

RECOVERING THE RADICAL BLACK FEMALE SUBJECT

Anti-Imperialism, Feminism, and Activism

Your Honor, there are a few things I wish to say! . . .

I say these things not with any idea that what I say will influence your sentence of me. For even with all the power your Honor holds, how can you decide to mete out justice for the only act [to] which I proudly plead guilty, and one, moreover, which by your own rulings constitutes no crime—that of holding Communist ideas; of being a member and officer of the Communist Party of the United States?

—CLAUDIA JONES, FROM “SPEECH TO THE COURT, FEBRUARY 2, 1953”

The only black woman among communists tried in the United States, sentenced for crimes against the state, incarcerated, and then deported, Claudia Jones seems to have simply disappeared from major consideration in a range of histories. The motivating questions for my study have arisen principally from this situation. How could someone who had lived in the United States from the age of eight, who had been so central to black and communist political organizing throughout the 1930s and 1940s, up to the mid-1950s, simply disappear? How could such a popular public figure, an active journalist and public speaker, a close friend of Paul and Eslanda Goode Robeson, a housemate of Lorraine Hansberry, mentored by W. E. B. Du Bois, remain outside of major consideration? How could someone who was so central to Caribbean diaspora community organizing abroad, the

founder of the London Carnival and of one of the first black newspapers in London, the *West Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian-Caribbean News*, a close friend of Amy Ashwood Garvey, a female political and intellectual equivalent of C. L. R. James, remain outside the pool of knowledge of Caribbean intellectual history? The need to find answers to these questions, and thereby correct these omissions, provides the impetus for this book.

Tall, elegant, brilliant, and Trinidadian, Claudia Jones was deported from the United States in December 1955 after serving over nine months of a one-year-and-one-day sentence in the Federal Prison for Women in Alderson, West Virginia.¹ In my view, the deportation of Claudia Jones in a sense effected the deporting of the radical black female subject from U.S. political consciousness. By “radical black female subject,” I mean both this black radical individual herself and the basic subject or topic of black female radicalism within a range of political positions and academic histories. Claudia Jones’s politics were radical because she was seemingly fearless in her ability to link decolonization struggles internally and externally, and to challenge U.S. racism, gender subordination, class exploitation, and imperialist aggression simultaneously.

The fact that Claudia Jones is *buried* to the left of Marx in Highgate Cemetery, London, provides an apt metaphor for my assertions in this study. Her location in death continues to represent her ideological position while living: this black woman, articulating political positions that combine the theoretics of Marxism-Leninism and decolonization with a critique of class oppression, imperialist aggression, and gender subordination, is thus “left” of Karl Marx.²

Claudia Jones’s position on the “superexploitation of the black woman,” Marxist-Leninist in its formation, offered, for its time, the clearest analysis of the location of black women — not in essentialized, romantic, or homogenizing terms but practically, as located in U.S. and world economic hierarchies. It thereby advanced Marxist-Leninist positions beyond their apparent limitations. To develop her argument, Jones contended that if all workers are exploited because of the usurping of the surplus value of their labor, then black women — bereft of any kind of institutional mechanism to conquer this exploitation, and often assumed to have to work uncountable hours without recompense — live a life of superexploitation beyond what Marx had identified as the workers’ lot.



1. Claudia Jones, on left on second row, with other defendants in front of Court House, Foley Square, New York. Pettis Perry is on the far right in the second row. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn is to Claudia Jones's left. From the *West-Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian-Caribbean News*, 1965.

Jones's argument regarding the superexploitation of the black woman is clearly a position left of Karl Marx, since Marx himself did not account for race and gender and/or the position of the black woman. Though her position may be identified as a logical extension of Marx's theory of surplus value, Marx had not, in his time, either the imagination or the historical context to argue for the gendered black subject. Lenin had taken a position on what was then called "the woman question," asserting from the outset that "we must create a powerful international women's movement, on a clear theoretical basis."³ But Lenin spoke only of the enslavement of women within the social and economic structures that restrict them to domestic labor. Clearly this general position did not account for the specificities of any group of women, as it spoke of women generally and did not figure in the fact that black women at that time were already located in a superexploitative condition within the given productive labor sectors. This is the analytical space in which Claudia Jones began to provide intellectual leadership and to which subsequent scholars of black women's social and political history and condition in various societies would contribute.

This line of argument on the economics of black women's experience was to be made subsequently by Francis Beale in a 1970s black feminist articulation, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," but it somehow disappeared from Beale's larger conceptual framework, which in the end she reduced to the "double jeopardy" of race and gender. Angela Davis took the formulation further than double jeopardy, as she identified instead, in *Women, Race and Class*, a "triple jeopardy" that was consistent with Marxist/feminist politics. Davis obviously had been aware of Claudia Jones's existence and ideas (167–171). But in my view, largely because her information was sketchy at best, Davis was not able to give Claudia Jones the full conceptual emplacement in an international "women, race, and class" formulation that she deserved.⁴ It is important to recognize nevertheless that Angela Davis herself, having been imprisoned, like Jones, for her communist political views and activism, also occupied—and continues to occupy—the pole of the radical black female subject in black feminist conceptualizing. Claudia Jones thus functioned for Davis as an earlier example of a communist woman's struggle against state repression, as well as an earlier recipient of the state's reprisals.

