"Little Rock" in Britain: Jim Crow's Transatlantic Topographies

Kennetta Hammond Perry

On 25 August 1958, the lead story in London's *Daily Express* reported that bottles, knives, razors, and sticks had been drawn in a "pitched battle" on the streets of Nottingham, England, involving "Englishmen, West Indians, Pakistanis and Africans" and described as "one of the ugliest race riots ever known in Britain."[1] During the following week, details about similar incidents of racial violence in London surfaced. For four consecutive nights, numerous media reports emerged recounting violent clashes between "gangs of white and coloured youths" in West London as "Negro-baiting" white mobs were heard shouting threatening racial epithets including, "We'll kill the black bastards!" "Deport all Niggers," and "Let's lynch the niggers!" amid cries to "Keep Britain White!"[2] In the early morning hours of 1 September 1958, Scotland Yard dispatched eleven police cars to Notting Hill Gate in an effort to disband a "jeering crowd," estimated at over four hundred, that had gathered in a fracas that pitted white against black with broken bottles, iron railings, knives, fists, and angry shouts serving as weapons of choice.[3] Later that same day, Seymour Manning, described by one newspaper as "a young West African student," screamed "Help me. For God's sake help me. They are going to kill me," as he dashed into a local grocery

Kennetta Hammond Perry is assistant professor of history at East Carolina University. Her research interests include black British history and transnational race politics. Along with the editors and anonymous readers for the *Journal of British Studies*, the author would like to thank Tina Campt, Eric D. Duke, Marisa Fuentes, Leslie Page Moch, Sowande M. Mustakeem, Susan D. Pennybacker, Susan Thorne, Sasha Turner, and colleagues in the Department of History at East Carolina University for commenting on earlier drafts of this article.

[1] "Race Riots Terrorise a City," *Daily Express*, 25 August 1958.

[2] "New Race Riots in UK: Mostly Whites Held," *Daily Gleaner*, 1 September 1958; "New Riot Terror," *Daily Herald*, 1 September 1958; Edward Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots* (London, 1988), 114; "Further Racial Incidents," *The Times*, 3 September 1958; "Renewed Racial Disturbances in London," *The Times*, 2 September 1958; "London Racial Outburst Due to Many Factors," *The Times*, 3 September 1958; "'Lynch Him!' Heard in London," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 4 September 1958.

[3] "Racial Fights in London," *The Times*, 1 September 1958.

Journal of British Studies 51 (January 2012): 155–177

store in Notting Hill after escaping an attack by "a gang of young toughs" that incited "a crowd of two hundred white people," some of whom reportedly called out "lynch him!"[4] When questioned by a local reporter about the reasons for the attack on Manning, one person replied, "Just tell your readers that Little Rock learned us a lesson."[5]

Nearly one year before the day that Seymour Manning faced the terror of mob violence on the streets of Notting Hill, on 2 September 1957, Governor Orval Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to erect a military-styled perimeter to prevent African American students from entering the corridors of Little Rock's Central High School. In doing so, Faubus transformed Little Rock, Arkansas, into an instant media phenomenon that became a metonym for a series of local campaigns erupting throughout the South designed to resist, delay, and obstruct the imposition of federal mandates for desegregating public schools in accordance with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision.[6] Ultimately, it was only after U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower deployed federal troops to assist in the enforcement of federal law that nine African American students were able to attend a full day of classes at Central High School.[7] However, in the intervening three weeks between Faubus's order and Eisenhower's response, the spectacle of adolescent youth encountering armed guards and angry white mobs as they attempted to perform the innocent and mundane task of attending school became an epic media event that captured the attention of audiences around the world. Just as horrific descriptions of the lynching of black men had captivated British audiences and shaped perceptions of Jim Crow America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the intensifying legal battle over desegregation, which the Little Rock case epitomized, also engendered a public fascination with American racial narratives in Britain.[8] One article appearing in *The*

[4] "'Lynch Him!' Heard in London," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 4 September 1958. In another report on this particular incident appearing in the *Daily Mirror*, Manning is described as Jamaican. This discrepancy is indicative of the ways in which categories of race, ethnicity, nationality, and, more precisely, blackness were in part matters of perception. However, it is important to note that demographically speaking, the largest populations of nonwhite constituencies in the British Isles during this period were composed of Afro-Caribbean migrants. See "Riot Gangs Go by Car to Join the Mob," *Daily Mirror*, 2 September 1958.

[5] "'Lynch Him!' Heard in London," *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 4 September 1958.

[6] For a comprehensive discussion of the Little Rock case and its significance to the larger movement against federally mandated school desegregation in the South, see Frances Baer, *Resistance to Public School Desegregation: Little Rock, Arkansas and Beyond* (New York, 2008). For more on massive resistance throughout the South during the 1950s, see Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950s* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1999).

[7] It is important to note that Eisenhower's decision to intervene in Little Rock was not necessarily grounded in a defense of the civil rights of African Americans or support for desegregation. Rather, he was acting out of an obligation to respect the rule of federal law. See Cary Fraser, "Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock: The Eisenhower Administration and the Dilemma of Race for U.S. Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 233–64.

[8] Baer, *Resistance to Public School Desegregation*, 170–73; Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 119–23. The transatlantic antilynching campaigns of Ida B. Wells that brought her to Britain in the 1890s were critical in cultivating British interest in the racial politics associated with American lynching narratives during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See Sarah Silkey, "Redirecting the Tide of White Imperialism: The Impact of Ida B. Wells's Transatlantic Antilynching Campaign on British Conceptions of American Race Relations," in *Women Shaping the South:*

Times of London observed that Little Rock was vested with the imagery of "lonely, isolated negro children whose pictures have touched and shamed millions."[9] In the weeks and months that followed, the British press showcased visual images, special reports, editorials, caricatures, and analysis of the Little Rock "crisis" as a harrowing example of the distinctively American—and more precisely, purportedly "southern"—problem of entrenched "racial tension."[10]

As the integration of public schools became a media flash point in what was ultimately a multipronged political movement for civil liberties, economic justice, human rights, and equality, the city of Little Rock, Arkansas, came to represent an iconic local drama about the politics of race and citizenship with implications that reverberated on a global scale.[11] In Little Rock, the forces of white supremacy, black activism, and the rising currents of a Cold War liberalism wedded to marketing a palatable image of the promise of American democracy collided in dramatic fashion. In a period when racially charged international debates concerning decolonization, human rights, and apartheid took center stage, stoking tensions in a Cold War contest between "East" and "West," what happened in Little Rock mattered at home and abroad. According to historian Mary Dudziak, in the context of Cold War propaganda battles between the United States and the Soviet Union over competing visions of democracy, Little Rock created an image crisis of epic proportions such that international audiences employed it to judge American racial progress and the nation's moral fitness for occupying a position of leadership in the postwar world.[12] But what exactly were the "lessons" gleaned from the Little Rock debacle that would resonate among Britons, including one of Seymour Manning's attackers during the late 1950s? Moreover, what purposes did public invocations of Little Rock serve in articulating a local politics of race in the aftermath of episodes of urban racial violence?

This article examines how appropriations of both "Little Rock" and the internationally recognized iconography of Jim Crow America offered Britons a political lexicon to publicly debate the stakes of urban racial violence and to make claims about the politics of race, nation, citizenship, and Britishness.[13] Scholars of American history have documented the international circulation of narratives about Jim Crow America and African American freedom struggles; however, there is much

Creating and Confronting Change, ed. Angela Boswell and Judith McArthur (Columbia, MO, 2006), 97–119.

[9] "Guard Withdrawn from Little Rock School," *The Times*, 23 September 1957.

