



**THE NATIONAL TRUST  
OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**FREE PRINTABLE  
WORKSHEETS**

**Black Power  
Lesson and Activity Sheets**

**PART 1**



## **The Black Power Movement of 1970**

Did you know that in 1970 in Trinidad and Tobago thousands of citizens took to the streets to protest? Black people protested for their rights, rights that many people take for granted today. There is a lot of information on this topic and there are many different views on it as well. This handout will introduce you to the topic. As you get older, you will be able to understand it better and do more research on the topic. You should speak to your grandparents and your older relatives about Black Power in T&T in 1970. Ask them what they remember about it.



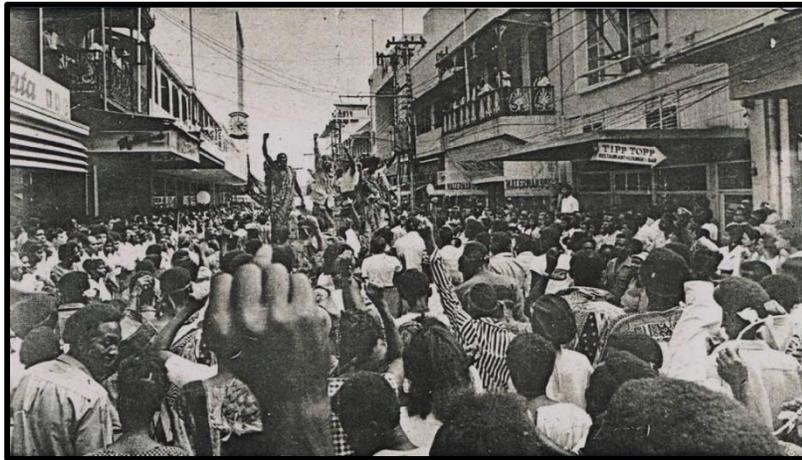
There are heritage sites associated with Black Power Movement of 1970, like Nelson Island, where some of the leaders of the movement were kept in prison, and Woodford Square where many public discussions were held about improving the lives of citizens. When school reopens you can come with us to visit these heritage sites. We would love to take you with us!

### **What was The Black Power Movement of 1970?**

The Black Power Movement of 1970 was a series of protests by ordinary citizens of T&T against the political, social and economic systems. This means that people were unhappy with how the country was being run, how money was being spent by the government and the unfair treatment that they experienced. There were events that took place in the 1960s, especially 1969, which led up to the events of 1970.

The Black Power Movement in T&T was part of a worldwide movement. There were Black Power Movements in the United States of America (USA), England and the Caribbean. All of these had big impacts on T&T. These movements had one thing in common, they were upset with the treatment of persons of African descent/ancestry and they were asking for equal treatment by the government, by their employers and by their societies. In T&T, Black Power ideas appealed to persons of African descent and they also appealed to some persons of Indian descent who joined the movement.

For hundreds of years, Africans were brought to the Caribbean; North, Central and South America to work as slaves on plantations owned by Europeans and their descendants. This was called African slavery. The harsh system of African slavery was based on racism—the idea that some races are better than others. Slavery ended in the Caribbean at different times. It ended in T&T in 1838. Even though it officially ended, the racism continued. The fight against racism was one of the reasons why citizens of T&T participated in the Black Power demonstrations of 1970.



**Photo of Black Power Demonstrations in Port of Spain, 1970**

The clenched or closed fist, held in the air, was called the Black Power Salute. In T&T and in the rest of the world, Black Power supporters made this gesture to symbolize their support of the movement. The authorities around the world often saw this symbol as a threat. Indeed, the overall Black Power movement was viewed as a threat to the established system or order, an unfair system which gave some people privileges over others.

There are many aspects to Black Power. A feature of the movement was the expressions of black identity. This was a time for expression of black identity through culture (through music and film) and personally (through fashion and natural hairstyles).

Some of the main groups and persons involved in Black Power in T&T include the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), the Oilfield Workers' Trade Union (OWTU) and students at the University of the West Indies (UWI).

The next section will introduce the context of the movement.