It remained standard practice, during the 1980s and 1990s, for U.S. African American feminist scholars to deliberately reduce much of their analysis to either a race and gender approach (later including sexuality) or a straight U.S. linear narrative.⁵ While a domestic U.S. approach is appropriate for fleshing out the specifics of African American feminist political history in the United States, such a position remains bordered within the U.S. narrative of conquest and domination and thus accompanies the "deportation of the radical black female subject" to an elsewhere, outside the terms of the given U.S. discourse. For this reason as well, there tended to be a consistent deportation of class analysis also to this elsewhere, though there would be fairly frequent mention of class in a variety of formulations.

For Claudia Jones, deportation was not the end of her life. Instead, "elsewhere" became creative space and another geographical location for activism. As will be explored in subsequent chapters, after deportation, Claudia Jones's life was full of political organizing in London: the founding, writing for, and editing of a newspaper; the organizing of cultural activities such as the first Caribbean carnivals in London; and travel to China, Russia, and Japan. Her untimely death in December 1964, nine years after she had left the United States, brought an abrupt halt to a vibrant life, full of activity and energy.

Some writers, such as Buzz Johnson,⁶ have argued that her incarceration and the harsh treatment she experienced in prison in the United States—the denial at times of appropriate medical care and diet—weakened her to the point that it is possible to contend that the U.S. government technically killed her. While this is an important and credible assertion, others who knew her well⁷ say that Jones never rested, even with a heart condition, and constantly minimized how serious her health issues were, so much so that many of her London colleagues never knew that she was as close to death as she was.

An African diaspora framework, internationalist in orientation, embraces this radical black female subject and begins a process of relational work, combating the imposed erasure and silencing of Claudia Jones that was the final goal U.S. officials intended by her deportation. *Left of Karl Marx* has the explicit aim, then, of recovering the radical black subject that was Claudia Jones for a variety of relevant discourses; this recovery of Claudia Jones, the individual subject, reinstates a radical black female intellectual-activist position into a range of African diaspora, left history, and black feminist debates.

Combating the Erasure and Silencing of Claudia Jones

The life of Claude Vera Cumberbatch (as she is identified in her birth certificate) was one that consistently resisted containment within the limitations of space, of time, and place.⁸ Her declared political identification as a communist of Marxist-Leninist orientation functioned for her as a large enough ideological positioning within which to address the many other subject locations she carried: black, woman, Caribbean-born, pan-Africanist, antiracist, anti-imperialist, feminist. However, it also simultaneously marked her—if we are to use Joy James’s distinctions—as minimally a black radical subject and maximally as revolutionary.⁹ In my view, a “radical black subject” is one that constitutes itself as resisting the particular dominating disciplines, systems, and logics of a given context. The radical black subject, male or female, challenges the normalizing of state oppression, constructs an alternative discourse, and articulates these both theoretically and in practice. This is a resisting black subject . . . resisting dominating systems organized and enforced by states, organizations, and institutions in order to produce a complicit passive people and to maintain exploitative systems. The revolutionary subject works in a movement geared toward dismantling that oppressive status.

In the end, these distinctions, while useful, may still not mark a person for

the entire trajectory of her life, particularly since, for the revolutionary position to be effective, the individual act must be operational within some sort of revolutionary movement for social change. James herself concludes that “no metanarrative can map radical or ‘revolutionary’ black feminism, although the analyses of activist-intellectuals such as Ella Baker serve as outlines” (*Shadowboxing*, 79).

Another such outline would be the activist-intellectual work of Claudia Jones herself. Along with her organizing and intellectual work, her own resistance to the variety of organized attempts to silence her are worth recognizing. Her speech to the court, excerpted in the epigraph to this chapter, which begins “Your Honor, there are a few things that I wish to say,” challenges linguistically, politically, and legally the state’s illegal attempts to silence her. Indeed, she has her say, and this itself becomes a tangible document within the corpus of material on state censorship and the creation of political prisoners in the United States. Within the speech, she makes it clear that even the judge was hamstrung by the legal prescriptions against communism and confined by U.S. capitalist prescriptions about ideas. Jones became a political prisoner, imprisoned—as she herself says explicitly—for her independent ideas. Paramount in this imprisonment and subsequent deportation was the fact that she dared to adopt a political philosophy that was anathema in the McCarthy period of the 1940s and 1950s: Marxism-Leninism with an anti-racist, antisexist, problack community orientation.

Claudia Jones also has to be seen as a writer articulating her ideas in a variety of media (poetry, essays, articles, editorials, reviews, booklets). While her dominant genre was the political essay, the creative was clearly also part of her formation. Thus another form of resistance to silencing is her composition of a number of poems during periods of imprisonment, which also thereby demonstrated her resolve and willingness to speak in the face of perhaps the most concentrated and directed attack on her freedom and the notion of freedom more generally. Her subsequent founding of the *West Indian Gazette*, which opened up a wide space for free expression, also furthered this process and provided some continuity with her essays in *Political Affairs* and journalism in the *Daily Worker*. This conscious and deliberate definition of herself as a black woman writer is another major means by which she combated erasure and silencing, as it has been for numerous other discarded writers now being brought back into full consideration.