[10] "Arkansas Crisis Engineered," *Manchester Guardian*, 12 September 1957; "Defiance of U.S. Law Renewed," *The Times*, 5 September 1957; "U.S. Racial Tension Grows," *The Times*, 11 September 1957; "'Federal 'Occupation' of Little Rock," *The Times*, 26 September 1957; "The Blackboard Jungle," *Daily Mirror*, 12 September 1957.

[11] It is important to note that the desegregation campaigns that climaxed in the 1950s and 1960s were one facet of a broader movement for civil rights and social justice waged by African Americans throughout the twentieth century that connected U.S. foreign affairs and domestic race politics. See Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950* (New York, 2008), 6–10.

[12] Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 115–51; Fraser, "Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock," 234, 245–64.

[13] As will be demonstrated throughout this article, invocations of "Little Rock" simultaneously referred to a geographic place and a particular discourse about what that place had come to represent for white and black Britons; however, from here forward in the body of the article, quotation marks around the term will not be used to denote this point.

more to uncover about the impact of the transmission of these racial narratives outside of the United States.[14] By examining public discourses about Little Rock as they emerged in the British press following widely reported episodes of racial violence in Nottingham and London during the late 1950s, one can consider how Little Rock became much more than an internationally mobile civil rights saga about the corroded virtues of the American nation; it also became an iconic transnational topography of race. But as an itinerant topography of race, what did Little Rock become as it circulated beyond the borders of the United States? More specifically, what social and political valences did Little Rock acquire in transit and (re)appropriation through and across the routes of the Atlantic and what do they have to tell us about the transnational histories of Jim Crow and racial politics in postwar Britain?

In many ways, domestic and international press coverage of the desegregation of public schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957 shaped the terms in which Little Rock emerged as a political discourse about race in America and beyond.[15] Therefore, charting how and where Little Rock emerged in the British press presents an instructive line of sight for examining what it came to signify about race outside of the United States. By mapping competing appropriations of Little Rock captured in the British media, I argue that one can see how the iconography of Jim Crow America was reconstituted for different local political ends in transatlantic circulation. In the wake of racial violence in British cities during the summer of 1958, for various constituencies of Britons ranging from the likes of Seymour Manning's attacker to British officials, antiracist white liberals, black British activists, and the mainstream media, Little Rock provided a means to publicly explain and interpret race relations and the politics of race in Britain. For some, this involved deploying Little Rock to problematize what was in the late 1950s, a largely Afro-Caribbean Commonwealth migration. Yet for others, it entailed appropriating Little Rock as a counterpoint to define the virtues of the British nation, mark the presence of racism in British society, and appeal to the imagined antiracist ideals tethered to notions of what it meant to be British.

Writing a British history of Little Rock provides a critical opening to con-

[14] Some of the more recent works on the international dimensions of the African American freedom movement in the twentieth century include Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca, NY, 1997); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (Cambridge, 2003); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, 2003); Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (New York, 2006); and Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*. For ground-breaking work examining the impact of American racial narratives internationally, particularly in Britain during the twentieth century, see Jacqueline Nassy Brown, "Black Liverpool, Black America and the Gendering of Diasporic Space," *Cultural Anthropology* 13, no. 3 (August 1998): 291–325; Joe Street, "Malcolm X, Smethwick and the Influence of the African American Freedom Struggle on British Race Relations in the 1960s," *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 6 (July 2008): 932–50; Ann Marie Angelo, "The Black Panthers in London, 1967–1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic," *Radical History Review* 103 (Winter 2009): 17–39; and Susan Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, NJ, 2009).

[15] In a compelling critique of Civil Rights–era scholarship, Charles Payne notes that the media played a powerful role in shaping popular narratives about the movement and consequently the history of the African American freedom struggle during the 1950s and 1960s. See Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA, 1995), 403–4, 413.

sider histories of postwar race politics in Britain that venture beyond the corridors of Whitehall and interface with transatlantic discussions about race and the issues of citizenship and belonging shaping the everyday lives of populations of the African Diaspora during the 1950s.[16] Because Little Rock was invoked by a wide cast of characters with disparate interests and investments, including agents of racial violence, white liberals, the media, Parliament members, Caribbean officials, and grassroots black activists, tracking its assorted meanings unearths a contentious debate among Britons about the so-called color problem. From this vantage point, one can imagine race politics in postwar Britain as a politically charged social dialogue that engaged Britons across the tenuous imperial fault lines of race, class, gender, and nationality as opposed to merely an official political agenda. To be sure, as a transposed vernacular of race with an American etymology, tracing discourses of Little Rock in Britain provides a critical vista to de-domesticate what has been largely narrated as an island story about race relations in postwar Britain and illuminates how the politics of race, migration, and citizenship can be viewed through the intersecting prisms of empire, diaspora, and postwar international relations.[17] In the process, the possibilities of creating a more textured history of postwar Britain emerge by engaging a broad range of scholarly canons, including African American history, U.S. southern history, Atlantic history, and diaspora studies, which are seldom employed collectively to construct histories of British metropolitan life in the twentieth century.[18]

[16] Much of the historical scholarship on early postwar race politics takes a state-centered approach and examines how policy makers reacted to shifting racial dynamics prompted by nonwhite Commonwealth migration. Examples include Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: "Race" and "Race Relations" in Postwar Britain* (Oxford, 1992); Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca, NY, 1997); and Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford, 2000). Alternatively, interdisciplinary work on the social and cultural politics of race has produced scholarship with a more inclusive cast of historical actors including the migrant populations shaping the British society during this era. See Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender Race and National Identity, 1945–1964* (London, 1998); and Bill Schwarz, "Claudia Jones and the *West Indian Gazette*: Reflections on the Emergence of Post-colonial Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* 14, no. 3 (2003): 264–85.

[17] Examples of a more island-oriented focus include Paul Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics* (Harmondsworth, 1965); Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871–1971* (Houndsmill, 1988); Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*; and James Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging: Immigration and the Politics of Demographic Governance in Postwar Britain* (London, 2005). A notable exception to more insular histories of Afro-Caribbean migration, citizenship, and racial politics in postwar Britain includes Winston James and Clive Harris, eds., *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain* (London, 1993). Likewise, work in the field of black British cultural studies aims to foreground the voices and perspectives of black Britons as diasporic, transnational subjects shaped by the experience of empire. See Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago, 1987), and *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, 1993); Houston Baker and Manthia Diawara, eds., *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Chicago, 1996); and Barnor Hesse, "Diasporicity: Black Britain's Post-colonial Formations," in *Unsettled Multiculturalisms*, ed. Barnor Hesse (London, 2000), 96–120.

[18] Susan Pennybacker's recent work, *From Scottsboro to Munich*, is a notable exception.

SEEDS OF ANOTHER "LITTLE ROCK"

The outbreak of race riots in Nottingham and London quickly became international news as media outlets throughout Britain, the Commonwealth, Europe, and the United States provided daily coverage and analysis of violence between local whites and a largely Afro-Caribbean migrant population of black Britons in late August and early September of 1958. According to a report appearing in London's *Daily Herald*, "A great roar of protest against Britain's race war exploded across the world," as news of racial violence circulated internationally.[19] As a result, the Foreign Office issued a number of official statements in an attempt to influence and manage international public opinion. Intended to deflect negative publicity about the violence and redeem tarnished perceptions of British race relations, these official communiqués promulgated a national veneer of racial liberalism declaring that "organized racial discrimination has never been part of the pattern of British life, nor the laws of the country." Moreover, they emphasized that the violence could hardly be considered a "race riot" as relatively few people had been injured.[20]

