

Narratives of resistance and decolonial futures in the politics of the Bermudian Black Power movement

Ben Gowland 

Geographical and Earth Sciences,
University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

Correspondence

Ben Gowland

Email: b.gowland.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Funding information

Royal Geographical Society (GCA
16/19; PRA 16/19).

Abstract

In this paper, I examine the spatial politics of the Bermudian Black Power movement and its connections to Black Power political formations in the wider Caribbean and North America. This spatial politics is examined in detail through an engagement with the First Regional International Black Power Conference (BPC) held in Bermuda on 10–13 July 1969 and the subsequent Black Power political activity on the island that the conference inspired. Through this engagement it is shown how the island of Bermuda and its black population were constitutive of transnational circulations of radical Black Power, and aligned thinkers and activists. This paper develops a reading of a politics of Black Power on the island as challenging hegemonic geographies and political spatialities of white supremacy through the envisioning of alternative, decolonial futures and a resultant prefigurative political praxis. Such a reading is built on the theory of West Indian scholars David Scott and Brian Meeks and the spatial ontology of Doreen Massey. D. Scott and Meeks have been key contributors to Caribbean critical thought for many decades, with D. Scott the long-time editor of the Caribbean studies journal *Small Axe*, and both have been concerned with post and de-colonial politics in the region and the role of temporality and historiography in conceptualisations of the Modern Caribbean and Jamaica in particular. This paper offers an exploration of a decolonial spatial politics and political praxis, through the theory of post-colonial Caribbean intellectuals, that foregrounds the agentive and insurgent capacity of Black Power as a political movement in the imagining and pre-figuration of emancipatory futures beyond hegemonic geographies of white supremacy, (neo)colonialism, and (neo)imperialism.

KEYWORDS

archival research, Bermuda, Black Geographies, Black Power, decolonisation, spatial politics

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1 | INTRODUCTION

An internal Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) paper from February 1970 entitled “Black Power in the Eastern Caribbean” (FCO 141/150) details British intelligence on the development of Black Power politics in these islands. It is noted with concern that Black Power formations had emerged in Antigua, St Kitts, St Lucia, St Vincent, Dominica, Montserrat, and the British Virgin Islands (FCO 141/150). FCO analysts and security assets in Britain and the West Indies linked this increase in overt Black Power political activity to events in another of the British Empire’s vestigial colonies: Bermuda (FCO 141/150 1970a; FCO 63/444 1970d).

The First Regional International Black Power Conference (BPC) held in Bermuda in July 1969 was assessed by the British, American, and Canadian security states to have been central in building links between the Black Power movement in Bermuda and the wider Caribbean and North America (Swan, 2009, 2014, 2020). Hereafter referred to as the First BPC, the conference represented the first significant gathering of Black Power and aligned activists and thinkers in the Caribbean region. There had been major conferences in continental North America previous to this, with these having significant bearing on events in Bermuda as will be described later in this paper.

The conference drew representatives from the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa to a gathering of an estimated 2,000 attendees; with around 200 coming from outside Bermuda (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 46 no. 8). Despite Bermuda’s size and remote location, the First BPC highlighted global articulations of Black Power politics and the transnational relations that Black Power groups and actors forged to realise their emancipatory and decolonial ends (Austin, 2013, 2018; Quinn, 2014; Swan, 2009, 2014, 2020; Tyner, 2006). The First BPC galvanised Black Power political activity in Bermuda and the wider Caribbean long after its end, facilitating the development of transnational solidarities and political networks between those who attended. While Bermuda is not part of the geographical region of the Caribbean, the island is part of the broader Caribbean world through shared cultural links and a shared history of colonial rule, transatlantic slavery, and white supremacist social stratification (Swan, 2014).

This paper provides an original spatial-political analysis through building on the work of Caribbean scholars David Scott (2004, 2014) and Brian Meeks (2000). I draw on their utilisation of the concepts of problem-space and narratives of resistance to help ground Massey’s (2005) spatial ontology in a study of the articulation of a transnational Black Power politics in Bermuda. I position Bermudian Black Power theory and praxis as decolonial and so foreground the peoples and places of the Caribbean world in the intellectual history and geography of decolonial thought. This paper contributes to efforts to internationalise studies of Black Power (Quinn, 2014; Slate, 2012), particularly within geography, that have to date been largely circumscribed to the USA, and further contributes to scholarship on black internationalism by broadening examinations of conferences and conferencing through engagement with the First BPC (Hodder, 2015).

This paper’s structure is as follows. The next section details the paper’s theoretical grounding, namely the theories of David Scott (2003, 2004, 2010, 2014) and Brian Meeks (1996, 2000, 2009) on radical Caribbean thought, revolutionary temporality, and subaltern resistance practices. This work, when combined with the spatial ontology of Doreen Massey (2005), provides an original analytical approach for analysing the spatial politics of Black Power. It does this by developing an analysis of the historical problem-space of the post-colonial and decolonising West Indies and Bermuda attuned to the dynamic and productive geographies of articulation that were generative of political and historical change and alternative futures. Next, I position Bermuda within the Black world with reference to Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic” to draw out the historical and geographical specificities of the “problem-space” (Scott, 2004, p. 4) within which a Bermudian Black Power politics proffered a subaltern decolonial imaginary (Gilroy, 1993; Iton, 2008). I then engage with McKittrick’s (2011, 2013) work on plantation geographies and temporalities, demonstrating how the Bermudian Black Power movement was constitutive of a politics of resistance to transnational geographies of white supremacy.

The empirical discussion traces the strategies of resistance and solidarity enacted and envisioned by Bermudian Black Power actors in their insurgent spatial politics (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Swan, 2009, 2014). I explore the First BPC and its “afterlives,” in the form of political activity and publications emergent from the conference, as constitutive of a decolonial politics. This paper makes contributions to work on Black Geographies (Hudson, 2014; McKittrick, 2013) and geographies of Black radicalism (Heynen, 2009; Ramirez, 2015) through an engagement with prominent post-colonial Caribbean intellectuals (Meeks, 1996, 2000; Scott, 2004). In drawing on their theories, this paper provides original insight into the dynamic and wide-ranging spatial politics of Black Power on Bermuda that contested plantation forms of white supremacy and envisioned alternative decolonial futures.

2 | BERMUDIAN PROBLEM-SPACE, NARRATIVES OF RESISTANCE, AND REVOLUTIONARY TEMPORALITY

To develop the themes of decolonial futures and the impact of imagined futures on spatial-political form in the present, I engage with important Jamaican theorists David Scott and Brian Meeks. Both attend to notions of revolution and hegemonic dissolution and are concerned with the role of subaltern agency and imagined futures in making history (Meeks, 1996, 2000; Scott, 2003, 2004). Their insights when read alongside the spatial ontology of Doreen Massey (2005) provide the major theoretical framework of this paper. This framing represents an original approach to scholarship on the spatial politics of Black Power through conceptualising the movement in the West Indies and Bermuda as constituting one of a number of coeval, and often contesting, historical-political trajectories productive and reflective of the historical problem-space of the post-colonial and decolonising Caribbean world. The situated spatial-political praxes employed by Black Power actors emerged from an alternative reading of this historical-problem space with said practices enacted in their present impelled towards the realisation of a desired decolonial future (Massey, 2005; Scott, 2004, 2014).