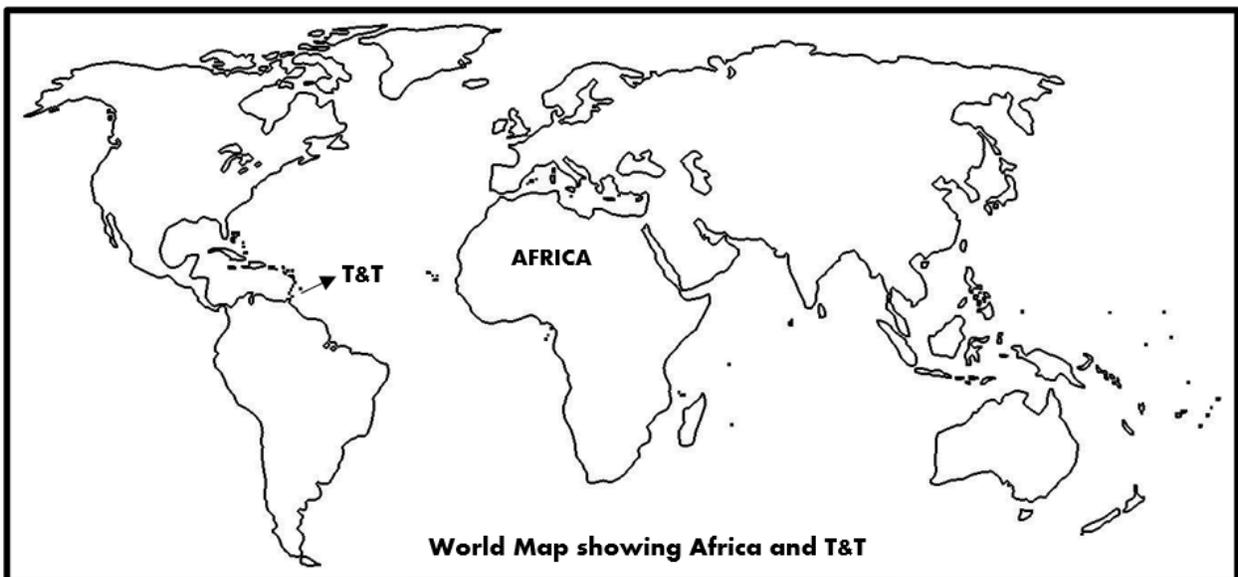


**What inspired the Black Power Movement in T&T?**

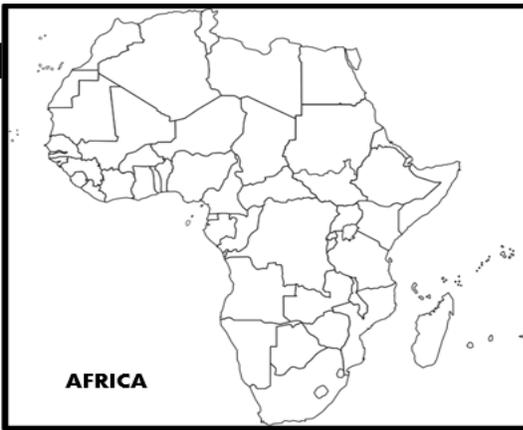
There are several reasons why the protests took place. Here are some of the reasons:

**1. Pan Africanism:**

This was the context or background to the entire worldwide movement. Pan Africanism is an ideology which was born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pan Africanism is about a sense of sisterhood and brotherhood among all persons of African descent. This includes the ones who live in Africa as well as the ones who do not. Persons of African descent who live outside of Africa are part of the African Diaspora. Pan Africanism is also about a sense of pride and awareness of African identity. Black Power in Trinidad and Tobago, during the 1960s and 1970s, was strongly influenced by the ideology of Pan-Africanism.



World Map showing Africa and T&T



KEYWORDS	
Ideology	A system of ideas which can influence politics and the economy
Diaspora	A group of people who live outside the country of ethnic origin
Pan Africanism	A worldwide movement that aims to unify and uplift African people and their descendants.

### Pan Africanist Leaders:

**Marcus Garvey** was one of the most significant Caribbean leaders who championed the Black Nationalism and Pan Africanism movements and had an impact across the world. He was born in Jamaica in 1887. After living and working in Central America and England, he returned to Jamaica in 1912 and founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The aim of the UNIA was to unite the African Diaspora which would form a country of its own. He believed in freeing Africa from colonial rule because he felt that this was important for the dignity of all Africans.