Sensitivity to international perceptions in the wake of the violence was well warranted. Throughout the twentieth century, issues of race could never quite simply be confined to a nation's domestic sphere. Rather, they represented contested transnational terrain that could define a nation's image in world politics and test its legitimacy on racially charged international concerns. In the postwar world, extant memories of Nazi Germany, civil rights campaigns in the United States, debates concerning South Africa's apartheid regime, as well as the racial undercurrents of decolonization firmly situated issues of race in a geopolitical landscape defined by shifting and competing Cold War rivalries.[21] Moreover, as Britain rebranded its waning image as an imperial nation-state in the aftermath of World War II, during the late 1940s and 1950s, the nation actively embraced and cultivated a discourse about fostering a multiracial Commonwealth that acknowledged the diversity of a global community of Britons and championed the virtues of egalitarianism, liberalism, democracy, and universalism. As former British colonies with largely nonwhite populations including India, Pakistan, and the Gold Coast (Ghana) acquired independence, the idea of Commonwealth provided an incentive to maintain strategic formal relations with Britain despite imperial pasts structured by racial and ethnic hierarchies of power.[22] In addition, the egalitarian and racially inclusive vision of Commonwealth also granted Britain and, subsequently, proponents of Western capitalism a degree of political leverage in a Cold War battle between the United States and the Soviet Union that hinged upon

[19] "Riots: World Uproar," *Daily Herald*, 4 September 1958. See also memo, "Ghana and the Racial Riots," from A. Snelling to Sir H. Lintott, 4 September 1958, Dominions Office (DO) 35/7992, The National Archives (TNA). According to the memo, this characterization was also reproduced in Ghanian papers.

[20] Telegram from Foreign Office to HMG Representatives, 3 September 1958, DO 35/9506, TNA.

[21] Paul Gordon Lauren's *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder, CO, 1996) remains one of the best comprehensive surveys of the ways in which questions of race have affected international politics in the twentieth century and especially in the aftermath of World War II. See also Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996); Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; and Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*.

[22] Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939–1965* (Oxford, 2005), chaps. 3, 4.

representing a commitment to racial democracy and antiracism to newly independent nations.[23] In this climate, questions of race mattered, and Britons certainly knew that headlines declaring "race war," "nigger-hunting," and vigilante campaigns taking place on the streets of London to "Keep Britain White!" would undermine the Commonwealth ideal and certainly garner international scrutiny.[24] As this news circulated, Britons knew that the world would be watching and the image of the nation would be at stake.

In addition to downplaying some of the more sensational headlines about the news of race riots in Britain through Foreign Office statements, the government also charged British diplomats in various overseas outposts with surveying international reaction to the violence in Nottingham and London. Reporting on the view from France, British diplomats noted that news of racial violence had "come as a shock" to French observers because the British were "renowned in France for their tolerance and liberal outlook."[25] Reports from New Zealand struck a similar chord as British diplomats relayed that press coverage emphasized the extent to which the violence seemed "so out of character with Britain['s] whole reputation for tolerance."[26] In a survey of editorial commentary that appeared in the *New York Times* concerning the violence in Nottingham and London, British officials stationed in Washington, DC, noted that the paper reported that among U.S. audiences, there was "something especially shocking about the race riots in England." The report also remarked that considering Britain's international reputation as bulwark of Western liberalism and democratic tradition, American audiences would take an interest in seeing "how the British reassert their normal tolerance and good sense," given that, in the opinion of the British diplomat, "no people in the world had achieved a more urbane sense of tolerance than the British."[27]

The filters of British diplomats tracking international media coverage of the violence in Nottingham and London reflected a broader historical narrative about Britain and British liberalism that embraced discourses of tolerance as a means of cultivating an antiracist image of the nation. Despite the fact that Britain had a long racialized history of empire building marked by conquest, exploitation, chattel slavery, and disenfranchisement that continued to play out in the 1950s in colonial conflicts including the Mau Mau rebellions in Kenya, Whiggish visions of a tolerant Britain repressed the violence of empire and conformed with an antiracist, liberal reformist image of the nation.[28] Crafted in part with the "moral capital" accrued through investments in and appropriations of a legacy of abolition, the existence of this national facade convinced one British diplomat tracking French reaction

[23] Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 186–218.

[24] "Four-Year Terms for Nine 'Nigger-Hunting' Youths," *The Times*, 16 September 1958; "Race War in Britain," *Trinidad Guardian*, 25 August 1958; "'Keep Britain White' Call in Notting Hill Area," *The Times*, 10 September 1958.

[25] Telegram from Paris, France, to the Foreign Office, 6 September 1958, DO 35/7992, TNA.

[26] Telegram from Wellington, New Zealand, to Commonwealth Relations Office, 8 September 1958, DO 35/7992, TNA. According to the telegram, this characterization appeared in the *Wellington Dominion*.

[27] Telegram from Washington, DC, to Foreign Office, 4 September 1958, DO 35/7992, TNA.

[28] Georgie Wemyss, *The Invisible Empire: White Discourse, Tolerance and Belonging* (London, 2009), 12, 124–25; Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, chap. 5.

to the violence in London to conclude that the "shock" in France about the "race riots" was because the French found it difficult to imagine such a scenario unfolding in what was regarded as the "country of Wilberforce."[29] Headlines about the violence of 1958 certainly obstructed this view. But while some international audiences may have reacted to the news with some degree of astonishment, others saw it an opportunity to underscore that Britain was not "immune to anti-racial feeling" despite a "tendency to preach to others," about racism.[30]

As reports of violence in Nottingham emerged, *The Times* reported that South African papers characterized the events as "a case of the biter bit." According to *The Times*, under the heading "No more the cry 'Holier than thou,'" the Johannesburg *Star* reprinted a cartoon appearing in Britain's *Daily Express* just days after news of racial violence in Nottingham began to publicly surface that portrayed British prime minister Harold MacMillan dodging a scuffle between what was described as a "Nottingham 'teddy boy' and a coloured man,"[31] while a caricature of Arkansas governor Orval Faubus and a figure "vaguely resembling Mr. [Charles Robbert] Swart" labeled "South Africa" stood watch in a close huddle with gleeful expressions (see fig. 1).[32] Implicit in the cartoon's depiction of widely reported scenes of violence involving black and white men causing angst for Britain's national leadership while providing a source of amusement for ardent segregationists in the Jim Crow South and South Africa was the idea that the violence had placed Britain in a position of ridicule and rebuke before the world—even in the eyes of the some of the most recognizable culprits of racist policy.

Explaining South African coverage of the violence, a British correspondent for *The Times* reporting from Johannesburg noted, "Many South Africans feel that as their own racial troubles develop the British, like the United States, are likely to be more sympathetic to the Union's difficulties, and this gives them a feeling of relief."[33] Although Britain supported South Africa's right to institute a racist domestic policy designed to preserve white minority rule before the United Nations throughout the 1950s, during this same period, left- and right-winged voices in Britain typically stood in united opposition to apartheid and Afrikaner Nationalist

[29] Telegram from Paris, France, to the Foreign Office, 6 September 1958, DO 35/7992, TNA. On the political legacy of British abolitionism, see Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 451–62.

[30] Telegram from Bonn, Germany, to the Foreign Office, 25 September 1958, DO 35/7992, TNA; Telegram from Paris, France, to the Foreign Office, 6 September 1958, DO 35/7992, TNA. Placed in context, the term "anti-racial" is mostly suggestive of antiblack or anti-nonwhite. See also "Law Needed to End Colour War," *Daily Herald*, 2 September 1958.

[31] Dick Hebdige notes that the cultural trope of the "Teddy boy" was prominently featured in popular imagery about the whites involved in the attacks on West Indians during the racial violence of 1958. Hebdige notes that this figure became the focus of a subculture that reflected working-class "anxieties about the effects of black immigration, of employment, housing and the 'quality of life'" in postwar Britain. See Dick Hebdige, *Subcultures: The Meaning of Style* (London, 2002), 50–51, 73, 81.