Scott's (2003, 2004, 2014) work on temporality, political action, and the disjunctures brought about by the foreclosing and opening of political trajectories provides a generative lens for geographers to explore spatial politics. D. Scott's exploration of these themes in the contemporary Caribbean world and what he sees as the exhaustion of decolonial energies in the face of a hegemonic neoliberalism make him a key theorist of decolonial politics. I contend that Black Power in Bermuda anticipated a radical, decolonial future divergent from that envisioned through the hegemonic logic and (continued) historical trajectory of colonialism, with said trajectory dominating the horizons of possible Bermudian futures and spurring the systematic repression of Black Power and renewal of white supremacist, plantation spatialities in the Bermudian present (McKittrick, 2013; Scott, 2003).

D. Scott's deployment of the concept of problem-spaces in his analysis of C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* and post-colonial theory is a useful starting point:

A 'problem-space' ... is meant first of all to demarcate a discursive context, a context of language. But it is more than a cognitively intelligible arrangement of concepts, ideas, images, meanings ... It is a context of argument and, therefore, one of intervention. A problem-space, in other words, is an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs. (Scott, 2004, p. 4)

Problem-spaces are contexts of dispute and rival ideas, and importantly "problem-spaces alter historically because problems are not timeless and do not have everlasting shapes" (Scott, 2004, p. 4), thus new horizons and trajectories can and should be envisioned in response to the changing context of the present and present problems. So, the problem of race or coloniality doesn't disappear but rather has to be dealt with in new problem-spaces; specific and contingent to different social, cultural, political, and historical contexts and necessitating new political strategies, spatialities, and imagined futures (2004, p. 4). D. Scott deploys this conception in his assessment of the post-colonial present and what he sees as the exhaustion of the nationalist Bandung project emergent from the anticolonial revolutions of the early and mid-20th century. The Bandung Conference held in Indonesia in 1955 saw the coming together of leaders and delegates drawn from newly independent nations of the "Third World" to debate and attempt to build a transnational alliance in opposition to global colonialism and imperialism (Prashad, 2007). These nations and peoples, it was hoped, would be bound by a political will (beyond race, religion, or ethnicity) to build Third World unity in order to ward off imperialist powers and their Cold War military might, their economic manipulations, and their regimes of epistemic domination (Prashad, 2007). Scott's (2004, 2014) assessment stems from lack of interrogation of the *spatial* leading to an over-determination by the temporal in historical and political development that leads to periodisation and an overly teleological, broad-brush assessment of post-colonial politics in the wider Caribbean world (Featherstone, 2007; Sparke, 2008).

My own spatial-political reading, building on Massey (2005), draws attention to the multiple, contesting political trajectories operating in Bermuda and the West Indies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the anti-colonialism and Third Worldism of Bandung a key tendency influencing Black Power activists and nationalist West Indian politicians alike (Prashad, 2007; Quinn, 2014). D. Scott's work does, however, pose the important question: how to construct alternative decolonial temporalities and imagined futures?

D. Scott's highlighting of the contingency and multiplicity of revolutionary political temporalities can be grounded spatially through Massey's (2005) spatial ontology. Massey's conception of space as being the product of interrelation asserts that human subjectivity and experience is enacted both temporally and spatially:

If experience is not an internalised succession of sensations (pure temporality) but a multiplicity of things and relations, then its *spatiality* is as significant as its temporal dimension. (Massey, 2005, p. 56; original emphasis)

Massey (2005) contends we might think of space as providing a mutually necessary condition for the experience of temporality; the experience of time is predicated on "things" changing, which requires interaction and thus a spatial dimension for the interaction of trajectories to occur. Both time and space are of equal importance in making the world "lively" (Massey, 2005). Read with David Scott (2004), an appreciation for the *space* in problem-spaces can be foregrounded with the temporal re-workings and relationality of past, present, and future made possible by the generative multiplicity of space. The conceptual and political horizons envisioned from particular problem-spaces by historical-political actors develop interrelatedly with spatial relations contingent to said problem-spaces and the multiple readings of them. Political movements and ideologies, necessarily animated by certain envisioned horizons, inaugurate *spatial*-political strategies in their present problem-space(s) directed towards the realisation of a desired space-time configuration in the spatially and temporally open and undetermined future (D. Scott, 2004). This proposition affirms the generative potential of reading David Scott (2004) alongside Massey (2005); an ontology of space as being the product of interrelation opens up space to politics and the mutually necessary reworking of historical time and an associated imagining of possible futures. David Scott (2003, 2004) provides an appreciation of the interplay between ideology and historiography and a historical-material grounding through which Massey's (2005) more abstract thoughts on the material practices of power that produce space can be better understood.

This discussion of multiple possible de- and post-colonial futures requires engagement with Massey's (2005) conceptualisation of space-time trajectories. With space defined as relational and processual, it is the:

Sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. (Massey, 2005, p. 9)

Under this ontology the spatialities of agency remain unfinished with this providing a terrain for what is possible (Massey, 2005, p. 9). D. Scott's (2004) problem-spaces and coeval imagined futures can be usefully combined to an ontology of space-time trajectories. The possibility of (re)imagining alternative futures, and thus reworking a given problem-space and the teleology so invoked, points towards the *openness* of the future. This suggests the possibility of new and alternative space-time trajectories, which are necessary to engage in and imagine a politics wherein genuine change is possible and helps one move beyond teleological conceptions of political and social development (Massey, 2005). I suggest Black Power politics represented an alternative decolonial trajectory emergent from the reconceptualised problem space of (neo)colonialism, (neo)imperialism, and spatialities of white supremacy in an "officially" decolonising and post-colonial world. Black Power prefigured an alternative decolonial future to that of anticolonial Creole nationalisms and British colonialism (Meeks, 1996; D. Scott, 2004; Thame, 2017) and thus enacted an alternative spatial-politics and imaginary.

I develop this discussion through Brian Meeks' (1996, 2000) work on narratives of resistance. In exploring mid-20th-century Caribbean insurrections and revolutions, Meeks, building on James Scott (1992), challenges conceptions of revolutionary and false consciousness that assert "the people by themselves are incapable of moving beyond the stage of militant reformism to revolutionism without external intellectual input" (2000, p. 38). In evaluating conceptions of social and ideological hegemony, Meeks summarises J. Scott (1992):

Scott's central thesis, then, is to question the notion of ideological incorporation. Yes, he admits, there is an "official transcript" in which subordinate peoples praise the king and support the status quo. However, this is only tactical and is performed precisely because of the perceived and evident weaknesses of those below. Beyond this official transcript, though, Scott asserts that there is a "hidden transcript" of ridicule, subversive acts, pilfering, poaching, tax evasion and shabby work, which is developed as a means of resistance to the dominant. (2000, p. 39)

Meeks reconfigures James Scott's "hidden transcripts" (Meeks, 2000, p. 39) as narratives of resistance emergent from the lifeworlds and cultural practices of Caribbean subaltern populations. These narratives form, sustain, and direct opposition to hegemonic, chauvinistic structures of power from the spaces and communities of the subaltern.