Another related project in recovering Claudia Jones is a more developed understanding of the transnational/African diaspora subject, whose movement outside of circumscribing national space renders her nationless. Jones's emigration from Trinidad to the United States of America as a child of eight led to a full immersion in urban African American culture but also to being subjected to its racism. The implications of this location within U.S. racism and her understanding of the denial of citizenship rights for African Americans also produced her preliminary understanding of the need for black liberation and therefore ushered in her life of activism. Her secondary migration, to England, led to a participation in a broader Caribbean/African diaspora, as well as an international community of Asians and Eastern Europeans and other groups. But at the same time it also meant another location, within the contours of British racism and its explicit resentment of all black immigrants at the same time that Britain maintained colonial domination in the homes of those same immigrants. The internationalizing of this understanding of racism provided Jones with the means to operationalize her pan-Africanist politics in resistance to these various versions of racism in a way that was more obvious there than it was in the United States.

Thus, to understand Claudia Jones as an African diaspora subject is also to recognize her own placement outside of narrow nationalist identifications. Her alliances with other racial and political communities in a truly cross-cultural mode of community organizing similarly articulate that personal and political movement. The range of personal and political affiliations and subject locations that she consistently deployed — “Negro, Woman, Communist, of West Indian descent . . . born of working-class poverty” (Johnson, 130), and so on (much like Audre Lorde would subsequently do) — makes this point as well.

In the end, then, combating the erasure and silencing of Claudia Jones means simultaneously relocating her in the multiple discourses that she articulated and to which she belonged. For example, Marika Sherwood concludes a section on Jones's political activism with the strong assertion that “Claudia, despite her plethora of political activities, appears in no histories of the British Left. She, like so many other Black activists, has been written out of history.”¹⁰ Given these and a variety of other projects of deliberate scholarly recovery, however, the black woman buried left of Karl Marx can no longer remain willfully unaccounted for in the history of the Left.

My context for understanding the radical black female subject is a particular formulation of the black radical tradition that combines intellectual and activist work in the service of one's oppressed communities. I see this as represented well by Claudia Jones's own practice. Intellectual work in this understanding is not a "neutral process," nor one of distant academic reflection, but one of contending ideas—as Stuart Hall maintains—and struggles for social change and human justice. My assertion therefore is that Claudia Jones, though never located in the academy, engaged directly in intellectual-activist work that locates her solidly within Caribbean, African American, and black international radical intellectual traditions.

The role of the intellectual within the academy has been subjected already to some internal scrutiny. Several other attempts have been made over the years to identify the nature of intellectual work in and for black communities. Du Bois's formulation of the "talented tenth," despite its limitations, has been embraced by some scholars in the contemporary period, although Du Bois himself had repudiated it, finding in the end that he had not accounted sufficiently for the selfishness of that talented tenth. Still, one must read Du Bois's formulation along with Zora Neale Hurston's "pet negro system" and her subsequent articulations; in her recently published letters, for example, she describes the mutual benefit that accrued to the dominant white society and to the coopted black intellectual or creative figure.¹¹

The Gramscian binary of the traditional intellectual and the organic intellectual is expanded by three descriptors: "the co-opted liberal intellectual" posture, which never sees knowledge as moving into transforming action; "the accommodationist-reformist" intellectual, who aligns her/himself with popular struggles but cannot communicate with people the ideas of the academy; and the "guerilla intellectual" in the tradition of Walter Rodney, whose scholarship, life, and activism were all organized for transformative intent.¹²

Our contemporary U.S.-based realities reveal that two other categories are perhaps appropriate. I would add (1) the commoditized intellectual, whose entire exercise of academic production is hyper-market-driven and in the benefit of the state; and (2) the radically transformative intellectual,¹³ whose entire praxis is organized around the production of knowledge directed at transforming the social contexts in which we live and operate in and out of the

academy. This latter position comes out of not seeing the Walter Rodney position in idealistic terms, because, at its most extreme, it requires a certain martyrdom in order to be activated.

Still, I find most helpful Edward Said's analysis "The Limits of the Artistic Imagination and the Secular Intellectual," which offers six axes of activity and thought for the secular intellectual, not in terms of authority but "as an everlasting effort, an unendingly vigilant, prompt, energetic and reflective activity, an unstoppable energy." The axes, which Said sees as "orienting intellectual activity" and not prescribing it, comprise (1) providing counter-information in an age where the media have the resources to manage and manipulate reality; (2) a reinterpretive function at the level of communicating ideas; (3) demystification by articulating the basic issues of justice and human good or evil surrounding these issues; (4) interfering and intervening across lines of specialization that attempt to privatize knowledge; (5) an insurgent and resistant position when consensus is arrived on the basis of domination; and (6), the task of "exercis[ing] a moral function of deploying the irreconcilable and irreducible oppositions between ideas, peoples, societies, histories, and claims" at the level of performance (32). Many of these qualities seem to mark the activist orientation of Claudia Jones. In the final analysis, then, Said's definitions may not be directly operational by the academy-bound intellectual, who is subject to a variety of institutional mandates, and may indeed work better for the activist-intellectual outside of the academy.¹⁴

I am suggesting then that one cannot talk about intellectual work and practice among black and women scholars without raising some questions on the role of its practitioners who occupy the "status identity" of the professoriat. Additionally, our contemporary (twenty-first-century) political realities make it clear that one cannot assume that, by virtue of any generic subject location, one's contribution is automatically radical just because it comes from a member of a subordinated group. The nature of the construction of power elites who function as spokespeople for subordinated communities in myriad locations testify to this.