[32] "Britain's Racial Problems: S. Africans Now Expect Greater Sympathy," *The Times*, 29 August 1958. The cartoon appeared unaccompanied by an article in the *Daily Express* on 27 August 1958. The caption under the article read, "Now, perhaps, the English will stop giving us that 'more anti-colour bar than thou' stuff." Presumably, the figure labeled "South Africa" is a reference to Nationalist Party leader Charles Robberts Swarts, who became active prime minister of the Union of South Africa in 1958 and vehemently worked to suppress antiapartheid activity during the 1950s.

[33] "Britain's Racial Problems: S. Africans Now Expect Greater Sympathy," *The Times*, 29 August 1958.

Figure 1—Michael Cummings, "Now, perhaps, the English will stop giving us that 'more anti-colour bar than thou' stuff . . . ," *Daily Express*, 27 August 1958. Reprinted with permission from Express Newspapers Syndication Department.

rule in South Africa.[34] The insights of *The Times* correspondent suggested that the defenders of apartheid and white supremacy in South Africa hoped that the eruption of racial conflict in Britain—even if only fleetingly—might offer some sort of conciliatory ground of understanding about racial politics between the two Commonwealth nations.

Just as Afrikaner Nationalists seemed to find similarities between British race relations and those in South Africa in the aftermath of the violence, so too did advocates for Jim Crow segregationist policies in the United States. Citing an interview with Arkansas governor Orval Faubus in which he had expressed "sympathy" to a London reporter about what he described as "that shindy in Nottingham," an article appearing in the leftist weekly the *New Statesman* suggested that the violence in Britain had political implications well beyond the shores of the British Isles.[35] Drawing a clear parallel between the international implications of local race politics playing out in places like Little Rock, Arkansas, and London, England, the article explained, "To millions on both sides of the colour line, all over the world, what happens in Nottingham and Notting Hill is just as important as anything that happens in Arkansas or Alabama. For the bigots in the American South or South Africa, or the Rhodesias, an outbreak of racial tension in Britain is a political victory—an opportunity to say 'we told you so' and to dismiss British criticism of racial prejudice as the self-righteousness of those who have never had to live with the colour problem."[36]

According to the *New Statesman*, Faubus's willingness to comment on the affair should allow islanders to see the racial violence in its proper international context.

[34] Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge, 2003), 146–67, 307–20.

[35] The comment was reportedly uttered to Ronald Singleton of the *Daily Express*. "Faubus on Nottingham," *New Statesman*, 30 August 1958.

[36] Ibid.

Faubus's comments were a reminder that news of racial violence in Britain attracted international audiences—some of whom, like Faubus, might view the events with a degree of vindication for their own racist agendas.

Just days after the clashes began in Nottingham, Orval Faubus had secured unanimous support from the Arkansas state legislature to close any school that federal authorities pushed to integrate.[37] In the British press, as the "battle" to desegregate Arkansas's public schools unfolded over the course of 1957 and 1958, the "defiant" and "recalcitrant" Governor Faubus had become the personification of Little Rock's public meaning as "symbol of southern intransigence" and a topography of what was thought of as a particularly American dilemma of race.[38] It was under Faubus's orders that the world witnessed the spectacle of African American teenagers armed with schoolbooks encountering military force to bar them from entering the doors of a public school. Not only did his sardonic comments about reports of racial violence in Britain underscore the international stakes of local race politics, but one might imagine that the very thought of a man described as a "hillbilly match-chewer" from Greasy Creek, Arkansas, showing empathy for race relations in Britain likely unsettled the minds and egos of many Britons.[39] How could Faubus propose to lecture Britons on race?

In response to a report in an Arkansas newspaper indicating that Governor Faubus had warned, "The British had better not point the finger at us anymore," as news of intensifying racial conflict in Notting Hill had surfaced, a reporter for London's *Daily Mail* who had personally witnessed the "cordon of State Militia in full battle-dress" blocking black students from entering Central High School while covering the Little Rock desegregation case challenged comparisons between Little Rock and the racial conflict that had erupted in Britain.[40] While Faubus may have seen parallels between the two, in an article titled "Dear Governor Faubus" presumably addressed to Faubus and any others feeling absolved of British moral indignation about their racist policies and practices, the reporter outlined why the racial realities of Little Rock were not in any way comparable to those in British cities like London. First and foremost, the reporter insisted that there was nothing akin to Jim Crow and its accompanying policies of racial separatism and disfranchisement coupled with the sanctioning of terror and violence against black Britons. The reporter proclaimed, "There is no law for the white and another for the black in this country." While Little Rock's Central High School used armed military personnel to keep its doors closed to black children, as the impending school year began in Britain, the reporter noted, "no troops will bar the entry of coloured boys and girls in North Paddington Central," where children living in Notting Hill attended, "or any other school in Britain." And to be sure, while a "tiny section" of "white hooligans" might have attacked "coloured people," there were

[37] "Faubus Wins His Vote," *Daily Express*, 28 August 1958; Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country*, 126–27.

[38] "Defiance of U.S. Law Renewed," *The Times*, 5 September 1957; "U.S. Racial Tension Grows," *The Times*, 11 September 1957; "President Eisenhower Acts," *The Times*, 26 September 1957; "Federal 'Occupation' of Little Rock," *The Times*, 26 September 1957.

[39] "The Observer Profile: Governor Faubus," *Observer*, 7 September 1958. Similar descriptions of Faubus can also be found in "Guard Withdrawn from Little Rock School," *The Times*, 23 September 1957.

[40] "Dear Governor Faubus . . . ," *Daily Mail*, 6 September 1958.

"no Ku-Klux-Klan or burning crosses" inciting organized terror and violence in the name of white supremacy in Britain.[41]

The article was also careful to distinguish between the culprits of racism in the Little Rock case and those in British cities. While state officials like Orval Faubus stood in stark defiance of federal law in Little Rock, the reporter contended that "none of the local authorities has defied the law of the land" in Britain. Instead, those who had violated law in Britain by committing acts of violence were not those endowed with the responsibilities of enforcing the law, but rather were "a bunch of rowdies and no-goods," whose actions would be punished to the full extent of the law. Whereas law and order had been eroded in Little Rock, equal justice would prevail in London. To underscore this point, the reporter recalled the "Wolf Whistle murder case" that he had covered, where two white men stood "trial" in Mississippi for murdering a "Chicago negro youth" who had allegedly "wolf-whistled at a white woman." Just as Little Rock had stirred the hearts and minds of an international public, so too did the 1955 lynching of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till following the publication of images of his disfigured corpse in *Jet* magazine.[42] After polling some of the jurors following the trial, the reporter noted that jurors disclosed that while they knew that J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant were guilty as charged, they had a duty to send a message that "sassy niggers making passes at white women" in Mississippi would not be tolerated. The reporter concluded that there was not even "the slightest danger of a Wolf Whistle murder case in Britain."[43] Therefore, nothing tantamount to the forms of prejudice, racism, violence, and Jim Crowed ideologies of white supremacy that resulted in the legal sanctioning of Emmett Till's tragic death or the disenfranchisement of black children in Little Rock could occur in a place like London.

Despite the *Daily Mail* reporter's insistence that Little Rock and London had nothing more in common than "humid and oppressive" September weather, conservative politician Cyril Osborne, MP for Louth, envisioned the possibility that the racial troubles that besieged Little Rock could easily become British realities.[44] Speaking as part of a growing public chorus of mostly conservative Parliament members, Osborne drew a direct link between the incidents of racial violence in places like Nottingham and Britain's open-door Commonwealth migration policy, which had, in recent years, facilitated the growth of multiracial enclaves largely composed of Afro-Caribbean migrants in a number of British cities. Advocating for a twelve-month moratorium on all Commonwealth migration except in the case of "bona fide students," Osborne insisted that any other alternative would be devastating to race relations in Britain. The incidents in Nottingham that had preceded the violence in London were "a red light" that the nation should heed. He further opined that without drastic and immediate migration restrictions, "It will be black against white. We are sowing the seeds of another Little Rock and

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid. For more on the Till case, see Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America* (New York, 2003).