Meeks makes an important claim here; if revolutionary politics isn't the preserve of communities that have attained a pre-requisite level of development (economic, cultural, intellectual, etc.) then the geographies of revolutionary politics have been opened to communities and places previously overlooked but holding as yet unrealised potentialities. This conceptualisation helps move one away from a temporalisation of revolutionary political change that can lead to an overly teleological conceptualisation of politics as discussed in geographical critiques of David Scott (Featherstone, 2007; Sparke, 2008).

Meeks urges researchers to locate "the *social spaces* in which the discourse of the transcript from below is fleshed out and identify how this operates in guerrilla fashion on the fringes of the original transcript" (2000, p. 41; emphasis mine). The First BPC was such a social space that saw the confluence of diverse personal and ideological trajectories in an act of place-making. Conference delegates and attendees came together to debate and outline the contours of a transnational Black Power politics and envision decolonial futures in opposition to plantation geographies and structures of white supremacy (Gilmore, 2007; Massey, 2005; McKittrick, 2011). Narratives of resistance rooted in the lifeworlds of the West Indian and Bermudian subalterns give popular form and intelligibility to the space-time trajectories and imagined futures of Massey (2005) and David Scott (2004, 2014). Here, I understand subaltern to denote those racialised West Indian and Bermudian communities whose political consciousness and activity was not viewed as constituting an alternative epistemology but instead understood as narrowly reactionary or atavistic by hegemonic West Indian nationalist and (neo)colonial regimes ontologically rooted in Eurocentric thought (Jazeel & Legg, 2019). These narratives represent an imaginative practice of situating historical and contemporary struggles against spatialities and regimes of domination by marking out an identifiable political terrain and horizon of possibility through available ideologies, aesthetics, cultural practices, and even theologies of racially oppressed non-white Caribbean communities (McKittrick, 2011; Meeks, 2000). Resistance narratives and imaginaries generatively reorder problem-space and space-time, and their constitutive trajectories, producing and anticipating new spatial-political forms (Massey, 2005).

Narratives of resistance emerge from re-conceptualisations of particular problem-spaces and hegemonic readings of them (Massey, 2005; D. Scott, 2004); narratives of resistance can, in insurgent fashion, impel subaltern movements towards reimagined political horizons. In the necessity to locate the social spaces wherein narratives of resistance are developed, a return to Massey's (2005) spatial theory where place is conceived as the conjuncture of space-time trajectories is useful. "Places ... as *spatio-temporal events*" (Massey, 2005, p. 130; emphasis original) are open and internally multiple, and represent the articulations and generative productions of the interactions of various trajectories. The spaces/places from which narratives of resistance are developed constitute complex and extensive spatialities and temporalities, with said narratives shaping the development of spatial-political formations and strategies directed towards the pre-figurative realisation of imagined futures (J. Scott, 1992; D. Scott, 2004; Meeks, 2000; Massey, 2005).

3 | POSITIONING BERMUDA IN THE BLACK WORLD

I now position Black Power politics in Bermuda, and the broader West Indies, in their particular historical problem-space. I contend the central problems that Black Power politics was articulated in relation to were the inadequacies of mainstream West Indian anti-colonial nationalisms, as seen in the region's post-colonial states (Gray, 1991; Thame, 2011, 2017), and the limits of national sovereignty in fully realising the decolonial project. In Bermuda, Black Power opposition was directed against colonial rule and the abolition of white supremacist socio-political and cultural stratification, with independence a key goal. Independence, however, was envisioned in this Black Power imaginary as specifically *divergent* from the form taken in the post-colonial West Indies, with a greater focus on anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and internationalist anti-racist solidarity (Swan, 2009). This position generated a consistent focus on building transnational solidarities and operating in an internationalist framework with the understanding that national sovereignty alone was inadequate in contrast to the political rationalities of anticolonial Creole Nationalists for whom national sovereignty was the moment at which the "Modern" decolonised West Indies emerged (Quinn, 2014; Austin, 2013; D. Scott, 2017). Black Power politics in the West Indies and Bermuda contained at heart a complex analysis of (neo)colonialism and capitalist-imperialism and the ways these forces interacted to constrain political and historical agency supposedly attained through formal independence (James, 1971; Munroe, 1971; Rodney, 1969). The decolonial project did not end at the territorial limits of the post-colonial nation-state; therefore, the black diaspora was the focus.

This paper is built on extensive archival work drawing on materials from repositories in the UK, Bermuda, and the West Indies. Through drawing together these collections, I have produced a transnational historical and geographical study of the First BPC and Black Power politics on Bermuda (Hodder, 2017). In pulling together variously situated

archival sources (Black Power publications, local newspapers, state documents), I have developed a fuller picture of the spatial politics and praxes of Bermudian Black Power and the state security actors that opposed the movement. I have necessarily read along the grain of imperial archives in order to identify the various narrative and historiographical streams that comprise them (Stoler, 2009). This means challenging and excavating the perceptions and priorities of those colonial officials who wrote documents and looking for moments when subjugated knowledges erupt into dominant narratives. I understand the Black Power publications and testimonies engaged with as constitutive of a counter-archive of black memory oppositional to what one finds in state and imperial archives and that traces an alternative decolonial trajectory as articulated through Black Power politics (D. Scott, 2008).

This paper responds to Hodder's (2015) suggestion that geographers broaden engagements with international conferences and the practice of conferencing beyond "high summits" conducted by heads of state and official diplomatic corps and held in state-accredited spaces. Studying the multiple archival traces, and the historical-political trajectories they are constitutive of, that emerged from the First BPC positions the event as central in the development and articulation of Black Power politics in the Caribbean world and the reactionary securitisation networks arrayed in opposition to such activity. Studying varied sites and examples of conferences broadens understandings of how transnational and international politics are shaped, debated, and practised in such settings, and on what terms.

3.1 | Bermuda's Black Atlantic geographies

Situating Bermuda within a Black Atlantic context is important to fully interrogate the historical constitution of the problem-space wherein the Bermudian Black Power movement operated. Gilroy utilises the term "Black Atlantic" to denote "a transnational spatial formation composed through an intricate interplay of connection and difference" (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 114) that positions the Modern Atlantic as an interconnected "cultural and political system ... forced on black historiography and intellectual history by the economic and historical matrix in which plantation slavery ... was one special moment" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 15). Gilroy's (1993) exploration of the trans-oceanic geographies that constitute the Black Atlantic points towards the historical-spatial relations that shaped Bermuda as a colonised space and constituted the political terrain on which Black Power operated.

