup>31</sup>

Some key black leadership figures in Cardiff and London such as Eldred Taylor of the Society of People of African Origin and Rufus Fennell, who had represented multi-ethnic communities in Cardiff, advocated and facilitated repatriation; though Fennell also protested about the conditions faced during repatriation.<sup>32</sup> There was direct opposition to repatriation.<sup>33</sup> Cardiff's chief constable noted that the "militant section" of the city's "black population" "insisted upon their right as British subjects to get fair treatment and to remain the United Kingdom."<sup>34</sup> Resistance to repatriation, however, was not confined to those who refused to be repatriated. The ships used to deport Black seafarers from Cardiff and Liverpool were the site of concerted resistance and struggle. Ships' officers made clear that they had faced concerted resistance from repatriated seafarers.

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<sup>30</sup> TNA UK CO 318/ 349 folio 322-323.

<sup>31</sup> TNA UK CO 318/349 folio 330-332, Mr W N McIntyre Kingston to the Acting Governor, Jamaica, 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1919.

<sup>32</sup> Christian Høgsbjerg, "Rufus E. Fennell: a literary Pan-Africanist in Britain," *Race and Class* 56 no. 1, 59-80.

<sup>33</sup> Thus Eldred Taylor argued in a letter published in the that 'As there are many coloured men in distress in London and elsewhere at the moment entitled to receive the benefits considered by one or other of these arrangements, who are not in touch with us on account of change of address etc, we would be thankful if you could help us to give publicity to this matter in order that they might communicate with us for further particulars' *South Wales News*, 16 July 1919.

<sup>34</sup> Cited by Høgsbjerg 'Rufus E. Fennell: a literary Pan-Africanist in Britain' *Race and Class*, 56: 1,59-80, p. 67.

The commanding officer of the *Santille*, which carried deported seafarers from Liverpool to Barbados from which some seafarers were then trans-shipped to Jamaica on the *Grantuille Castle* noted how he had had to request an armed guard on the ship something that he “very much regret[ed].” He commented that “we have had to take this strong action but if a class of men like we had on board scraped up from Liverpool, London and Cardiff to be repatriated to their homes an armed guard must be placed in charge of them on board as all these men are bitter against the white man.”<sup>35</sup> He also noted how his “first class passengers have been in a state of suspense the whole passage.” Disturbances continued when repatriated seafarers reached Caribbean ports. The Managing Director of “the Sailor’s Home” in Kingston, wrote on 15 August 1919, that “A great disturbance is caused by having this type of man [repatriated seafarers] at Sailor’s Home, sometimes needing Police protection, and keeping the better type of Sailor away, and causing racial animosity generally.”<sup>36</sup>

The most intense disturbances and resistance were on the *Orca*, a troop ship, which were described by ship’s officers as a full blown mutiny on the 15 September 1919. The events on the ship suggest how different forms of grievance and political trajectories could become articulated together in the confines of such vessels. The “Commander of the *Orca* and the Officer Commanding the Troops” noted “that there had been trouble and insubordination on board ever since the vessel left Cardiff.”<sup>37</sup> The ship carried “several hundred demobilised veterans [from the British West Indies Regiment]” and approximately “200 black seamen and civilians, repatriated in the wake of that summer’s riots.” Military prisoners who had been involved in the Taranto mutiny were also aboard the vessel imprisoned in makeshift cells.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> TNA UK CO/318/349. July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1919,

<sup>36</sup> TNA UK CO- 318/349, folio 329.

<sup>37</sup> TNA UK CO- 318/349 folio 347.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War*. 132; Howe, *Race, War and Nationalis*, 155-171; James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, 62-3.

The *Orca* mutiny emphasizes how different forms of racialized solidarities were shaped in opposition to differently placed and experience forms of oppression, in this instance experience of the riots in Cardiff and Liverpool and the racism endemic to service in regiments such as the British West Indies Regiment. Through so doing it positions the racialized violence in Cardiff and Liverpool and other ports as part of a broader context of racialized inequalities and antagonism shaped by the colonial labor geographies which were constitutive of the First World War.

The mutiny also emphasizes, however, the fragility of some of the disciplinary mechanisms used to try and enforce a global color line, across spatial distances, and in particular sites. Thus the Acting Governor of Jamaica reported that the “cells in which these prisoners were confined were made of match boarding” and during “repeated attempts to rescue the men several cells had been broken up.”<sup>39</sup> During these struggles a Barbadian BWIR veteran Private Lashley was “shot dead by military police.”<sup>40</sup> The Acting Governor reported that “Since that the seamen for repatriation had been constantly inciting the troops to storm the bridge and take charge of the ship. It had been necessary to give all officers rifles. The majority of these seamen-passengers declared that they would not leave the ship until they had revenge for the shooting of the Barbadian,” indicating a strong sense of pan-Caribbean solidarity towards these prisoners. The racialized dynamics which shaped the events aboard the *Orca* are made clear in various testimonies. Thus Brigadier General AR Gilbert noted in a despatch on 29 September 1919 that “the civilian deportees were the cause of all the trouble on board ship, constantly threatening violence to all white people on board and endeavouring to incite the convicts and troops to mutiny.”<sup>41</sup> Major Hemsley, the commander of the troops on board

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<sup>39</sup> TNA UK CO 318/349, 341-342, 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1919.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers*, 132.

