

Conclusion

No nation, no race, no individual in an[y] clime or at any time, can lay claim to civilization as its own creation or invention or exclusive personal possession. The impulse of humanity toward social progress is like the movement in the currents of a great water system, beating ever onward toward its eternity — the ocean.¹

Anna Julia Cooper

The project of modernity, how, when, and where it began and who produced it, continues to plague historians and sociologists alike. Writing in 1925 as she accepted her diploma for completion of the doctoral dissertation *L'Attitude de la France à l'égard de l'esclavage pendant la révolution* [*Slavery and the French Revolutionists, 1788–1805*], Anna Julia Cooper's remarks instruct us to be constantly in search of self-defined expressions of humanity and development beyond the scope of the Western world. Cooper's dissertation did just that in expanding study of the French Revolution to its imperial territories in the Caribbean – Saint-Domingue specifically – to make the case that without consideration of racial slavery in the colonies, the political and philosophical ideals propagated by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen were woefully incomplete. That Cooper used water, currents, and the ocean to symbolize human movement toward new, liberated, modes of being is perhaps an irony, given that movement across the Atlantic Ocean was largely a voyage toward unfreedom for captive Africans. Still, even the lives of those who survived oceanic journeys and were enslaved in the Americas were not without alternate flows, bends,

and radical turns that would alter the course of human history; the “currents” of which Cooper spoke were and are not linear.

For Anna Julia Cooper, and later C. L. R. James, slavery and colonialism were central questions in the French Revolution, highlighting the transnational nature of revolutionary processes. Indeed, just as maroons and the formerly enslaved rebels of Saint-Domingue embodied and put forward ideals of freedom and liberty that were much broader than those espoused in France, the island’s centuries-long legacy of resistance that informed the Haitian Revolution stemmed from West and West Central African social, economic, cultural, religious, and militaristic sensibilities and contributions. These insights may now be considered as accepted interventions in the fields of African Diaspora Studies and Atlantic World History; yet the discipline of sociology, the field of revolutions in particular, has only recently moved toward destabilizing the limitations of Eurocentrism, methodological nationalism, and presentism (Go and Lawson 2017). Nearly 50 years after Joyce Ladner (1973) foresaw *The Death of White Sociology*, the discipline has not only recovered W. E. B. Du Bois and the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory as the true pioneers of scientific American sociology (Morris 2007, 2015), it has begun to challenge the racialized and imperial gazes that imbued the discipline and its methodologies, instead centering perspectives on humanity and modernity that emerge from the global African Diaspora and other parts of the postcolonial world (Magubane 2005; Bhambra 2011, 2014; Go 2016; Itzigsohn and Brown 2020).

The social, religious, political, and economic maroon formations explicated in this book only mark the beginning of Haiti’s history as the first free and independent Black nation in the Americas. Nineteenth-century Haitians identified lifeways and freedoms that were grounded in the counter-plantation logics of marronnage: subsistence farming, land-owning kin networks, the religious consolidation of Vodou, and absconding as a form of protesting unfair labor codes (Casimir 2001, 2015, 2020; Gonzalez 2019). Marronnage remains a significant orientation and mode of political action in Haiti: the Marron Inconnu statue in Port-au-Prince symbolizes this history. Similarly, the walls of the Musée du Panthéon de National Haïtien recognize the contributions of maroon leaders like François Mackandal, Polydor, Louis Gillot *dit* Yaya, Thélémaque Canga, Noël Barochin, and Colas Jambes Coupée and many others in the struggle against slavery and colonialism. Haiti’s influence throughout the Black world as symbol of hope and inspiration, a locale of liberation, and, perhaps more importantly, as a wellspring of black political thought and action that represented the deepest truths of modern ideals can

hopefully also be instructive to those concerned with the ideas and realities of modernity. On the other hand, the ongoing economic and militaristic aggression that Haiti has experienced in the form of the French indemnity leveled in 1825, American imperialism from 1915 to 1934, and government corruption also reveals the persistent underbelly of the ways racial capitalism and colonial legacies continue to inform our modern world. The world now awaits answers in the troubling assassination of Haitian president Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 – with many fearing that it might be a precursor to American intervention, possibly striking parallels to events that preceded the 1915 occupation.

Insights from Haiti, and African Diaspora Studies and postcolonial sociological thought more broadly, can help inform the study of social movements and revolution, especially with regard to (1) employing approaches that prioritize insurgents' long-term, emic resistance strategies (2) contextualizing Black resistance within macro-level analyses of racial capitalism, colonialism, and empire, and (3) exploring the global interconnectedness – and at times divergences – of the Black diaspora and its long legacy of international politics and transnational solidarity networks (Patterson and Kelley 2000; Martin 2005; West and Martin 2009). Analyses of the ways systems of oppression transform over time, migrate within and across empires, and re-inscribe subjugation can help illuminate connections between past and recent moments of insurrection and revolution. Both Haiti and the United States have faced economic, social, environmental, and political crises that have had disproportionately negative effects on the lives of poor and working-class people of African descent. In both countries, Black people have responded with large-scale social movements in the form of #PetroCaribeCorruption and Black Lives Matter. These events not only require analysis of Black people's micro-level mobilizing patterns, but must engage historical consideration of issues of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism to fully comprehend the ways Black struggles continue to push for democracy and political representation, economic fairness, and social justice.