[43] "Dear Governor Faubus . . . ," *Daily Mail*, 6 September 1958.

[44] Ibid.

it is tragic."[45] Osborne's appropriation of the perceived dangers of Little Rock blooming in British locales like London dovetailed with a broader postwar anti-imperialist discourse about the British nation marked by a return to the insularities of Englishness and an attendant aversion to the overwhelmingly nonwhite vision of Britain and Britishness forged through a history of imperial encounters. In some ways anticipating Enoch Powell's controversial "Rivers of Blood" scenario, for Osborne, preventing another Little Rock meant securing the borders of the (white) metropole against an encroaching (black) imperial threat through "immigration" control—a political grammar that inherently disavowed the citizenship rights of migrating Afro-Caribbean subjects.[46]

Under the terms of the British Nationality Act of 1948, not only did Caribbean migrants retain a long-held imperial right to migrate to the British Isles, but they also acquired the legal and political status of "citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies." As a category of British citizenship that was shared by both British subjects in the metropole and colonies with no legal distinction, once in Britain, the designation "citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies" granted Caribbean colonials the full privileges, entitlements, and responsibilities of British citizenship enjoyed by their metropolitan counterparts including the right to permanently settle and work in Britain.[47] Therefore, it is important to recognize that by legal definition, as Winston James has succinctly noted, colonial subjects entering Britain during the postwar era "were simply moving from one part of the British empire to another *as British citizens*," so, "unless one is prepared to call Yorkshiremen in London immigrants, then we should not call Barbadians entering London on British passports immigrants."[48] During the 1950s, Afro-Caribbeans, and, more specifically, Jamaicans, accounted for the greatest numbers of a largely nonwhite Commonwealth migration that also included South Asians and Africans. Because Afro-Caribbean migrants constituted the overwhelming majority of Commonwealth migrants, not only did "immigration" restrictions discount the issue of their citizenship rights, but they also reflected racially coded boundaries of Britishness that privileged whiteness.[49]

Cyril Osborne's suggestion that Commonwealth migration restrictions were necessary in preventing another Little Rock in Britain may have reflected a minority opinion in official political circles; however, it is clear that the Commonwealth

[45] "Renewed Call for Changes in Immigration Law," *The Times*, 28 August 1958. Most Caribbean migrants entering Britain during the postwar era were part of a labor migration and came to Britain in search of jobs and economic opportunities rather than to strictly pursue education.

[46] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, NJ, 1999), 3–40; Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, chap. 6; Chris Waters, "Dark Strangers in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947–1963," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2 (April 1997): 207–38; Bill Schwarz "'The Only White Man in There': The Re-Racialisation of England, 1956–1968," *Race and Class* 38, no. 1 (July 1996): 65–78.

[47] Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 10–24; Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain*, 35–49; Ian Spencer, *British Immigration Policy since 1939* (London, 1997), 53–55.

[48] Winston James, "Black Experience in Twentieth Century Britain," in *Black Experience and the Empire*, ed. Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (Oxford, 2006), 349.

[49] Kathleen Paul notes that the violence of 1958 was particularly important in creating a public discourse that conflated "immigrant" and "coloured," reflecting what she describes as the "separate spheres" of a racialized vision Britishness imagined by policy makers throughout the late 1940s and 1950s. See Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 124–25, 158.

Relations Office did anticipate a potential public backlash against what was a de facto migration policy rooted in nationality law.[50] In a series of telegrams dispatched to governments across the Commonwealth and the Western world sent just one day after news reports began to circulate pertaining to racial violence in Nottingham, the Commonwealth Relations Office noted that increasing publicity surrounding the violence was "bound to lead to further pressure for some form of immigration control."[51] Even though changes in the Commonwealth migration policy had been a source of debate among Parliament and cabinet members for some time, the violence gave proponents of restrictions ammunition for reform. "Immigration" policy became a means of explaining why the violence had occurred, and "immigration control" became a shorthand remedy for preventing future conflicts. According to conservative backbencher Norman Panell, an MP for Liverpool who had successfully lobbied nearly thirty conservative MPs along with a few members from the governing Labour Party for a motion to consider restrictions in the previous Parliamentary session, controlling migration was an essential means for addressing race relations. Declaring the "Nottingham fighting" a "manifestation of the evil results of the present [migration] policy," Panell surmised that "unless some restriction is imposed we shall create the colour bar we all want to avoid."[52]

Reacting to factions in Parliament who raised the possibility of revisiting migration controls as a means of addressing racial conflict, the leftist political organ *New Statesman* sharply criticized members for "pandering to popular prejudice rather than challenging it," by suggesting that Britain's race problems could be reduced to the single issue of what was in 1958 a black majority Commonwealth migration.[53] In doing so, the editorial insisted that the type of flawed logic justifying policy meant to infringe upon the rights of British citizens relied upon "the same assumptions as the case put forward by Orval Faubus" in defense of segregation in Arkansas's public schools.[54] Faubus's public defense of his strategy of enlisting armed military personnel to suspend the integration of Little Rock's Central High School was that he wanted to secure the state against the threat of "domestic violence," a looming danger presumably exacerbated by the mere presence of black children learning algebraic formulas and conjugating verbs alongside their white counterparts.[55] The parallels that the *New Statesman* article drew between Orval Faubus and British Parliament members who purported to eliminate racial violence through migration controls underscored the inherent fallacies of any view of racial violence as the inevitable by-product of the mere presence of black people in British society. This incoherent reasoning denied the long history of a black minority

[50] Although conservatives may have been more publicly vocal about the problem of "immigration" in the aftermath of the violence, scholars have documented that successive Labor and Conservative governments throughout the 1950s used racialized logics of citizenship and belonging to craft agendas for curtailing a largely Afro-Caribbean Commonwealth migration. Bob Harris, Clive Harris, and Shirley Joshi, "The 1951–55 Conservative Government and the Racialization of Black Immigration," in James and Harris, *Inside Babylon*, 55–72; Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 131–69.

[51] Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Ghana, and other Commonwealth countries, 26 August 1958, DO 35/7992, TNA.

[52] "Renewed Call for Changes in Immigration Law," *The Times*, 28 August 1958.

[53] "Faubus on Nottingham," *New Statesman*, 30 August 1958.

[54] Ibid.

[55] "Little Rock Negroes Stay Away," *Manchester Guardian*, 6 September 1957.

presence in the everyday life of British society and surreptitiously cast postwar black migration rather than white racism as the primary cause of the eruption of racial violence.

In the days following reports of violence against Caribbean migrants in Britain, Jamaica's chief minister, Norman Manley, traveled to London in an official capacity to assess the nature of the violence and impress upon British officials and the larger public the importance of the long tradition of imperial migration between the Caribbean and the British Isles.[56] Because of widespread unemployment coupled with declining economic growth throughout the 1950s, migration to Britain offered a critical source of relief for the Jamaican economy and provided an outlet for Jamaican migrants to pursue job opportunities and routes of economic mobility in a British labor market that was actively recruiting international workers to facilitate postwar reconstruction efforts.[57] During a press conference held in London in the wake of a growing public debate about Commonwealth "immigration" control, Manley suggested that even though Britain had a right to alter its migration policy, the nation should be mindful that the violence in Nottingham and London was "a big thing, of tremendous world importance."[58] Timing mattered. In his view, the "struggle" for what he termed "racial decency in the West" had been "profoundly affected" by the incidents of racial violence in Nottingham and London. No doubt well aware that changes to Britain's open-door migration policy in the wake of the violence would have significant implications for perceptions of race relations in Britain among Commonwealth communities and around the world, Manley cautioned, "Anything in England that enabled the leaders of Little Rock to boast and smirk is a disaster."[59] Juxtaposed with his more immediate political concern of lobbying against drastic changes in Britain's Commonwealth migration policy, Manley's invocation of Little Rock allowed him to leverage international opinion about British racial politics to safeguard the economic interests of the Jamaican people. By intimating that racial violence and Britain's response to it could potentially provide fodder for the Orval Faubuses of the world, Manley reminded British audiences that a respectable image of the nation on matters pertaining to race was under international scrutiny in the wake of the violence.