Garvey travelled to the USA in 1916 and began publishing a newspaper called the *Negro World*. His wife, Amy Garvey contributed to the newspaper. Garvey used his newspaper to spread his message and it was very popular in the Caribbean even though it was banned by several colonial Governments, including T&T. This only made people want to read it more and it became more widespread.

The UNIA won support from West Indian immigrants in the United States and throughout the Caribbean. However, as it gained strength, colonial governments banned it. By 1922, there were over 30 UNIA branches in T&T. Despite this, Garvey had a major impact on working class Trinbagonians. Garvey taught people an absolute pride in race and a new self-confidence rooted in their African heritage. This movement fuelled the drive in the Caribbean for their political rights and fair treatment. The emergence of Black Power during the 1960s and 70s signified a struggle to reclaim authority, power, identity and respect.

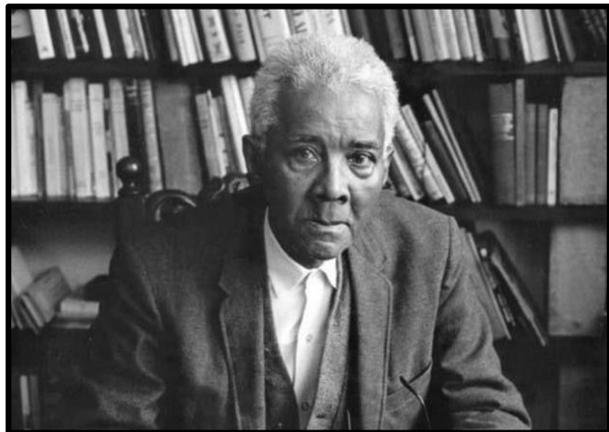
Other Pan Africanist Leaders from the Caribbean include:

Edward Blyden from St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Aimé Césaire from Martinique

CLR James, George Padmore and Henry Sylvester Williams from T&T.

These men are all considered to be Black Political Intellectuals.



**Cyril Lionel James also known as CLR James. Pan Africanist from T&T who was involved in Black Power in England**



**George Padmore Pan Africanist from T&T**



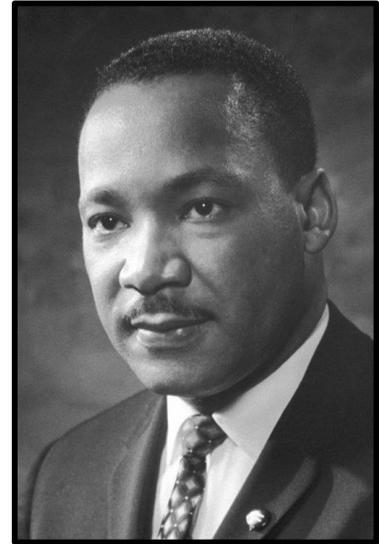
**Henry Sylvester Williams Pan Africanist from T&T who organized the first Pan Africanism Conference in London in 1900**



## **What inspired the Black Power Movement in T&T?**

### **2. International and Regional Events impacted on T&T**

Events in the USA in the 1960s had a significant impact on persons of African descent in T&T and the world. African Americans did not have the same rights as white citizens, and they began to fight against this. By the middle of the 1960s, civil disorders were widespread in the USA. One of the most prominent Civil Rights Leaders in the USA was **Dr Martin Luther King Jr.** He was influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian who protested against racism in South Africa and colonial



rule in India using nonviolent resistance. In 1955, Dr King led the first of several nonviolent demonstrations in the USA. This was the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott from 1955 to 1956. African Americans refused to ride the buses in Montgomery because of the separate seating for different races. During the days of the boycott, Dr King was arrested, and his home was bombed but he became one of the important leaders of the movement. In December 1956, the Supreme Court of the USA removed laws which separated persons of different races on the bus.



In 1957, he became president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and from 1957-1968 he travelled across the USA, spoke publicly over 2,500 times, wrote five books and several articles. He led a huge protest in Birmingham, Alabama which attracted worldwide attention. The world watched as Dr King, together with other civil rights activists led a peaceful march on Washington, D.C. of 250,000 people in

protest of racism and segregation. At age 35, he was the youngest man to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. He became a symbolic figure for persons of African descent and a worldwide figure.

Another important Civil Rights leader whom you should know about is **Malcom X** who was born Malcom Little. With the guidance of your parents you can read more about him.