Gilroy's analysis centres cultural and political cross-fertilisation in a way that destabilises discourses of cultural absolutism and ethnic homogeneity (Austin, 2013; Goldberg, 2002). Actors and movements seeking freedom and justice for black peoples across the Atlantic diaspora have long understood that an "outernational, transcultural [conceptualisation]" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 17) of historical and present forces of racialised oppression is necessary to transcend the strictures of spatial-political configurations rooted in particularist logics of race and ethnicity (Bogues, 2003; Gilroy, 1993; Goldberg, 2002; Iton, 2008). Utilising the Black Atlantic as a conceptual framework, I foreground the longstanding diasporic connections that Black Power politics in Bermuda was rooted in and that shaped its articulation. These connections provided shared cultural and political histories that were drawn on to shape narratives of resistance (Meeks, 2000). Similarly, the colonially and racially mediated geometries of power that criss-crossed the Black Atlantic constituted the historical-material problem-space within and against which emancipatory black politics was articulated (Gilroy, 1993; D. Scott, 2004; Massey, 2005).

Bermuda's black population has a long history of opposition to British colonial rule, racial segregation, and discrimination, and such action was conducted in connection with other diasporic movements. Bermuda was connected to global Pan-Africanist politics through organisations like the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The UNIA movement, led by the Jamaican Marcus Garvey, was a global Pan-Africanist organisation seeking the establishment of a powerful African nation-state and advocated transnational diasporic organisation to achieve this aim alongside racial justice, equality, and dignity (Hill, 2018; Nettleford, 1970). A UNIA branch was established on Bermuda in 1920. Austin (2013, 2018), in his work on black radicalism in Montreal, also notes the historical importance of the UNIA in laying the foundations for the emergence of Black Power. As in Bermuda, Caribbean migrants to the city established Montreal's first chapter, and UNIA activity and the diasporic connections facilitated by the UNIA provided a local base that would sustain black protest and community organisation throughout the 20th century (Austin, 2013, 2018). Meeks (1996) similarly notes the important role of black cultural memory and the spaces in which it was grounded, specifically the deep currents of African cultural nationalism long harboured by Afro-Caribbean subaltern populations (Gray, 1991), in the development of a Black Power narrative of resistance during the Trinidadian Black Power Revolution.

This history of black diasporic political organising in Bermuda was not without reaction. Black protest and resistance were systematically suppressed by the colonial state throughout the 20th century, often most effectively, by insulating the island from “subversive” peoples and materials. In the 1920s, the British governor quashed circulation of the UNIA newspaper *The Negro World*, in the 1960s Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* was banned along with literature from the Nation of Islam, and finally a stop-list was drawn up in response to the convening of the First BPC that prevented a number of black radicals from attending (FCO 63/444 1970d; Swan, 2009, 2014, 2020). FCO (63/444 1970d) documents reveal the Bermudian and British security states assessed the publicisation of the stop-list to have been a major factor in ensuring the First BPC went without incident. However, this lack of incident may speak more to the strategic assessment of conference organisers, who saw violence as unnecessary given the black population’s demographic majority on the island; democratic, majority rule was the goal (Swan, 2009).

Discussion of Bermuda’s place in the Black Atlantic must also be related to work on the plantation and geographies of white supremacy that co-constituted Bermudian problem-space.

3.2 | Forging decolonial space

Bermuda has been a British colony for over 400 years and is a place long-defined by logics and processes of white supremacy. Existing scholarship (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Derickson, 2017; Gilmore, 2007; McKittrick, 2013; Noxolo & Featherstone, 2014) has foregrounded white supremacy, colonialism, and their multiple

Social, economic, and political impacts ... as a materially grounded set of practices ... [situating] white supremacy not as an artefact of history or as an extreme position, but rather as the foundation for the continuous unfolding of practices of race and racism. (Bonds & Inwood, 2016, p. 715)

White supremacy describes structural and institutional mechanisms of non-white racial domination, destruction, and exploitation that constitute fundamental processes of racialisation and the production of racialised spaces: spaces produced through the regulation of schemas of violence and exclusion against racialised Others legitimised by logics of racial hierarchy (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Derickson, 2017; McKittrick, 2013). White supremacy as an organising, structuring logic of Western imperialism produced colonial societies with racist institutional structures that maintained and justified segregation, violence, and oppression (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Noxolo & Featherstone, 2014). The historical problem-space of the West Indies and Bermuda in the late 1960s and early 1970s was indelibly shaped by histories, structures, and spatialities of white supremacy. Many First BPC workshops were specifically directed towards analysing and challenging white supremacy, with the reactionary state security response to the conference representing the latest instantiation of white supremacist oppression meted out to black Bermudians (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 45 no. 43).

McKittrick’s (2013; Hudson, 2014) utilisation of the plantation analytic and its racial logics in explorations of Black Geographies in the New World is useful in assessing spatialities of white supremacy and black resistance in Bermuda. McKittrick uses West Indian intellectual George Beckford’s economic studies of the post-independence Caribbean to build a conceptual framing for understanding historical and contemporary racialised spatial production and the logics that continue to project plantation space-time onto the political and conceptual horizons of Black Atlantic communities (Gilroy, 1993; D. Scott, 2004; McKittrick, 2013). Beckford conceived of the Caribbean as a plantation system, with this system impacting all aspects of life, even after independence:

The contemporary social structure and race class relations were held to be the products of the legacy of the plantation system – that is, what had been instituted by the slave plantations and modified over time by indentureship, by the rise of the peasantry, by urbanisation, migration, and by the rise of new export staples. These modifications were believed not to alter its fundamental character. (Meeks & Girvan, 2010, p. 7)

The significance of this Caribbean intellectual production has been noted for its importance in generating ways of understanding the co-productive dynamics of “resistance, security and colonialism” that both historically and contemporaneously shape the lives of non-white Caribbeans (Noxolo & Featherstone, 2014, p. 604). McKittrick (2013) assesses the plantation form as spatially and temporally shifting and underpinned by logics re-emergent through present black lives. The plantation is remade anew in contemporary, post-slave, and post-independence contexts of violence, dispossession, and poverty (Meeks & Girvan, 2010; Thomas, 2013). As discussed previously, *time alone* does not account for the development and transformation of historical problem-space(s); re-articulations of plantation space-time are always situated with the specificities of a given locale inflecting the spatial-political configurations and praxes enacted in the renewal

of the plantation. Plantation regimes are renewed in present problem-space and projected into future problem-space(s) through the grounded actions of specific actors and socio-political structures that shape the specific material and ideological conditions of a given historical problem-space and that require similarly dynamic, situated praxes of resistance.