Thus, one cannot locate all intellectual activity within the academy only, particularly when there exists (and existed) a Marxist tradition of the development of working-class intellectuals for whom the study of political theory and its praxis were critical. This is one of the traditions out of which Claudia Jones came. Thus, I am extending this critique of intellectual work to say equally

that popular versions of black feminist thought, in many ways, simply retraced the basic academic terms of black studies and women's studies positions, as these have themselves retraced the larger academic structures. In that context then, it is important to give similar recognition to the kind of intellectual work produced organically outside of the academy and accord that work the same weight and space one gives to academic production. In the final analysis, in order to speak fully about the intellectual work that was Claudia Jones's contribution, as it was for several of her counterparts, one has to undo the narrow equivalence of intellectual work with the academy.

This introduction engages some of the questions surrounding black feminist work and its relation to work in black studies and feminist studies, to the academy as a whole, and to the larger public sphere in which it sometimes operates, in order to understand why someone like Claudia Jones remained outside the pale of black and feminist intellectual production. The entire project therefore locates itself within a certain form of radically transformative intellectual work, engaging some of the ideas advanced by Said, for example, on the role of the intellectual as identified above. It also relocates the issue of activism in black intellectual production at the level of praxis.

It is in this context that we account for the activist-intellectual who was Claudia Jones, as someone who was solidly located outside of any academic context but whose entire production of ideas rivaled many of those produced in the universities at the same time. This intellectual contribution is particularly important since black communities did not have the kind of access to academic institutions that they do following the civil rights era. As chapter 2, "From 'Half the World' to the Whole World: Journalism as Black Transnational Political Practice," will demonstrate, a great deal of this praxis came through the medium of journalism. But there are also theoretical contributions outlined in a range of political essays and journal articles. *Left of Karl Marx* represents the radical, political intellectual ideas of Claudia Jones, recovering them from erasure, and relocating them solidly within black, feminist, Caribbean, and allied intellectual traditions.

Relocating Claudia Jones in U.S. Black Feminist Thought

The advances in black feminist thought have been substantial in articulating a theoretic that has historically put together race, gender, class, and sexuality as intricately linked, and thus provided a model for the kind of contemporary theoretical work that builds on a logic of intersectionality. Black feminist

analyses have allowed a series of articulations that have accounted for the missing black woman in a variety of discourses. Still, the absence of a geopolitical approach to black identity often replayed itself in seventies and eighties U.S. black feminist thought, in much the same way that mainstream feminist thought accounted only for white women. The tendency has been toward the articulation of a historically linear narrative that looks back in U.S. history to black women, either symbolic or actual, for verification and therefore stays within U.S. borders. The specifics of location raised by black women across various cultures became, by the end of the twentieth century, significant for reassessing various subject positions and redefinitions of black feminism.

It is important to say at the outset that in the second wave of black feminist activity (during the 1980s and beyond), the intent and spirit of the Boston-based group of black lesbian/feminist activists, the Combahee River Collective, was often overlooked. The “Combahee River Collective Statement,” republished in Hull, Scott, and Smith’s collection *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*, began to formulate a discourse of black feminism with an activist and intellectual orientation (praxis model) in mind, as did the initial work of the Chicago-based National Black Feminist Organization. Much of this was unfortunately transformed to a singularly intellectual agenda in the post-1980s entry of black women into academic positions. To their credit, the formulators of the Combahee River Collective Statement addressed the relational, that is, the issues that relate African American women living in the United States to third world women in their assertion that “black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in feminist movement from its start” (14).

The inclusiveness of our politics makes us concerned with any situation that impinges upon lives of women and those of Third World and working people in general. We are of course particularly committed to working on those struggles in which race, sex, and class are simultaneous factors in oppression. We might, for example, become involved in workplace organizing at a factory that employs Third World women or picket a hospital that is cutting back on already inadequate health care to a Third World community, or set up a rape crisis center in a black neighborhood. (21)

That this position is listed under “black feminist issues and practice” is significant because here were women working toward a “nonhierarchical distribution of power” within their own group and in a transformed society.

In the introduction to her 1990s reprint of *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*¹⁵ titled “How I Saw it Then; How I See it Now,” Wallace references postcolonial criticism and the problematizing of home but offers her critique as well: “I don’t think they begin to exhaust what we can possibly say about our relationship to ‘other worlds’ beyond the hegemony of the West. Afro-Americans are not immigrants although we have always wanted recent arrivals from the Caribbean and Africa among us. As a group, we have been in the Americas longer than anyone apart from the Indians” (xxvi).

For Wallace, the particular black identity that is evoked is consistently only viable within U.S. African American formulations about race and history. Thus is sometimes enshrined a separation between those who do African diaspora (international) work and those who do U.S. African American (domestic) research in the United States without any attempt to conceptually account for what lies outside U.S. borders, as though the U.S. African American community was somehow not part of the African diaspora. Thus it was gratifying to see Wallace refer to the Jamaican side of her family, who were always there, even though this does not continuously inform her articulation of African diaspora women’s experience from locations outside of the United States. Her visit to Jamaica that is narrated at the start of *Dark Designs and Visual Culture* is seen through the prism of U.S. citizenship privilege. Her statement “Suddenly, I understood how and why my own family, and all the other West Indians who lived in Brooklyn and Queens and Harlem, had fled this island” (3) makes it seem that the apparent poverty and unfinishedness that she witnesses in the Caribbean are not also found in poor black communities in the United States. For indeed, the amenities of good living (such as universities and bookstores and libraries) are available in certain classed communities everywhere and unavailable in others.