<sup>41</sup> TNA UK CO 318/ 349 folio 343.

the *Orca*, noted that “[t]hese civilians have endeavoured to terrorise the ships’ crew and have been extremely insulting to all white people on board.”<sup>42</sup>

The ways in which such grievances were articulated in petitions presented to Jamaican Governor about the plight of destitute seafarers deported from British port cities, however, speak to important dynamics around representation of in/ securities. Thus petitioners noted that because of the repeated refusal of the *Gleaner* to print their letters they had placed their grievances before “the Vice President of the Jamaica Federation of Labour a Journalist Mr Alfred A. Mends.” According to the petition Mends told them to “seek aid and assistance of the powers that be many of us Unionists in Great Britain and the Jamaica Federation of Labour is working on English lines; believing we will receive ample justice and equity before placing the whole subject matter in any newspaper and before a Jamaica public he (Mr Mends) said to us that he believed that the British Government would not allow the necessity to arise for doing otherwise than placing the matter before His Excellency the Governor.”<sup>43</sup>

Mends’ articulation of their grievances, however, suggests that the articulation with emergent forms of trade unionism involved a confining of the seafarers’ political demands within respectable limits. This was in line with Mends’ other writings. In a 1923 pamphlet, for example, Mends argued that “We demand full liberty under the British flag; no half-hearted representation. There ought not to be Taxation without full and extended Representation. We plead

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<sup>42</sup> TNA UK CO 318/ 349 folio 354, though interestingly the Acting Governor of Jamaica sought to place the blame for the mutiny more on the soldiers on board rather than the repatriated seafarers- see CO 318/349 folio 342.

<sup>43</sup> TNA UK CO 318/ 349.



to let us have full and extended representation.”<sup>44</sup> Though as Aviva Chomsky has noted protestations of loyalty in such documents could bear a decidedly ironic tone.<sup>45</sup>

There remains, however, a disjuncture between the registers through which in/securities and destitution are politicized through the petitions and the kind of assertive political resistance associated with the mutiny on the *Orca* or the riots of returning seafarers and BWIR veterans. Thus a disturbance in Kingston on the 18 July 1919 which “included some ex-British West Indies Regiment men and sailors” attacked “some sailors of HMS *Constance*” was described by the acting governor of Jamaica as “due to the treatment which had been received by coloured sailors at Cardiff and Liverpool.”<sup>46</sup> This emphasizes that grievances around racialized in/securities become politicized in ways which exceeded the confines of the respectable modes of trade unionism associated with Alfred Mends. These kinds of assertive responses were not confined to Jamaica. The most significant aspect of this wave of labour unrest was the strike of “black dock workers in Port of Spain, Trinidad which began in mid-November 1919.” As Ewing notes it was shaped by Trinidad Workers’ Association with strong links to “several of the island’s leading Gaveyites” and “sparked a wave of anti-white uprisings that quickly engulfed the island.”<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusions

By positioning the 1919 riots in Cardiff and Liverpool as part of transnational events rather than simply understood in a national frame this paper has sought to draw attention to important forms of oppositional agency shaped through spatially stretched resistances to the ri-

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<sup>44</sup> Alfred A. Mends, *A Brochure Entitled Can There Still be Hope For Reformation in Jamaica: A Change in our Political Constitution Demanded. The Restoration of the Status Quo Ante 1865*, 1923.

<sup>45</sup> Aviva Chomsky, “Afro-Jamaican Traditions and Labor Organizing on United Fruit Company Plantations in Costa Rica, 1910,” *Journal of Social History* 28, no. 4 (1995), 841-2.

<sup>46</sup> TNA UK CO 137/733.

<sup>47</sup> Ewing. *Caribbean Labour Politics*, p.

ots. By following the forms of resistance shaped by “repatriated” seafarers as they mutinied and shaped disturbances aboard the ships on which they were deported to Caribbean ports the paper has drawn attention to oppositional political trajectories which have been largely ignored in accounts of these events. Through doing so the paper has also used a focus on the spatial practices through which in/security becomes politicized to speak to understandings of the contested articulations of the global color line in the post-First World War conjuncture. In particular, the paper has sought to trace situated forms of translocal solidarity, agency and identity shaped through the struggles of Caribbean seafarers who experienced the 1919 riots – and the state’s reaction to them.

Through drawing attention to some of the different spatial practices that shaped politicizing of racialized forms of in/security the paper has foregrounded different ways of politicizing such in/security. This raises key questions about the articulations of labor struggles in this period and their relationship to colonial imaginaries of labour geographies and to influential British unions like the NSFU. While Alfred Mendis positioned the relation between trade unionists in Britain and Jamaica as harmonious this belies the tensioned relations between Caribbean seafarers and the National Seamen and Firemen’s Union. These relations continued to be contested and struggled over long after 1919. Seafarers’ organizers from the Caribbean who were active in British port cities such as Cardiff and London in the 1920s and 30s notably Harry O’Connell from Guyana in Cardiff and the Barbadian Chris Braithwaite in London expended considerable acumen and energies on contesting the racialized organizing of the NUS through the interwar period and after.

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