

Dalea Bean, *Jamaican Women and the World Wars: On the Front Lines of Change*.

Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 245 + xxi pp. (Cloth US\$119.99)

Jamaica has a proud female military tradition, including Nanny of the Maroons and Mary Seacole, who took a nursing expedition to the Crimea, but aside from Ben Bousquet and Colin Douglas, *West Indian Women at War* (1991), little has been written about Caribbean women's experiences of war. Published on the centenary of the Armistice, Dalea Bean's study is therefore a significant contribution which raises our understanding of gender, race, and class during wartime and which fully draws the colonial Caribbean into the frame of total war.

Recognizing the positive transformation that global conflict could bring to Jamaican women's lives, the study also unpicks continuity and change in the plantation economy between 1914 and 1945 which, alongside wartime retrenchment, inflation, and shortages, adversely affected women. Bean skillfully illustrates how the stratification of Jamaican society by class and skin-shade combined with colonial education to produce strong pro-British feeling in 1914. As elsewhere, women recognized that public campaigns were an opportunity for advancement. Charitable war initiatives, such as flag days, were led by well-connected, white middle- and upper-class women from whose ranks were drawn the 24 volunteer nurses representing Jamaica overseas. In World War I domestic thrift received much media attention, and during World War II it was fully incorporated into the Jamaican government's War Food Program. This gendered enterprise also produced comforts for troops serving overseas and included consignments of preserves and knitted garments. Working-class and peasant women were pivotal in sustaining wartime production of supplies and raw materials, contending with drought and hurricane but receiving little attention for their efforts. Bean is careful to point out that the relative power of upper-class Jamaican women fell well short of affording them full civic equality. In the volume itself, however, the deeds of privileged white women sometimes overshadow those of other women. Alternative readings of the rich archival sources could have produced a less tentative picture of black and brown women's contributions between 1914 and 1945, as shown in the studies of nineteenth-century Jamaican cultural resistance by Brian Moore and Michele Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven* (2004) and *They Do as They Please* (2011).

Around 15,000 Jamaican men left for service overseas in the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) during World War I, and several thousand in the Second to serve in the Caribbean Regiment, Royal Air Force, or as war workers in the United Kingdom and United States. Again, Bean focuses on the

lighter-skinned Jamaican middle- and upper-class women who urged men to enlist with patriotic poems and recruitment speeches that underlined protective masculine expectations. She discerns less enthusiasm among peasant and working-class Jamaican women, who were reluctant to see male providers depart for service overseas. Allowances paid for dependents were inferior to those in the metropole and informal familial arrangements meant that volunteers with genuine responsibilities were often denied support. Jamaican folk culture tends to be wary of the military, linked to its oppressive role in events like the Morant Bay Rebellion and religious nonconformity; antiwar feeling among women could have been developed further by Bean.

Bean connects greater visibility in wartime to the limited female franchise granted in 1919. However, although campaigners claimed that 3,000 women would be added to a male electorate of around 40,000 (from a total population of 853,000), uptake was initially far lower. She depicts the women's franchise as a double-edged sword—the property and tax qualifications for women were significantly higher than for men, proving a further obstacle for black women and consolidating white minority rule rather than a feminist agenda. The interwar period witnessed rising Jamaican nationalist sentiment, fueled by the Great Depression and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1935–36) and culminating in the Labor Rebellion of 1938. Bean notes that welfarism accompanied growing radicalization, providing opportunities for a cadre of professional black women keen to improve the educational and domestic conditions of working-class Jamaicans.

During World War II, the Colonial Office pragmatically accepted the support of Jamaica's nationalist leaders. White women continued to dominate gender-based war effort campaigns, but some leading black women consolidated their positions. Bean highlights Amy Bailey's emphasis on Jamaican self-sufficiency, Una Marson's black internationalism, and Amy Jacques Garvey's critique of female domestic labor exploitation. She shows that Jamaican women's military involvement was determined by both political campaigning and military expediency, as it was in the wider British Empire. The recruitment of 600 Caribbean women into the Auxiliary Territorial Service was perhaps numerically insignificant but, like the contribution of the BWIR in World War I, it provided symbolic proof of competency for national independence. Perhaps equally important, many of the women volunteers were also able to prepare for the tribulations they would face as migrants to postwar Britain.

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