Perhaps it was precisely the issue of national respectability that the *Daily Mirror* had in mind when it ran a racially charged cartoon in the days following the height of the London violence depicting a white male seated at a desk positioned under a poster of what appeared to be a figure that could easily represent a cross between

[56] For coverage of Norman Manley's visit, see "West Indian Ministers May Ask to See Mr. McMillan," *The Times*, 5 September 1958; "West Indian Ministers Arrive in London," *The Times*, 6 September 1958; "West Indian Give Mr. Manley Enthusiastic Reception," *The Times*, 8 September 1958; "West Indies Unlikely to Apply Voluntary Limits on Emigrants," *The Times*, 11 September 1958.

[57] G. W. Roberts and D. O. Mills, *Study of External Migration Affecting Jamaica, 1953–55* (Kingston, 1958), 2–4; Ceri Peach, *West Indian Migration to Britain* (London, 1968), 24; Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 64–89. According to one article covering Manley's press conference, unemployment in Jamaica in the previous two decades ranged between 18 and 25 percent. "No Stopping Migrants at the Source," *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1958.

[58] "West Indies Unlikely to Apply Voluntary Limit on Emigrants," *The Times*, 11 September 1958.

[59] "No Stopping Migrants at the Source," *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1958.

Figure 2—Vicky (Victor Weisz), "How d'yer spell civilization Tosh?" ***Daily Mirror*****, 5 September 1958. Reprinted with permission from Mirrorpix.**

Adolf Hitler and British Union of Fascists founder Oswald Mosley drafting a letter addressed to Governor Faubus of Little Rock, U.S.A. The letter began, "We send you fraternal greetings and stand by you in your fight to save white ci." Joined by two other seemingly bewildered white men, the caption under the drawing reads "How d'yer spell civilization, Tosh?" (see fig. 2).[60] Invoking popular stereotypes of the white locals involved in the violence in London, the cartoon literally illustrated a portrait of young, uneducated, disheveled, presumably lower-working-class white men who aspired to the socially deviant ideals of a neo-Nazi fascism. For these individuals, black migration, which was typically represented in popular discourse by unskilled Afro-Caribbean male laborers, could be understood as a cultural, sexual, and economic threat to their own existence and subsequently that of "white civilization."[61] In the rush to explain the sources of the violence, the

[60] This cartoon appeared in the *Daily Mirror*, 5 September 1958, unaccompanied by an article.

[61] Marcus Collins, "Pride and Prejudice: West Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 40, no. 3 (July 2001): 391–418.

"Teddy boy," a cultural trope that emerged in the 1950s associated with delinquent and disreputable youth culture, figured prominently in British press accounts of the violence.[62] The cartoon suggested that only working-class "Teddy boys," who had much to learn about respectable British manhood, would welcome sympathy from a perceived ally like Governor Faubus. It was this small and inconsequential band of pariahs in British society that would elect to stand in arms alongside the defenders of Jim Crow in their battle to protect white supremacy. Blame for the violence against black Britons lay at the feet of these sullied characters, not the respectable masses, and certainly not the nation as a whole.

In a passionate reply to critics in the international community who might have questioned Britain's capacity to remain a legitimate moral arbiter on the global politics of race in light of the violence in Nottingham and London, Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest well known for his antiapartheid activism, aimed to explain why the news of race riots in Britain did not reflect the racial politics of the nation. For Huddleston it was quite simple. In Britain, the "colour question" was "still a local issue."[63] Echoing the sentiments of the *Daily Mirror*'s caricature of those responsible for the violence, Huddleston contended that the conflict was a contained problem of "primitive violence" characteristic of "cities from Chicago to Calcultta" that had reared its ugly head in the urban recesses of Britain in spaces conditioned by what he described as a "background of . . . slum conditions, unemployment, thuggery [and] sexual promiscuity." Making clear distinctions between the type of endemic racial strife that engulfed nations like South Africa, he argued that the "colour question" and, more precisely, the rootedness of structures, systems, languages, policies, and widely accepted practices of racism could not be considered "a *national* problem . . . yet."[64] Rather, he insisted that the violence represented a quarantined, aberrant set of circumstances limited in scope to the deviant activities of oversexed "hooligans" whose behaviors reflected the frustrations of working class urban life run amok.[65]

To accompany Huddleston's editorial, the *Daily Mail* printed a sketch depicting a faceless figure carrying what appeared to be a knifelike instrument in his or her pocket wiping blood-soaked hands on a British flag while standing on a street corner lined with shards of glass, a broken bottle, and an item resembling a brick also spattered with blood (see fig. 3). Directly above the sketch, readers were reminded of Huddleston's appraisal of the importance of news of race riots in Britain: "Notting Hill may be small in itself; so is Little Rock. Both are areas of vital moral significance."[66] For Huddleston, the racial violence that had engulfed the West London neighborhoods of Notting Hill did not necessarily speak for the nation even though, as the blood-stained British flag in the sketch suggested, the

[62] Hebdige, *Subcultures*, 50–51. Alienated from the routines of school, skilled work, and a sense of home life, Hebdige notes that the figure of the Teddy boy was a counterpoint to notions of a respectable working class in 1950s Britain.

[63] "This Puts Us All on Trial," *Daily Mail*, 3 September 1958. For more on Huddleston, see Robin Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston: A Life* (New York, 1999).

[64] "This Puts Us All on Trial," *Daily Mail*, 3 September 1958.

[65] Ibid. "Hooligan" was commonly used to stereotype the white male perpetrators of violence and was oftentimes interchangeable with the term "Teddy boys." See "The Hooligan Age," *The Times*, 3 September 1958.

[66] "This Puts Us All on Trial," *Daily Mail*, 3 September 1958.

Figure 3—Emmwood (John Musgrave-Wood), untitled cartoon, *Daily Mail*, 3 September 1958. Reprinted with permission from Solo Syndication.

violence threatened to soil the very values that the British flag ostensibly epitomized both at home and abroad. Huddleston's invocation of Little Rock suggested that Britain's response to the violence could function as a channel for projecting the nation's moral and political commitments to antiracism and the espoused democratic principles governing the nation. Just as Dwight Eisenhower aimed to restore the "fair name and high honour" of the United States before the world with decisive action against Orval Faubus's plans to maintain segregation in Little Rock, Huddleston saw an opportunity for British policy makers to make a similar statement in the aftermath of the violence in Nottingham and London.[67] Challenging British policy makers to avoid succumbing to undue "panic about West Indian immigration" and "prove to the world that we in this country still do believe in freedom, in justice and in truth," Huddleston used the specter of Little Rock to articulate and appeal to an imagined liberal consciousness among Britons that would not capitulate to the demands of "white supremacy" and instead aim to uphold the liberal and egalitarian ideals embedded in the idea of Commonwealth.[68] Certainly, black Britons would also find this particular deployment of Little Rock valuable as they explained and interpreted what it meant to be the targets of racial violence in postwar Britain.

[67] "Little Rock Dilemma Resolved," *Manchester Guardian*, 26 September 1957.
[68] "This Puts Us All on Trial," *Daily Mail*, 3 September 1958.