But it is precisely in that space between the domestic and the international that someone like Claudia Jones, though she had spent the bulk of her life in African American communities in the United States, continuously disappears.

It is for this reason that I want to foreground the logic of praxis, as opposed to the split between theory and practice. I also want to assert the spirit of contestation and production involved in work, not asserting that “thought” is not “work” but that “work” foregrounds labor-intensive aspects that must constitute any set of productive gestures. In fact, if we use the example of the same African American foremothers that are invoked — Sojourner Truth,

Harriet Tubman, Maria Stewart, and Ida B. Wells, for instance—we are talking of women who were actively involved in a variety of movements against oppression both inside and outside the U.S. government’s legitimating mechanisms: women who often deliberately moved in search of an elsewhere that was not confining.

Defined as a leading black feminist scholar for her work on developing black feminist thought, bell hooks clearly also had a blind spot regarding third world feminisms, which disappear from her formulations, except, perhaps, in “Third World Diva Girls: Politics of Feminist Solidarity.”¹⁶ While the essay claimed to work toward “feminist solidarity between black women/women of color” (94), it homogenized all “third world women” into some generic “third world woman.” In this formulation, clearly no room exists for black feminist discourse in some sort of transnational context.

Again, speaking of its limits, and not devaluing its contributions, it is helpful to examine the underlying principles of the work of Patricia Hill Collins. In her *Black Feminist Thought* one is even more struck by the way in which the definitions of black feminism are circumscribed by U.S. nation-state, patriotic Americanism; the ways in which racial discourse in the United States consistently effaces “transnational Afro-diasporism.”¹⁷ Thus she dismisses the analyses of internal colonialism that would link African American populations in the United States more solidly to the discourses of African diaspora. Her essay “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Social Significance of Black Feminist Thought” is perhaps most instructive. It is based entirely on a position grounded in U.S. parochialism and by its very construction marks the limits of “outsider within” positionality. Beginning with the case of the domestic worker who knows the house better than the mistress allows her to construct black feminist intellectuals within a similar relationship to white feminists. The subject of the address is white women, with a U.S. definition of naturalized, essentialized race as marker, which thus allows her to develop what she calls “standpoint epistemology,” that is, that U.S. black women as a group all see the world from a particular angle. It is only logical that the discourse will turn in onto itself in her formulation of Afrocentric feminism.

Collins, like many other scholars, privileges her own subject position, that of the U.S. intellectual as the producer of “facts and theories about the black female experience that will clarify a black woman’s standpoint for black women” (“Learning From,” 516). But even more surprising is her inability to

locate a black feminist position of non-U.S. origin operating within or outside of the United States. Her response in *Fighting Words* to the ways in which black feminist thought has been internationalized is telling.

The issue of imperializing gestures that crop up in a variety of articulations — even ones claiming to be resistant — has been raised in various quarters. Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar in England, in their essay “Challenging Imperialist Feminism,” began the process of talking about imperialist feminisms in the context of women from dominant social positions who set the agendas for the entire group. Some examples of such discussion is found in the work of African women looking at the bases of U.S. feminisms.¹⁸ Still, it was with surprise that I learned recently that the same Valerie Amos had recently been made a baroness and that Caribbean feminists from the former English Commonwealth had to address her by that title when she visited the Caribbean, with all the protocols in place.¹⁹ Some critiques of imperialism from U.S. (African American) feminism similarly come from women who, in their home contexts, have equivalent class privilege to that of Baroness Amos.²⁰ The point is less that women operating in a certain class background cannot make significant contributions, or that they commit class suicide, but that those class locations have to be consciously interrogated in general race-based critiques and women’s equality arguments.

In general, the idea prevalent in the United States that its people are the only “Americans” carries with it some specific imperialist baggage, as Michael Hanchard shows in his essay “Identity, Meaning and the African-American.” The extent to which U.S. African American intellectuals buy this formulation uncritically is the extent to which they participate in the management of the crumbling house of U.S. imperialism. The Afro-Canadian Caribbean writer Marlene Nourbese Philip takes up the argument, made in the May 1996 *New Yorker* special issue “Black in America,” that the existence of a successful and prominent black middle class of intellectuals, entertainers, and athletes is a counterpoint to the economic hopelessness of the larger population. Philip’s view is that the existence of this class helps to “manage a situation that may already be unmanageable” (18). She notes: “As often happens with empire, specificities are erased and absorbed into a larger whole — the way, for instance, in which all black people in Canada are absorbed into the larger identity of Jamaican immigrant. And so, we could argue, the black in America stands in for being black in Canada, eh. In the Caribbean. In Africa. Everywhere” (15).

The articulation of the role of the intellectual with which I began provides

space for a reading of the black and female intellectual as a manager of reality. I see a range of work—black feminist work included, if it remains uncritical of the boundaries that are being deployed—as fulfilling a similar role. The extent to which Claudia Jones remains unaccounted for (not even mentioned)²¹ in most U.S. black feminist conceptualizing and remains unknown by the major black women historians is a clear index of that absence of relational work and of paradigms that are not exclusively gender- and race-based, even as the word “class” is mentioned.²²

Thus the importance of Ella Baker’s work and her essay “The Bronx Slave Market” (written with Marvell Cooke). Even as Baker and Cooke deal with domestic labor in New York, because of its identification with the contexts of the exploitation of this labor, they are able to produce a historical document with international import into which or against which contemporary analyses of the exploitation of Caribbean women as domestics in New York may be measured. This issue, we know, reappears in Paule Marshall’s novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, which gives substantial narrative descriptions of Caribbean domestic labor in New York.