Applying the plantation analytic to Bermuda, the island's history of slavery, racial segregation, and anti-black discrimination can be understood as not a series of, now superseded, discrete acts of abhorrent racism but as evolving axes of social discrimination rooted in the logics of plantation racism (McKittrick, 2013; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2007). To quote McKittrick:

While plantations differed over time and space, the processes through which they were differentially operated and maintained draw attention to the ways racial surveillance, antiblack violence, sexual cruelty, and economic accumulation identify the spatial work of race and racism. (2013, p. 9)

Geographies of white supremacy and the coeval coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000, 2007) in the Black Atlantic have been continually resisted by black populations from the instigation of transatlantic slavery and the establishment of plantation societies (Beckles, 2013; Noxolo & Featherstone, 2014). Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) conceptualisation of decolonial praxis and associated spatial political form as *insurgent* is generative here. Insurgent decolonial claims to place represent fundamental processes in the production of plantation geographies and in forging decolonial praxes and trajectories that may exceed such geographies (Heynen, 2009; Meeks, 2000; Tyner, 2006). Insurgent actors are historical agents seeking to forge decolonial spaces and movements in the present and thus intervening in plantation problem-space by building towards future horizons beyond the strictures of white supremacy (Beckles, 2013; McKittrick, 2013; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; D. Scott, 2004). It is vital to approach the West Indian and Bermudian Black Power movement in this light in order to understand Black Power politics as an alternative decolonial trajectory operating against and beyond West Indian Creole Nationalisms, latent colonialisms, and spatialities of white supremacy.

This paper highlights specific co-produced articulations of plantation space-time in Bermuda and positions Black Power as a movement that could exceed plantation logics and spatialities. A core contribution lies in understanding the neo-colonial economic analysis, modes of revolutionary thought, cultural anti-imperialism, and politics of "Third World" solidarity evidenced at the First BPC as constituting an alternative decolonial trajectory directed towards an envisioned decolonial future for Bermuda. I contribute to recent efforts by scholars such as Ama Biney (2018), who has studied the decolonial thought of Thomas Sankara, the Marxist and Pan-Africanist former president of Burkina Faso. Like Biney (2018), I too foreground the diverse geographies of connection through which ideas of decolonial thinking have been articulated. An exploration of the history of decolonial thought brings one back to Black Power and the Caribbean world. Davies (2019) highlights the importance of Guyanese historian and Black Power thought-leader Walter Rodney's theories to Anibal Quijano in his development of a theory of the "coloniality of power" (Bogues, 2003; Quinn, 2014; Rodney, 1969). Quijano's interactions with Binghamton University's Coloniality Working Group in the early 1990s led to engagements with Rodney's theorisations of race and neo-colonialism. This demonstrates the significance of Black Power thinking and praxis to decolonial thought and furthermore positions the history of Black Power struggle in the Caribbean world as part of a decolonial tradition that holds key resources for understanding contemporary manifestations of the coloniality of power (Davies, 2019).

4 | A SPATIAL POLITICS OF BERMUDIAN BLACK POWER

4.1 | The First Regional International Black Power Conference, Bermuda 1969

The First BPC enables a grounded engagement with the historical-political trajectory of Black Power in the Caribbean world and its specific articulations on Bermuda in the service of envisioning and realising an imagined decolonial future.

The conference opened with an address from C.L.R. James, famed Trinidadian Marxist historian and political theorist, and direct mentor of many involved in Black Power politics in the Caribbean world (Austin, 2013). James assessed Black Power within a global, revolutionary context of a "mighty struggle against the forces of US imperialism" (James in Swan, 2014, p. 203), with James seeing Black Power activity as coeval with international movements seeking "power against those who are ruling the world" (James in Bogues, 2009, p. 131). Bermuda, the Caribbean, and the Black Power movement found there, were outlined as sites of revolutionary activity and decolonial potential *à la* "Vietnam, Cuba and Tanzania" (James in Swan, 2014, p. 203). James analysed Black Power as a political movement of world significance

emergent in a post-68 conjunctural moment. James sketches out the horizon of possible futures heralded by a globally articulated, anti-imperialist, and decolonial Black Power movement that could unite sites of black struggle from a colonial Bermuda, to liberation wars across the Global South and to African-American communities (Swan, 2020). The Bermuda Recorder (1969 vol. 45, no. 44) reported an estimated crowd of 2000 at the opening address, with the vast majority being Bermudians; around 200 conference attendees had travelled from abroad (CAB 148/91/23 1969; Swan, 2009).

The conference was structured around seven workshops: Communications, Creativity, Economics, Education, History, Politics, and Religion and Mythology (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 45 no. 43). Conference sessions were conducted in venues across the island and plenary sessions convened at Hamilton's, the island's capital, city hall (CAB 148/91/23 1969). The Bermuda Recorder noted "the conference had drawn persons from many walks of life and various ages" (1969 vol. 45 no. 44, p. 1), with Swan suggesting a broad spectrum of local black Bermudians attended proceedings, with "doctors, MCPs [Bermudian Parliament Members], union members, taxi drivers, students" (2009, p. 79) afforded the opportunity to interact, debate, and discuss the contours of a transnationally articulated Black Power politics and its application to Bermuda and wider diasporic and oppressed communities. First BPC Chair Roosevelt Pauulu Browne Kamarakafego's post-conference report reveals the sometimes intimate nature of these interactions, with "the opening of local homes to house overseas delegates" (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 46 no. 8, p. 4) seen as a strength of the First BPC and indicative of the diasporic affinities and sense of communality engendered through a transnational Black Power politics. While the conference was not a subaltern space *per se*, it did provide an opportunity for subaltern Bermudians to exact influence on proceedings through participation in workshops etc. Further, the First BPC was a place from which narratives of resistance were enunciated and decolonial futures imagined that challenged and exceeded the articulations of colonial power on the island that subalternised black Bermudians.

The international guests similarly comprised an array of figures from across the black world. Academics Fernando Henriques and Acklyn Lynch came from institutions in the USA and UK; radical activists Mitsukusu Shiboh represented the Japanese Red Army and John Shabazz the Black Citizens Patrol of Harlem. A Presidential adviser on Black Studies, Dr Nathan Wright, delivered the conference's closing address; religious leaders such as the US Methodist Bishop Bright attended; and black feminists Thelma Morgan and Queen Mother Moore, founder and president of the Universal Association of Ethiopian Women, held a session on black women (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 45 no. 44 and 43; CAB 148/91/23 1969; Swan, 2009, 2020). This snapshot of attendees shows the range of personal, ideological, and theological trajectories that came together at the First BPC. The conference as a place, understood as a conjuncture of space-time trajectories (Massey, 2005), facilitated generative interactions in the service of envisioning alternative, emancipatory futures and the enunciation of narratives of resistance anticipatory of said futures and oppositional to contemporaneous colonial, white supremacist regimes (Meeks, 2000).