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**Rosa Parks**, an African American woman, was arrested and fined during the Montgomery bus boycott for refusing to give up her seat to a white man. She also became a leader of the civil rights movement in the USA because she inspired others to participate and stand up for their rights.



**Kwame Ture**, formerly **Stokely Carmichael**, was born in 1941 Port of Spain, Trinidad. At age 11, he moved to New York and at high school participated in a protest against racial segregation. He attended Howard University and as a student, he participated in civil rights activities in different states. He was arrested for the first time while he was a college student, at 19 years old, protesting against racial segregation. He was arrested over 40 times in his life for protesting for this cause.



In 1965, Carmichael participated in the Selma to Montgomery March, a nonviolent march of thousands of people, led by Dr. King for 5 days and 54 miles. His experience of working in the Southern American states which were racially segregated made him change his mind about nonviolent protests. He saw peaceful protesters being

beaten, abused and even killed just for trying to get equal rights. He became chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1966 at age 25 and opposed the nonviolence philosophy. He called for Black Power, which was a change to Dr King's philosophy. He gave many public speeches on Black Power and became honorary prime minister of the



militant Oakland Black Panther Party. He left the party in 1969 and moved to Guinea and changed his name to Kwame Ture. He married Miriam Makeba, a South Africa singer and activist against apartheid, racial segregation in South Africa.



**The Walter Rodney Riots in Jamaica**

In October 1968 there were disturbances in Jamaica that had a profound impact on students at the University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad. In Jamaica, a Guyanese born historian and lecturer at UWI Mona Campus, Walter Rodney, was banned from entering Jamaica in 1968 and this led to the famous 'Walter Rodney Riots'. He was refused entry into Jamaica after leaving to attend a conference because his writing and speeches were seen as a threat to the government.



In Jamaica, Rodney was deeply involved in the Black Power movement; he worked closely with the working classes and was committed to educating and uplifting Rastafarians through his speeches. Many in the Jamaican Government and elites saw Rodney as a threat to the status quo (social and economic order) in Jamaica because he argued that Caribbean poverty was a direct result of continued White control of banking, industry, commerce, and transportation and that without Black ownership, imperialism would persist even after independence.

The government set up surveillance on Rodney and decided to take action against him. When he returned from a Black Writers Conference in Canada, Rodney was not allowed to enter Jamaica. After this, UWI students and people from Kingston responded by marching from Mona Campus to Kingston, and the march turned violent. In Trinidad, students at UWI called for the Prime Minister, Dr Eric Williams to act against Jamaica. In Guyana, there were widespread protests, including at the University. This event had a major impact on other Caribbean nations including T&T.

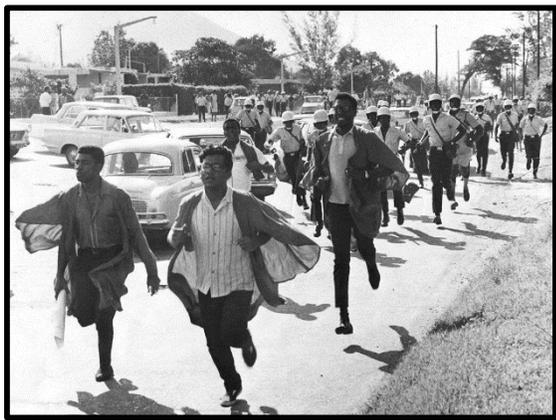


Photo showing students in Jamaica running from the Police during the Walter Rodney Riots

## **What inspired the Black Power Movement in T&T?**

### **3. Economic Hardships**

Trinidad and Tobago became independent in 1962. This meant that citizens of T&T from that point forward would be able to choose a government which would make its own decisions. Before T&T gained independence, it was a colony of Britain. This means that Britain was in charge of all decisions in T&T and all of the money made went into mainly British pockets. There were several other British colonies in the Caribbean like Jamaica and Barbados. T&T was a British colony from 1797-1962.

Dr Eric Williams became the first Prime Minister of independent T&T. His party, the People's National Movement (PNM) was in power. People had high expectations of independence—Marcus Garvey and other intellectuals had taught them that colonial rule was the reason for their poverty. People felt that after independence there would be noticeable changes.

The economy of T&T was not very rich in 1962. There was a lot of poverty and unemployment. The Government was dealing with problems that were created by British colonialism, which lasted for 165 years. By 1970, more and more people were attending secondary school. These people, however, could not find jobs. Almost half of the unemployed population was below age 25. This was a reflection of the economic problems which continued after independence.

