

1970 to Today

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PEOPLE'S POWER

Bro. EMBAU MOHENI
CHAIRMAN - TOBAGO CULTURAL COMMITTEE

The Movement of 1970, led by NJAC, infused the population with a determination to create a better life. Very much at the forefront of this movement for change were the youth of our nation. Fired by the ideals of a new and just society, the youth flocked to the movement in their thousands.

The leadership of the National Joint Action Committee was advocating a New and Just Society built around the creation of a new man and a new woman, with new roles and responsibilities. The new man and woman had to grow out of the eradication of the sense of inferiority which shackled our people and which had to be replaced by a new pride in ourselves. These ideals had a tremendous impact on the youth of our nation. Young people were discussing the ideas of the movement all over the country. There were discussions and debates in schools, on the blocks, at work sites and in the homes, and the youth were very much a part of all this and very much in the forefront. Our youth were striving to develop and portray this "new man" and "new woman". The new pride was reflected in the wearing of the 'afros' and the new pride in the natural look

of our young sisters. Hand in hand with this was the new respect for each other, which developed as our youth sought to internalise and live the ideals of the new society.

Education, enlightenment and a new consciousness were key elements of the movement and this captivated the imagination of the youth. Our young people were reading more books, magazines and articles than was ever done before or since. There was a particularly great interest in writers who were advocating fundamental change or a new way of life or who like Franz Fanon studied and sought to explain the colonial psyche. Young people were reading books by Kwame Nkrumah, Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), Malcolm X, Che Guevara, Walter Rodney, Jomo Kenyatta, Eldridge Cleaver and Angela Davis to name a few. There was a thirst for knowledge and understanding, not only about our lives, but also about our brothers and sisters with similar experiences around the world.

The principles of the movement were becoming very much a part of our society at this time. The mandate of the movement, to "be a brother" and "be a sister" redefined relationships and

gave rise to new bonds of love and responsibility for each other's welfare. The youths were grasping and practising these new principles as they greeted each other with salutations of "brother" and "sister", regardless of whether one was from Charlotteville and the other from Toco, or whether they knew each other at all.

In the 1970s, the movement was creating a 'new youth'. Many young people who were previously involved in gangs or anti-social behaviour, now channelled their energies into uplifting their society. With their eyes opened through the new consciousness, rival gangs and adversaries began to put aside their differences for the bigger cause and to unite under the banner of NJAC in the quest for a New and Just Society. This "new youth" was exhibiting a new interest in community, national, regional and international affairs. Young people were no longer prepared to wait passively on some act of Parliament, Prime Minister or some other institution or individual to determine their lives for them.



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