The inspiration for convening a Black Power Conference on Bermuda can be traced to the attendance of seven of Bermuda's Progressive Labour Party (PLP) members at the National Conference on Black Power Newark, New Jersey 1967 (Swan, 2009, 2014, 2020), the most noteworthy being Kamarakafego. The PLP formed in 1963 as a party of Bermuda's black working class, consistently calling for independence, franchise expansion, and challenging *de jure* and *de facto* racial segregation and discrimination (Swan, 2009). There was significant overlap between the PLP and Black Power politics on Bermuda. Kamarakafego was perhaps the most prominent example, but the PLP's Youth Wing officially supported the First BPC with members engaged in administration and organisation (CAB 148/91/23 1969). The 1967 Newark Conference produced a single, core resolution. Quoting Swan:

The Black Power Manifesto was the only resolution officially passed by the New Jersey Conference. It called for the creation of an International Black Congress that would reflect the 'new sense of power and revolution blossoming' throughout the Black world. This would include the convening of regional Black Power Conferences in America and the Black Diaspora. (2009, p. 25)

This call was answered enthusiastically by Kamarakafego in his convening of the First BPC and demonstrates these conferences were convened and attended in attempts to define and articulate a new black internationalist politics that could draw together variously situated struggles against racism, (neo)colonialism, and (neo)imperialism from across the globe (Tyner, 2006). These efforts to construct a Black Power international of course emerge in response to the shifting contexts of the historical problem-spaces that Black Power actors found themselves operating in. In Bermuda, the First BPC was held at the height of the "long sixties," with an ascendant West Indian Black Power movement and the general global upsurge and interest in anti-colonial, radical, and New Left politics heightening tensions and generating interest in the event that operated as a place of convergence for those variously aligned

with these new historical-political tendencies (Austin, 2018; Meeks, 2000; Swan, 2009). These same currents moved through Montreal's 1968 Congress of Black Writers which, like Bermuda, was a gathering of radical Black thinkers and activists as well as local youth and students (Austin, 2013, 2018). Key West Indian thought-leaders C.L.R. James and Walter Rodney attended and spoke in Montreal and Rodney's banning from Jamaica while at the Congress ignited the Black Power movement in the West Indies (Austin, 2013, 2018). The Bermuda conference, intimately connected to these previous events, represented a development of this transnational Black Power politics in a new and generative context.

One also sees the generative potential of such gatherings in furthering Black Power political action and politics. Personal meetings and political-strategic discussions in Newark in 1967 were direct antecedents of the First BPC and this same process again occurred in 1969 with Black Power political activity spurred across the Caribbean world due to the heightening of political consciousness generated by the event and the convergence of personal and ideological trajectories afforded (FCO 141/150 1970a; FCO 63/444 1970d; Massey, 2005; Swan, 2014; Hodder, 2015). Kamarakafego's understanding that Black Power politics could be generatively articulated in contexts outside the USA is evidenced in his speech at the 1968 National Conference on Black Power, Philadelphia. Kamarakafego used this opportunity to emphasise the need for Black Power conferences to be held outside the USA, as it was a movement and politics internationally relevant to the black world (Swan, 2014, 2020).

While there were connections and a shared genealogy between the Black Power movements of the USA and the West Indies and Bermuda, there were also significant differences. In the West Indies, Black Power advocates, most famously Walter Rodney (Rodney, 1969), articulated an expansive conception of blackness that included the region's East Indian population and all non-white peoples of the world oppressed by white power. Rodney's articulation of blackness was innovative and challenged mono-racial articulations of Black Power emergent from some sections of the US Black Power movement. This was evidenced in the hostile and damaging reaction generated across the West Indies following comments from Stokely Carmichael, one-time Prime Minister of the US Black Panther Party, at a May 1970 speaking visit to multi-ethnic Guyana that Black Power was for people of African descent only (FCO 63/463 1970b; Quinn, 2014). The anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist politics of Black Power were perhaps sharper and more immediate in Bermuda, an outright British colony, than in the USA where Black Power activists positioned African-American communities as being internally colonised (Heynen, 2009; Swan, 2009). Bermudian Black Power activists were directly confronted by imperial military power in 1969 as British troops were deployed to the island in order to protect the white-supremacist colonial state and in so doing re-articulated plantation space-time in the contemporary Bermudian context through the policing of black political activity (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 45 no. 44; Swan, 2009).

The First BPC constituted an example of black place-making enacted as a means of creative resistance to geographies and regimes of coloniality and white supremacy (Gilmore, 2007; Heynen & Ybarra, 2021; McKittrick, 2011). In a *Bermuda Recorder* interview the week before the conference, Kamarakafego confirmed that "no whites will be allowed ... [and] that he [had] returned application forms and registration fees some had submitted" (vol. 45 no. 43, p. 1). The First BPC represented an attempt to carve out a space solely of and for black and non-white people from across the world to come together and attempt to articulate a politics of anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism in a white supremacist, colonial state steeped in centuries of active hostility towards such efforts (Swan, 2009). This tactic of white exclusion should not be read as a reactionary politics of black supremacy, contra to the analysis of the British Joint Intelligence Committee that described Black Power as "an extremist racialist movement advocating physical violence" (CAB 158/68 *Black Power: Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee* 1968, p. 1). The decision to ban white attendees was a situated and strategic decision made by the organisers, who recognised that Bermuda was a society and space dominated by white colonial power and plantation logics. The First BPC articulated an assuredly anti-racist politics as seen in the memorandum produced following its conclusion; "world humanism" was the eventual goal requiring "the working together of people on a worldwide basis to eliminate hunger, disease, poverty, ignorance" and the attainment of "dignity for all people" (Swan, 2009, p. 84). However, as black people were oppressed locally and globally, the first step was to gain power over black communities and then as a united people with self-liberation the prerequisite to such utopian aims. The First BPC represented a situated and insurgent practice of place-making as freedom that emerged in direct response to specific plantation geographies that shaped contemporaneous Bermudian problem-space and that had long shaped the island's history of black political organisation (Gilmore, 2007; McKittrick, 2011, 2013; Scott, 2004).

The actions of the British and Bermudian security and intelligence apparatuses leave little doubt as to the necessity of the organisers' policy. British Cabinet Office papers detail the troop deployments to Bermuda intended to quell any potential disturbances:

It has been decided to send 80 officers and men of 45 marine commando to reinforce the seamen and marines of the two frigates *Arethusa* and *Mohawk* which will be standing by in Bermuda over the danger period. (CAB 148/91/23 *FCO Telegram no. 142 Guidance* 1969, p. 1)