THE DIASPORIC POLITICS OF "LITTLE ROCK"

Less than one year after headlines of "race riots" in Nottingham and London, the *Kensington Post* reported on the murder of Antiguan-born Kelso Benjamin Cochrane. According to Joy Okine, one of the few witnesses to the murder, in the early morning hours of 18 May 1959, someone in a group of what appeared to be five or six young white men shouted the words, "Hey Jim Crow" before attacking Cochrane from behind in a brief scuffle that left him dying on the pavement with a single stab wound to the chest.[69] Alluding to the potential racial politics surrounding the murder, the *Post* observed that "Once again the North Kensington district is headline news in the world's newspapers, with inevitable comparisons with Little Rock and all points South."[70]

On the day following Cochrane's murder, representatives of various African and Caribbean organizations in London met and drafted an open letter to the British prime minister, addressing the racial undertones of the murder. Even though African and Caribbean communities represented a diverse range of nationalities and ethnicities with varying affinities toward Britain and Britishness, racial violence against people of African descent, including Cochrane, engendered political collaborations that fostered the articulation of a black British identity that was by necessity diasporic in orientation. In the letter addressed to the prime minister, the organizations collectively stated, "There is evidence to show that Kelso Cochrane was murdered because he was colored." Recalling the ways in which the murder conjured images of "the racist disgrace of Nottingham and Notting Hill Gate" during the summer of 1958, the organizations urged that government officials publicly "condemn" the murder as "a sign that at topmost levels, the rights of Commonwealth citizens, irrespective of colour are held sacred." In an adjunct statement circulated in the national press, the organizations declared that the Cochrane murder "rivals what we have seen or heard in Little Rock or the recent lynching of Mr. M.C. Parker of Poplarville Mississippi" leaving many black Britons raising the profound question, "Are we to be mauled down just because we are black?"[71]

In the weeks that followed, activists and intellectuals in Britain including Claudia Jones, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Eslanda Robeson along with members of London's Committee of African Organisations mounted an antiracist grassroots campaign that involved lobbying government officials, holding public protest meetings, and transforming mourning into a cause for mobilization on behalf of the rights

[69] "Jamaican Is Stabbed to Death in Fight at Notting Hill," *News Chronicle and Daily Dispatch*, 18 May 1959; "Coloured Man Stabbed to Death," *The Times*, 18 May 1959; "WI Groom-to-Be Dies after Attack," *Trinidad Guardian*, 18 May 1959.

[70] "'The South' in North Kensington," *Kensington Post*, 22 May 1959.

[71] Letter from Alao Bashorn to Harold MacMillan, 18 May 1959, CO 1028/50, TNA; "Coloured People 'Have Lost Confidence' in Police: Open Letter to the Prime Minister," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 May 1959; "Coloured Folk Have Lost Confidence," *Kensington Post*, 22 May 1959; "Race Tensions Increased By Murder," *The Times*, 19 May 1959; "2 Detained in Notting Hill Murder Probe," *Trinidad Guardian*, 20 May 1959. While being held in a Poplarville, Mississippi, jail, Mack Parker was abducted by a lynch mob, beaten, shot, and eventually carried across state lines. His body was later found in the Pearl River, and his murder refueled campaigns for federal antilynching legislation in the United States. See "Anti-Lynching Law," *The Times*, 28 May 1959; and Howard Smead, *Blood Justice: The Lynching of Mack Charles Parker* (New York, 1986).

of black British citizens. While Cochrane's murderers went unpunished, his death ultimately became a touchstone for articulating the effects of racism and street violence on the lives of black Britons in the early postwar decades and beyond.[72] When black British activists likened the circumstances surrounding Kelso Cochrane's murder to tales of Little Rock, they effectively dismantled the imagined boundaries sequestering British cities from the racial geographies of Jim Crow—locales inhabited by racists and bigots. By appropriating Little Rock, the discourse of lynching and subsequently the iconography of Jim Crow America in the wake of Cochrane's death, black Britons engendered a diasporic relationship that articulated perceived affinities between their own local struggles for citizenship, belonging, and personhood and those of African Americans. For black Britons, Little Rock provided a type of what Jacqueline Nassy Brown has referred to as a "diasporic resource." According to Brown, diasporic resources may include "cultural productions such as music, but also people and places, as well as iconography, ideas and ideologies associated with them." Most important, Brown notes that these resources travel and are shared, translated, reconstituted, and reappropriated "for particular reasons, to meet particular needs . . . within limits, within and against power asymmetries and with political consequences."[73]

In charting the terrain of Little Rock in Britain one notices that its narrative power as a diasporic resource, or medium of constituting the relations of diaspora, did not solely rest in the hands of black Britons. Rather, Little Rock functioned as a type of contested discursive capital whose diasporic character was routed through the vectors of the Atlantic World but also was mediated within and against narratives of race, nation, citizenship, and Britishness being articulated within a larger constituency of Britons. By invoking Little Rock in the wake of Kelso Cochrane's death, black Britons drew parallels between American racial geographies that maligned the possibilities of black citizenship in ways that would have been familiar to African Americans. To do so, they mobilized and actively fashioned the cultural capital of a mythical Jim Crow South, a global brand that had its own locally grown political valence, to produce a powerful critique of the racialized boundaries of citizenship and belonging in postwar Britain.[74] For many Britons, the racism associated with Little Rock and ultimately, Jim Crow America, functioned as a counterpoint to define what a tolerant, liberal, and inclusive Britain did not embody. However, in deploying the trope of Little Rock, black Britons questioned the legitimacy of the espoused values of the British nation even as they reproduced these ideals of Britishness to make claims upon their rights of citizenship and belonging in British society. Thus for black Britons, Little Rock's meaning was twofold. Not only did it provide a means of marking the existence of racism using an internationally salient American trope about race, white su-

[72] Trevor Phillips and Mike Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London, 1998), 187.

[73] Brown, "Black Liverpool, Black America and the Gendering of Diasporic Space," 298.

[74] Matthew Lassiter and Joseph Crespino have persuasively argued that popular narratives about American racial politics during the twentieth century reflect a "selective historical consciousness" that manufactures a "retrograde," mythical South to shore up the image of an otherwise progressive, liberal nation. While Lassiter and Crespino's work tends to focus on this portrayal of the South in an American context, this work demonstrates the salience of this vision of the American South internationally. See Matthew Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism* (Oxford, 2010), 3–24.

premacy, and black disenfranchisement, but it also allowed black Britons to appeal to the sensibilities of an imagined British antiracism that would secure their rights as British citizens.[75]

What is clear from the various apparitions of Little Rock appearing in Britain is that despite its context of appropriation, this racial discourse manufactured a dialogue about racial politics in Britain marked by what Brent Hayes Edwards has described as "décalage." Edwards notes that "décalage" encapsulates "that which cannot be transferred or exchanged, the received biases that refuse to pass over when one crosses the water," as well as all that "escapes or resists translation" as diasporic resources are cultivated and appropriated across and between different spaces.[76] While Little Rock mediated a public conversation about the stakes of racism and the dilemmas of blackness in postwar Britain, it proved limiting and to some degree even debilitating in its inability to translate how familiar, yet wholly different legacies of slavery, colonialism, migration, and untendered freedom emerging on opposite sides of an interconnected Atlantic World produced different paths to citizenship and belonging for African Americans and black Britons.

For African Americans it took Civil War to end their status as enslaved property and create possibilities for full citizenship and equality in American society. Even though Reconstruction issued the promise of a freedom unencumbered by the strictures of race, the reconstitution of ideologies of white supremacy in the late nineteenth century sanctioned violence, economic exploitation, and the erection of Jim Crow boundaries that stripped African Americans of their civil, social, and human rights. During the 1950s, places like Little Rock, faces like Emmett Till's, and transformative legal battles including the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision became iconic flash points in a broader movement waged by African Americans both to dismantle racialized barriers of access and opportunity and to articulate their rightful claims to the liberties and privileges of citizenship.