The accounts of Baker, Cooke, and Marshall are valuable, and for the same reasons I value Joy James’s black feminist assessments, as I do her work on political prisoners. They come together in her work on the Angela Davis corpus and her critique of “talented tenth” formulations. James expresses a desire to restart black feminist articulations from a different theoretical place, one that accounts more deliberately for a tradition of radicalism that we know existed in the activism of people like Ida B. Wells. James’s is a framework of black feminism in which radical black left female subjects like Claudia Jones can have tangible existence.²³ For James, “black feminist writings often pay insufficient attention to state repression and the conflictual ideologies and divergent practices (from liberal to revolutionary) found within black feminisms” (*Shadowboxing*, 78).

The gains of black feminist thought can be summarized as follows: it has put together a range of hitherto disparate identities and theories (race, gender, and sexuality, for example); it has opened intellectual scenarios where black women must be accounted for; and it has inaugurated a proliferation of studies in the social sciences, humanities, legal studies, and even current discussions of black masculinities and black queer studies. It has therefore transformed the subjects of a great deal of intellectual inquiry and the ways that it is conducted, post-1980s and at the turn of the century.

Yet the reasons why important figures in U.S. African American history like Claudia Jones are again deported to another location conceptually and literally, outside the borders of U.S. thought, scholarship, and understandings have to be understood. The “insider within” approach has as its limit a certain set of insular assumptions about the local. Learning from the “outsider outside” is another approach that can be used along with it, as Lorde does with her formulation of “sister outsider” — the woman who is outside of a range of discourses, privileges, opportunities, and access. Hers is the kind of work that sees the global and local imbrications. It allows a certain domestic agenda and activism even as it recognizes how interrelated these are with the international. But much of this work is only just beginning to take place, and my study of Jones contributes to that process. By these and other means, many of the gaps in black feminist thought internationally are gradually being filled. This opens the space for a position as radical as that of Claudia Jones to be re-inserted. A more recent collection of black feminist criticism, *The Black Feminist Reader*, includes Sylvia Wynter’s important “Beyond Miranda’s Meanings: Unsilencing the Demonic Ground of Caliban’s Woman.”

The work done by some black feminist historians in the United States has been extremely useful in this regard, even as it has built itself into its own particular domestic borders, as I describe above. Works like *Black Women in America*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, are indispensable tools, providing extensive histories of black women’s contributions to the world; their book includes an entry on Claudia Jones. And the timely collection of essays by black women *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, provides an easy way to work through the various positions coming out of U.S. black feminist articulations. To its credit, the collection includes the classic article by Jones “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Black Women,” almost always overlooked, despite what it calls for.

Black Communist Women

The study of black communist women remains one of the most neglected among contemporary examinations of black women for at least one of the reasons that Joy James identifies: “The revolutionary remains on the margin, more so than any other form of (black) feminism” (92). *Left of Karl Marx* contributes to the necessary unfolding of this area of research, but there are a

few texts already available. Gerald Horne's *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois*, which, although titled *Race Woman*, shows that one of Du Bois's important "lives" was her strong affiliation with the Left and details, in particular, her travel to China and experience there. Horne reports, especially in the chapter "Black, to the Left," her relationship to the American Left as being cemented when her husband, W. E. B. Du Bois, joined the Communist Party of America (CPUSA), putting the couple ideologically in the company of Esther Cooper Jackson and James Jackson, who published the journal *Freedomways*. But, not unusually, these relationships with the Communist Party were never smooth, always complicated by issues of American black nationalism and the responses to racism that invariably produce a "race first" narrative.

Some new work is beginning to be available that makes the appearance of Angela Davis not an aberration or the result of some exceptionalism but something located within a history of black communist women. Erik McDuffie's 2003 dissertation, "Long Journeys: Four Black Women and the Communist Party, USA, 1930–1956," studies the early and developing lives of black communist women, using oral histories, FBI files, and other available records. The women include Louise Thompson Patterson, Claudia Jones, Audley Moore, and Esther Jackson. One chapter in particular ("Black Women Communists and the United Front in Harlem, 1933–1935") focuses on Patterson and Moore but also provides considerable information on the activities of other women. We learn, for example, that in the period following the Harlem Riot of 1935 "Louise Thompson had become the most visible African American female personality within the Party" (195), becoming "a high-profile CPUSA spokesperson" (197) and therefore an important member of the cadre of black leadership that developed in Harlem. Audley "Queen Mother" Moore would have a different trajectory, moving from activism in the Garvey movement to the Communist Party and back out again into a more explicit African nationalism at the end of her years. My own study of Claudia Jones, one of the important members of this group, adds to the growing knowledge of the history of black women communists. And hopefully additional studies will flesh out the full dimensions of their story.