Kamarakafego and other PLP members saw this display of imperial military power as incendiary and intimidating. This deployment of British naval vessels and military personnel is reminiscent of earlier Caribbean imperialist interventions. Guyanese poet Martin Carter penned these words in response to the 1953 suspension of the constitution and deployment of British troops: “Although you come in thousands from the sea ... Although you point your gun straight at my heart, I clench my fist above my head; I sing my song of FREEDOM!” (2006, p. 100). Kamarakafego noted in a post-conference report that “desert army land rovers, mounted with submachine guns, were moved through the city [Hamilton]” on the eve of the conference (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 46 no. 8, p. 1). A PLP statement published in *The Bermuda Recorder* stated “the gathering of black people for a conference does not require the entire Black population of Bermuda to be placed under a state of siege” (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 45. no. 44 p. 1). This “state of siege” was manifest less overtly too. A “stop-list” was produced through the collaboration of the Bermudian government, CIA, MI5, MI6, and Interpol to prevent “militant extremists” (FCO 63/443 *Meeting Concerning Regional Black Power Conferences* 1970c, p. 1) from entering the territory, with this succeeding in preventing the travel of a number of attendees and workshop convenors (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 46 no. 8). Perhaps the greatest vindication of the organisers’ exclusionary policy was found in the infiltration of proceedings by informants and agents of Special Branch, who composed a report on the First BPC complete with photographs, information on resolutions, and delegates’ personal information (Swan, 2009). These practices of repression, displays of imperial military power, and colonial intelligence efforts constituted renewals of centuries-old tactics of racialised surveillance, restrictions of mobility, and the criminalisation of black protest undergirded by racist plantation logics that positioned (radical) blackness and black political organisation as a threat to continued colonial and white supremacist hegemony (Austin, 2013; McKittrick, 2011).

This overview of the First BPC situates the event as a confluence of diverse trajectories, personal and political, from across the black world and Global South that came together to debate and articulate a transnational politics of Black Power. The conference represented a practice of liberatory black place-making with a white exclusion policy a strategic decision in light of the racial geographies and forms of white supremacy that defined contemporaneous Bermudian problem-space (Gilmore, 2007; McKittrick, 2011; D. Scott, 2004). This move was vindicated by the practices of intimidation, surveillance, and harassment enacted by local colonial and British imperialist security actors, and that represented re-articulations of plantation logics and coercive efforts that have long defined Bermudian race relations (McKittrick, 2013; Swan, 2009). The next empirical section explores the decolonial imaginaries and politics articulated at the First BPC.

4.2 | Decolonial futures

In analysing the decolonial visions emergent from the First BPC, a useful starting point is the Communications workshop and the publication that emerged from it: *Umoja*. The workshop’s core resolution was that there was a need for communications networks to be created in Bermuda and beyond to disseminate accurate knowledge about black people worldwide (Swan, 2009). This would have a mobilising effect and provide counter-networks operating outside the constraints of existent communications links that perpetuated white power and white cultural hegemony. This is a means of epistemic decolonisation with independent communications networks facilitating the refutation of colonial myths about black people and their history and allowing for positive expressions of black heritage and culture (Rodney, 1969; Biney, 2018).

Swan describes the intended form and activity of such communications networks:

This was to include the use of taped speeches, films, seminars, church discussions, parties, door-to-door campaigns, and newsletters intended to increase political awareness and to cover areas such as education, history, police conduct and culture. (2009, p. 91)

Narratives of resistance could be developed and disseminated locally and globally, thus drawing black Bermudians into transnational circuits of knowledge exchange co-produced through the activities and structures outlined in the Communications workshop. Such commitments were formalised through the establishment of a Black Power publication

entitled *Umoja*, paired with a synonymous Philadelphia-based paper (Swan, 2009, 2014). The pairing with the US publication facilitated the sharing of information between Black Power activists in Bermuda and the USA, widening circuits of Black Power communication across the Black Atlantic world and building a Black Power consciousness more deeply engaged with international black struggles. The word “*umoja*” itself is the Kiswahili for “unity” and demonstrates internationalist and Pan-African commitments (Swan, 2009, 2014, 2020).

Umoja became the official organ of the PLP Youth Wing and was distributed and contributed to by members of the Black Beret Cadre; a militant Black Panther Party-esque group active from 1969 to 1972 that self-styled as the vanguard of Black Power in Bermuda (Swan, 2009, 2020). This legacy of the First BPC on the politicisation and political activity of black Bermudians is representative of the consciousness-raising effect the conference had on Bermuda and across the Caribbean world (FCO 141/150 1970a; FCO 63/444 1970d). Around 1800 attendees were native Bermudians and, as described previously, these came from across the spectrum of Bermudian society (Swan, 2009). Kamrakafego notes in his post-conference analysis that a great success of the event lay in “having Black people of various parts of the world share the common as well as their local problems” (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 46 no. 8, p. 4). The conference afforded the opportunity for black people from across the world to come together and reason, and for Bermudians to relate their local issues to broader, transnational antagonisms shared by attendees. While workshop leaders and keynote speakers tended to comprise more elite actors able to engage in international travel, the First BPC also operated as a place of interaction where global personal and political trajectories were grounded and inflected by the input of Bermudians (Hodder, 2015). *Umoja* stands as a textual codification of narratives of resistance (J. Meeks, 2000; J. Scott, 1992) articulated during the first BPC and points towards decolonial horizons envisioned at the conference.

A 1970 *Umoja* article by one Brother “Che” Hannibal, entitled “Black Revolution,” adopts a Fanonian analysis of the post-independence states of the West Indies and the psychological damage wrought on black people by (neo)colonialism. Brother Hannibal’s writing in *Umoja* is indicative of the proliferation of Black Power political activism and analysis by local Bermudians that one sees following the successful conclusion of the First BPC (Swan, 2009, 2020). Post-independence governments in the West Indies are situated within a global system of white power that had incorporated the local petit-bourgeoisie into neo-colonial relations of exploitation and extraction; “these are Black Skins in White Masks (Fanon)” (Hannibal, 1970, p. 1). Hannibal adopts a decolonial position expounded in his assessment that formal independence had done little to challenge the configurations of domination of West Indian politics, economy, and culture by colonial powers and epistemes (Biney, 2018). Hannibal echoes the sentiments of Professor Henriques, who in a TV interview preceding the First BPC stated that, in his opinion, the work of Franz Fanon best shaped understandings of what “being black in a white world” meant (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 45 no. 44 p. 1). Hannibal’s Fanonian analysis turns psychological and biopolitical, with the inferiority complex engendered in the black subject through slavery and colonialism explored in relation to capital punishment (Hannibal, 1970). Capital punishment is analysed as a “white invention” (Hannibal, 1970, p. 1) instigated in the West Indies to terrorise black populations and is contrasted against the historical practices of African tribal peoples who rarely employed the practice, a point substantiated by Walter Rodney (1970) in his radical history of West African slavery, *A history of the Upper Guinea coast, 1545–1800*.

The continued use of capital punishment in post-independence Jamaica and Trinidad is read as leaders flexing newly minted state (bio)power. However, in these facile displays of sovereignty, these “Black Skins in White Masks” (Hannibal, 1970, p. 1) are recapitulating the violence of the plantation regime (McKittrick, 2013) and perpetuating the coloniality of state power (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). For these leaders and governments, unable to escape the plantation mindset and their own epistemic coloniality (Best, 1970, 2003), lethal violence remains a key mechanism of power through which societal discipline is enforced and the neo-colonial state defended. For Hannibal, formal independence alone is not enough while black leaders kill black people, with Black Revolution being the only way towards “freedom and justice. Revolution must be perpetual and intensified or black masses will forever ‘Look up to see the Lion and the Palace and the Lake’” (Hannibal, 1970, p. 2).