### **4. Racism**

The Government's actions after independence did not change the existing social stratification, as people hoped it would. Instead, discrimination against working class persons of African descent continued. The majority of the rich were persons whose families benefitted from British colonial rule; these were persons of European descent. Persons of African and Indian descent made up the majority of the poor population. Independence did not bring changes to the privileges that some people had over others. Racial discrimination was a key mobilizing factor of the masses to participate in the Black Power movement. From 1960-70, the economic problems led to increased crime which encouraged the migration of professional, skilled and business people. This led to a contraction of the economy. Wages were stagnant and government had limited funds to improve public services.



## **ACTIVITIES**

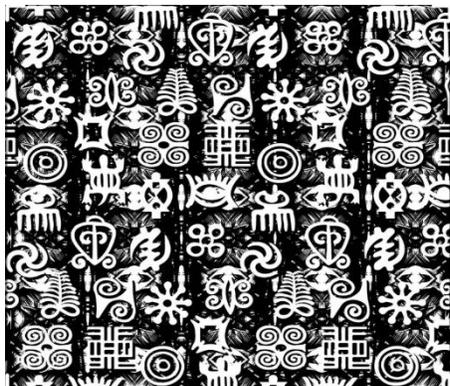
### **AFRICAN ADINKRA SYMBOLS**

Adinkra symbols are part of a rich tradition from Ghana. These symbols were created by the Akan people of West Africa hundreds of years ago. They were passed on to the Asante or Ashanti people who developed them further. The symbols were used as a way to communicate with each other. Adinkra symbols were originally reserved for royalty and spiritual leaders, who used it for important ceremonies, including funerals. The word 'adinkra' means goodbye. The meanings of the symbols are associated with beliefs and traditional sayings. Some symbols are like a statement.

The symbols were traditionally printed on cloth, called Adinkra cloth. The symbols were created by carving a stamp out of the calabash gourd. The stamp was then dipped in dye and then pressed into the cloth to make a pattern. As time passed the adinkra symbols were used on pottery and metalwork and now they are used on everything.



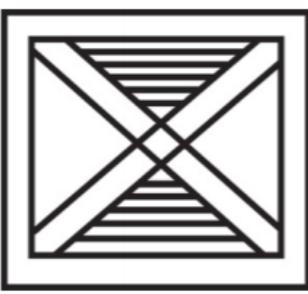
<b>Adinkra:</b>	System of symbols used by the Ashanti in Ghana.
<b>Ghana:</b>	A country in Africa
<b>Asante/ Ashanti:</b>	An indigenous ethnic group of people from Ghana



**Adinkra cloth**



**Activity # 1 Draw the Adinkra Symbols**

 <p><b>SANKOFA</b> <i>Go back and fetch it</i> The importance of learning from the past</p>	
 <p><b>ADINKRAHENE</b> <i>Chief of adinkra symbols</i> Symbol of greatness, charisma and leadership</p>	
 <p><b>MFRAMADAM</b> <i>Wind-resistant house</i> Symbol of fortitude and readiness to face life's challenges</p>	



**OYANKOPON ADOM**

*By God's grace, all will be well*  
Symbol of hope, providence, faith



**OSRAM NE NSOROMMA**

*The moon and the star*  
Symbol of love, faithfulness, harmony



**DWENNIMMEN**

*Ram's horns*  
Symbolizes humility and strength



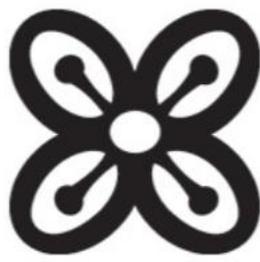
**AYA**  
*Fern*  
Symbol of endurance and  
resourcefulness



**DUAFE**  
*Wooden Comb*  
Symbol of beauty and cleanliness



**NYAME NNWU NA MAWU**  
*God never dies, therefore I cannot die*  
Symbolizes the immortality of man's or  
woman's soul



**BEŠE SAKA**

*Sack of cola nuts*

Symbol of affluence, power, abundance,  
plenty, togetherness and unity



**ANANSE NTONTAN**

*Spider's web*

Symbol of wisdom, creativity and the  
complexities of life



**Activity # 2 COLOURING PAGE**



## **Selected Sources/ Further Reading**

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