But even before Jones, as Mark Solomon reports, there was Maude White, who had studied in Russia, was one of a class of students that included Ho Chi Minh and Jomo Kenyatta, and returned to the United States as an activist in Harlem and subsequently in Pittsburgh. Solomon, whose dissertation is now

published as *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936*, had earlier written a short piece titled “Rediscovering a Lost Legacy: Black Women Radicals Maude White and Louise Thompson,”²⁴ which focused exclusively on black communist women, providing substantial discussion of Maude White, who was active in the Communist Party in the early 1930s. Thus, when Claudia Jones entered the Communist Party there were already examples of very active black communist or leftist women who had visible identities that she could emulate and positions she could advance. In this context, Claudia Jones was not a lone, singular figure, or unusual. What marks her instead is that she became both an *organizer* and a leading *theoretician*.

Additionally, as Solomon also reports, the Caribbean community was well represented in the early days of the Communist Party in the person of Richard Moore. Otto Huiswood, Cyril Briggs, and Grace Campbell, would be founding members of the radical African Blood Brotherhood. Grace Campbell, in particular (who is identified as of Jamaican descent and who has so far been also only marginally recognized), was among a group that according to Solomon, “found their way to the Communist Party when the Socialists continued to be unresponsive to the problems of African Americans” (4).

Kate Weigand, in *Red Feminism*, also reports that in Communist Party schools, courses on black women would become part of the curriculum with “teachers such as Lorraine Hansberry, Claudia Jones, Charlotta Bass, Eleanor Flexner, Yvonne Gregory and Doxey Wilkerson [who] offered lectures and courses that explored topics such as ‘Negro Women in the Struggle for Peace and Democracy’ and ‘Negro Women in Political Life’” (110). While it was clearly a Communist Party project, this initiative was spearheaded by black party women like Claudia Jones and accompanied by ongoing activities to recruit black women members, as significant elements of black communist women’s organizing and educating strategies.

It is in this context that the group known as Sojourners for Truth and Justice would exist. Dealing specifically with the conditions of black women, the links to the larger issues we have identified are among the fundamental markers of this manifestation of black feminist politics. Although not all its members were Communist Party members, and although there would be some conflicts between members such as Claudia Jones and Beah Richards on this issue, the project of the Sojourners would be identified by the state as a

left, Communist Party–inspired project and guarantee their surveillance by the FBI. And even when they were not Communist Party members, black women like Charlotta Bass took positions that would be defined as radical in the challenge to racism and sexism and state oppression. For example, Bass later defended other women who, like Claudia Jones, were being hounded by the U.S. government. Bass had also traveled to the Soviet Union, shared the same optimistic view of that country as Thompson Patterson, and wrote about her experience. In *Forty Years*, a collection of her writings in *The California Eagle*, she says there was “no color question in the USSR” and expresses the favorable view that Russians, “held together in a common bond of brotherhood for the good of all, . . . were enthusiastic in the belief that there was no room for hatred, bitterness and strife. There was no problem of discrimination or segregation” (167). Bass describes stumbling upon the John Golden story, of a black U.S. family living under segregation in Mississippi who decided to move to the Soviet Union in 1931 (166). Bass also points out the important fact that Los Angeles was founded primarily by black people and includes a piece that recognizes black women from other locations, capturing the words of Adora Lily Ulasi from Nigeria, then a student and later a writer (155).

Some specific connections are yet to be made between the activism of left women in the 1940s and 1950s and the genesis of Angela Davis in the following decades. From some reports, one of those links might be Esther Jackson, who was president of the Southern Negro Youth Conference and who would also work on the Scottsboro Boys case. The Angelo Herndon case would provide another link, as it became, for its time, the legal struggle that would launch the careers of subsequent communists like Benjamin Davis. The point is that throughout our histories there have been black activists—many of them women—who would be defined as radical or revolutionary because they challenged oppressive state practices. In our own contemporary period, Asata Shakur stands as an example of a woman who refused to be covered by an oppressive prosecutorial system. In her day, Harriet Tubman, though now celebrated, would have gone down as a radical woman, confronting the system of slavery at that time and moving in and out of it at will. Claudia Jones would be but one of a line of those radical women. As we shall see, comparable figures also appear in the Caribbean and in Africa.

Transnational Black Feminist Work

Transnational black feminist work recognizes that our current geographical locations are products of multiple historical processes, many of which we had no control over, which have produced us, as subjects, in various “nation-states” of the world, having to interact with other similarly or differently produced individuals. These displacements are the end product of some very hateful processes: wars of domination, colonialisms, enslavements, holocausts, encampments, dispossession, and genocide. Thus, preliminarily, transnational or cross-cultural feminist work has to take into account how we were produced as subjects in the wake of European Enlightenment and modernism, colonialism, and their various enterprises. More recent structural adjustments, economic and corporate globalization, and the transnational movement of capital in its search for cheap labor sources worldwide are reproduced under various nationalist or regional and global imperatives.

A number of texts begin to engage feminism in the United States from a variety of other ethnic locations other than black feminist positions. Transnational feminism would arise preliminarily from one larger assumption: that working cross-culturally is an essential feature of our contemporary world, and our own specific locations and identities must be part of the bases of our analyses. With this in mind then, any contemporary cultural and political work that wants to move out of fixity and specific imperialistic interpellations has to account for its particular location, articulate its own specificity, and move toward the recognition of the existence of other cultures and political realities in some cross-cultural or translocational way.