This narrative of emancipatory revolution evidenced above is a consistent refrain throughout *Umoja*, with decolonial futures seen to necessitate major structural changes in the configurations of power locally and globally and the required raising of a revolutionary black consciousness. In the article “Black Power” (*Umoja*, 1970), a revolutionary socialist line is developed with capitalism and racism viewed as inseparable and a class and critical black consciousness seen as coeval. This position chimes with the First BPC’s Economics Workshop, which described capitalism as “the White man’s economic system” and rejected black capitalism as a means of liberation (Swan, 2009, p. 82); this anti-capitalist position was rooted in the belief that collective freedom preceded individual freedom, with this same position adopted in the *Umoja* article. A transnational analysis of capitalist-imperialism is deployed, with the exploitation of black labour in Bermuda and the West Indies serving to enrich white, metropolitan states and capitalists (Kunz, 2020; *Umoja*, 1970). Black Power

would turn over ownership of the means of production to (black) workers and so break the transnational relationships of capitalist exploitation that immiserate black peoples in the region and “[reduce] the worker to a fragment of a man” (Umoja, 1970, p. 1).

Further, the decolonial future of a socialist and Black Power oriented Bermuda is explored with a focus on solidarity with peoples and nations fighting (neo)colonialism and (neo)imperialism. The article states:

Black Power will immediately withdraw all military forces and bases in other nations. It will abolish all travel restrictions to this nation based on the alleged or real communist and/or socialist ideas and activities of individuals or groups of individuals. (Umoja 1970, p. 2)

The assumption of Black Power in Bermuda would mean independence from British colonial rule, but as seen in Hannibal’s (1970) article, independence would be a means not an end. The politics of Black Power outlined here is directed towards solidarity with those fighting the forces of (neo)imperialism and (neo)colonialism globally, with this meaning commitment to the oppressed of the “First World” and also “Third World.” The desire to abolish travel restrictions can be read against the background of the Bermudian colonial state’s frequent banning of radical black figures from entering the island and the establishment of the stop-list described earlier (FCO 63/4431970c; Swan, 2009). *Umoja* and its authors’ imagined decolonial future has a core commitment to a politics of transnational solidarity with anti-colonial and imperial struggle as articulated in James’ conference address and workshop proceedings (Swan, 2014) and is reflective of a Black Atlantic consciousness that connects black emancipation in Bermuda to black emancipation globally (Gilroy, 1993; Iton, 2008).

The decolonial analysis evidenced in *Umoja* has clear antecedents in First BPC activities and demonstrates the impact of the conference on Black Power political action on Bermuda. In *Umoja* one finds assessment of contemporary West Indian and Bermudian problem-space, with Bermuda positioned in transnational relations of capitalist exploitation and colonial domination that frustrate efforts to improve black lives materially, culturally, and spiritually. The post-colonial politics and nation-states of the West Indies are critically assessed as being inadequate grounds to challenge the coloniality of life in Bermuda and broader black world. Emerging instead is a radical Black Power vision of a decolonial future that is anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist (Hannibal, 1970; Umoja, 1970). We might understand the content of *Umoja* as narratives of resistance (Meeks, 2000) that, in the words of First BPC workshop chair Acklyn Lynch:

Begin moving towards an independent people surviving, developing their own ethics – having their own ethos and creating out that community in which they live a new world. (The Bermuda Recorder, 1969, vol. 45 no. 44, p. 1)

5 | CONCLUSION

This paper offers a spatially attentive reading of David Scott’s (2004) conceptualisation of problem-space to explore the spatial politics of Bermudian Black Power through the First BPC and its after-effects. The paper eschews a reading of historical and political development in Bermuda and the wider Caribbean world that is temporally overdetermined. I challenge a teleological reading in which given political-historical tendencies or trajectories “win out” and come to define a given historical period or problem-space with other trajectories dismissed as relative failures and of diminished historical value. Building on Massey (2005), I foreground the multiplicity and generative and contested interactions of the competing political trajectories that constituted the historical-problem space of Bermuda in the late 1960s, with my analysis highlighting the productive geographies of connection and articulation that produce political and historical change beyond a focus on the temporal.

Through analysing Bermudian Black Power thought and action as explicitly decolonial, this paper contributes to efforts to broaden the intellectual geographies and genealogies of decolonial thinking and praxis (Biney, 2018; Davies, 2019). Studying the First BPC and Black Power thinking in the Caribbean holds key resources for analysing transnational neo-colonial relations, the geographies of racial capitalism and epistemic coloniality (Best, 1970; Hannibal, 1970; Rodney, 1969; Umoja, 1970). This paper contributes to the decolonisation of geographical thought through engaging with West Indian intellectual production emergent and grounded in the post and de-colonial contexts of the region (Craggs, 2019; Esson et al., 2017). Exploring the decolonial praxis, thinking, and narratives of resistance articulated by Black Power actors in Bermuda foregrounds the pro-active efforts of those racialised and subalternised by colonial, white supremacist

power (Hudson, 2014; McKittrick, 2013; Noxolo, 2017). Crucially, my examination of the First BPC situates the event as an example of liberatory black place-making (Gilmore, 2007; McKittrick, 2011), with organisers and attendees carving out a space in which emancipatory decolonial visions of a future Bermuda and narratives of resistance could be articulated in opposition to hegemonic plantation geographies.

This paper represents an effort to internationalise studies of Black Power politics (Quinn, 2014; Slate, 2012), particularly in a Caribbean context, through foregrounding the importance of Bermuda as a key locus of Black Power organisation and activity. Within geographical scholarship, engagement with Black Power has primarily centred on the US experience (Heynen, 2009; Ramirez, 2015; Tyner, 2006) and this paper thus introduces new perspectives through foregrounding Anglophone Caribbean Black Power politics' decolonial vision and praxis. As this paper demonstrates, geographers are well positioned to make further interventions here. There exists scope for future spatial-political analyses of Black Power politics and its articulation in diverse locales and problem-spaces, with this contributing to the global perspectives on Black Power that have been developed in other disciplines and through interdisciplinary studies (Narayan, 2019; Shilliam, 2015; Slate, 2012).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was supported by the Geographical Club Award, administered by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). This paper has benefitted from the insightful and constructive criticisms of three reviewers and the helpful feedback of journal editors. Thanks also to David Featherstone and Lazaros Karaliotas for their encouragement and comments throughout the writing of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Ben Gowland  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9090-0747>

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How to cite this article: Gowland B. Narratives of resistance and decolonial futures in the politics of the Bermudian Black Power movement. *Trans Inst Br Geogr*. 2021;46:866–881. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12450>