Alternatively, for the majority of black Britons resident in the British Isles during the 1950s, their ability to lay claim to British citizenship was shaped in the crucible of imperial relations fraught with shifting and competing logics of belonging.[77] Even though the empire acknowledged Afro-Caribbeans as British subjects after the abolition of slavery, as Christopher Brown notes, "winning the rights of the subject . . . did not free the liberated from the constraints of race or the taint of their former [enslaved] status."[78] Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Afro-Caribbeans would confront the inherent tensions between the universal language of imperial belonging represented in the idea of British subjecthood and the persistent realities of living under a racialized colonial structure that concentrated economic and political power in the hands of a white male

[75] "Coloured People 'Have Lost Confidence' in Police: Open Letter to the Prime Minister," *Manchester Guardian*, 19 May 1959.

[76] Brent Hayes Edwards, "Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 64–66.

[77] Winston James makes critical distinctions between a more inclusive "logic of Empire" and an exclusive "logic of the metropole," which collided as black migrants entered Britain. See James, "Black Experience in Twentieth-Century Britain," 378–79. However, this point has been made in a number of different articulations. See also Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness* (New York, 1996), 50–52; and Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire* (Berkeley, CA, 1997), 3.

[78] Christopher Leslie Brown, "From Slaves to Subjects: Envisioning an Empire without Slavery, 1772–1834," in Morgan and Hawkins, *Black Experience and the Empire*, 139.

governing elite.[79] It was, however, the idea of an inclusive British subjecthood that persuaded black British subjects to fight in wars in defense of Empire and actively cultivate their own iterations of what it meant to be both black and British well before they ever stepped on British soil.[80] Yet when they attempted to exercise the rights of imperial belonging and disrupt the partitions between the worlds of the colony and those of the metropole by settling in the "mother country" and claiming the rights of citizenship on the same basis as their white metropolitan counterparts, they encountered violence, racism, exclusion, and an evolving "Keep Britain White" mentality that attempted to bar them from full inclusion in British society. Although the official institutions of Jim Crow did not reside in plain view through laws that erected social, political, and economic boundaries of rights, space, and opportunities in shades of black and white, during the 1950s black Britons would encounter some of the accoutrements characteristic of Jim Crow as they read advertisements for housing boldly stating "No Coloured Applicants" or "White Tenants Only" and navigated a labor market that linked skill and skin color.[81] And no doubt as they met violence in the streets of Nottingham and London during the summer of 1958 reminiscent of that which had occurred in places like Cardiff, Glasgow, and Liverpool during the first half of the twentieth century, they knew, as did African Americans, that their sense of belonging as citizens was contested.[82]

Even though Little Rock conjured powerful narratives about the politics of race and the conditions of blackness in postwar Britain, it could not fully speak to the historic tensions and contradictions of imperial belonging that produced the racialized experiences shaping the lives of black Britons. In large measure, Little Rock's deficiencies as a vernacular of race in postwar Britain can be attributed to the ways in which the chimera of the Jim Crow South provided a globally dominant and internationally portable schema for reading race and the operation of racism—but through the particulars of American racial categories and historical scripts. Therefore, from the mouths of white and black Britons alike, renditions of Little Rock perpetuated a widely accepted myth that Jim Crow America was a transhistorical archetype for articulating the problem of race outside of the specificities of location. In doing so, a particularly British story about race, racism, and

[79] For a comprehensive discussion of the racial politics in the Caribbean during the postemancipation era with particular attention to Jamaica, see Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832–1938* (Baltimore, 1992).

[80] For a discussion of the ways in which Afro-Caribbean communities cultivated and adapted British identities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Brian L. Moore and Michele Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865–1920* (Kingston, 2004), chaps. 7, 9, 10.

[81] Ruth Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indians in London* (London, 1960), 58–59. Glass found that between November 1958 and January 1959 the *Kensington Post* contained over three hundred housing ads barring person from tenancy on the basis of race or national origin. Clive Harris, "Post-war Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army," in James and Harris, *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain*, 9–54; Lydia Lindsey, "The Split-Labor Phenomenon: Its Impact on West Indian Workers as a Marginal Working Class in Birmingham England, 1948–1962," *Journal of African American History* 87 (Winter 2002): 119–45.

[82] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984), 298–315, 367–80.

the history of empire was distorted by a more politically expedient and internationally legible narrative of American racial exceptionalism.

MAPPING JIM CROW'S TRANSATLANTIC TOPOGRAPHIES

In an investigative report on incidents of racial discrimination in Mainz, West Germany, appearing in the November 1961 edition of *Flamingo* magazine, a newly created publication that vowed to become a "voice" for "Negro citizens of Britain" and a "gulf between Negroes everywhere," Teddy Schwarz described a violent encounter between African students and white American servicemen.[83] According to Schwarz's report, before they could even be seated at the Copacabana Bar in Mainz, several African students were "showered with a hail of empty bottles," hurled by white American GIs. This incited a brawl that ended leaving two of the students unconscious and one severely injured. Concluding that the incident was symptomatic of a broader problem of antiblack racial discrimination in West Germany, Schwarz posited that the episode showcased "the complexities underlying the present uneasy situation in 'Germany's Little Rock.'"[84]

One might easily imagine that segments of Schwarz's black British audience read his reference to "Germany's Little Rock" as a double entendre. Not only did it convey perceived diasporic affinities structured by the particular historical conditions of racism and black identity experienced by African Americans in the United States, black Britons in England, and African students in West Germany, but it also engendered a narrative about Little Rock as an idiom denoting intersecting topographies of race composed of altogether different and divergent national histories. In doing so, Schwartz charted a transnational geography of Little Rock that extended to Mainz by recalling the specificities of racial politics in the Jim Crow South and resurrecting memories of violence and the realities of discrimination and disenfranchisement witnessed by black Britons during the late 1950s. In doing so, for black British audiences, "Germany's Little Rock" held possibilities for simultaneously registering the transatlantic circulation of local knowledge about the contentious plight of nine black teenagers seeking to integrate the classrooms of Central High School, Kelso Cochrane's fatal encounter with "a gang of white boys" in the streets of West London, and a violent encounter between white American GIs and African students in the Copacabana Bar in Mainz, West Germany.

The echoes of "Little Rock" heard in London urge historians of Britain to reconsider what is often narrated as an insular history of race, migration, citizenship, and national identity in the postwar era in a context that simultaneously recognizes its international, imperial, and diasporic dimensions. Likewise, it reminds U.S. historians that Jim Crow was never simply an American story confined to the borders of a mythical South. The "strange career of Jim Crow" and its impact on the formation of black freedom struggles and the politics of racism were

[83] Editorial Commentary, *Flamingo*, September 1961, Black History Collection, 01/04/03/02/081, Box 1, Institute of Race Relations Archives, London.

[84] Teddy Schwarz, "Little Rock, Germany . . ." *Flamingo*, November, 1961, 9–10, Black History Collection, 01/04/03/02/081, Box 1, Institute of Race Relations Archives, London.

indeed long, transient, and penetrating.[85] Jim Crow was not and is not just an American story. Rather, it encapsulates a dynamic transnational history with multiple geographies from Little Rock, Arkansas, to London, England, to Mainz, West Germany.

[85] C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford, 2002); Jacqueline Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–63. While Hall focuses on extending the temporal boundaries of U.S. civil rights histories, Angelo urges historians to think about a wider, transnational geography of the civil rights movement. Angelo, "The Black Panthers in London, 1967–1972," 30.