In much the same way, gender, or the social categorization of “woman” as identified and understood by Western feminists, has already been significantly challenged and redefined by a variety of non-Western feminist scholars and lesbian philosophers.²⁵ The result is that gender now has to be spoken for and understood within very specific cultural contexts and also relationally. Similarly, the tendency for the category “black woman” or “black feminism” to be deployed in a limited way is still being challenged and thereby redefined, based on the experiences of a number of black women internationally.

“Migratory subjectivity,” an earlier formulation of mine, attempted to account for the ways our identities are formed in movement.²⁶ In some ways, migratory subjectivity may be considered here, as it is through migration that

one gets to the transnational. Perhaps most critical in doing transnational feminist work is the understanding that the nation-states in which we live as subjects have been produced out of specific political imperatives and histories and that they therefore seek to contain, arbitrarily, a variety of peoples subject to the whims of these same nation-state enterprises. If those nation-states attain dominance, as has happened in the case of the United States, then even those identities subordinated domestically in those states are unwittingly attached. Thus African Americans in the United States end up carrying some of the weight of U.S. imperialism and its manifestations in war efforts and capitalist expansion. Among the people in contemporary times who are unable to live with the domination instituted in order to maintain these nation-states are “gypsies,” “nomads,” “migrants,” “migrant workers,” “exiles,” “refugees,” the “imprisoned,” “the deported,” and “the homeless.” Persons displaced by global economic processes, who must constantly reconcile themselves to existing emotionally and physically in different spaces, may enter what is popularly referred to now as a diaspora, a space that resists centering even as it identifies longing, homelands, and a myth of origin. Still, there are those who remain outside a diaspora or who live in intersecting or overlapping diasporas.

“Migrating subjects,” I have argued, already consistently negotiate borders in assertive ways, challenging the entrenched meanings of those in intact locations, crossing and recrossing them, making them sites of transformation. But there are those who remain confined by state dictates as they deal with the realities of living in twentieth-century imprisonments: a variety of prisons across the United States and refugee camp and concentration camp situations such as Chrome in Miami or Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. A lingering question then has to be, “What are all the in/visible identities that remain hidden as a dominant discourse is constituted?” First of all, the critique of a variety of levels of exclusion is critical, as is the recognition of the many local, activist movements of the women themselves, and clearly the appearance of a variety of these women in the various metropolises. Amrita Basu, in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms*, speaking of participants at a 1985 Nairobi conference, says that “better communications between these groups of women . . . occurred once they abandoned the myth of global sisterhood and acknowledged profound differences in women’s lives and the meaning of feminism cross-nationally” (3).

A growing body of scholarship, produced by black women and women of color, is systematically addressing the specificities of women's lives in myriad locations, identifying what the particularities of gender, sex, sexuality, race, class, and so on mean when looked at through different lenses or at least when removed from the fixed location of "under western eyes." See, for example, the recent work of Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, including *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*.²⁷

Beverly Guy-Sheftall's overview "Speaking for Ourselves: Feminisms in the African Diaspora" offers a range of black feminist contributors and positions internationally across the African diaspora, beginning with Anna Julia Cooper and ranging through the Casely-Hayfords and Funmilayo Anikulapo Ransome-Kuti to contemporary contributors. Transnational black feminist work, which accounts for some of these movements and migratory journeys as they also attempt to make connections, makes meaning based on a variety of experiences and is reflected as well in the kind of gender work that Claudia Jones did, from a variety of political positions and geographical locations. There is sufficient evidence, as Guy-Sheftall reveals, that these women often worked collaboratively across continents. Amy Ashwood Garvey, Eslanda Goode Robeson, and Claudia Jones, for example, maintained an international friendship and communication. And Claudia Jones is identified as attending the same meeting as Mrs. Ransome Kuti, at the World Congress of Women in the USSR in 1963.²⁸

With the various histories accounted for, it is not difficult to begin a process of recognition of the various positionalities we occupy and have occupied historically. This is the process that, for me, offers the possibilities for the transformation of the unequal bases of our arrangements. The context in which I want to locate this particular work on Claudia Jones is one that recognizes the transnational as it interacts with the local. For Jones herself was able to link the specific struggles of women from a variety of locations to those of women in world hegemonic powers like the United States.

As cultural critic, Stuart Hall appropriately asserted — well before the popular discourses of globalization — that the global has now become the local; indeed, the global and local are imbricated, one on the other. Separating them masks the ways in which capital traffics in global ways.²⁹ What some would call the postcolonial, the transnational, or the cross-cultural is a reality of our contemporary existences. Media, markets, and communications of various

sorts produce a multiplicity of possibilities. At the same time, they continue to exact a toll on those left out or exploited by these same processes.

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, in their introduction to *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, see the transnational as problematizing purely locational politics of the global-local or center-periphery. They assert that “transnational linkages influence every level of social existence. Thus the effects of configurations of practices at those levels are varied and historically specific” (13). Caren Kaplan, in “The Politics of Location as Transnational Feminist Critical Practice,”³⁰ sees Adrienne Rich’s coinage of the phrase “politics of location” as attempting the “dewesternization of the feminist movement.” For her, the fact that Rich comes to this formulation in the context of travel marks the ways in which this articulation, while it offers a way out, can reinstate a new binary—not between white and black but between the United States and the countries that are victims of its foreign policies. What recent discussions return us to, as did the earlier essays in Mohanty, Russo, and Torres, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*,³¹ are the ways in which we can examine another set of relationships, which include women marginalized in the United States and outside of it and their varying predicaments and responses. More important, we must not minimize the ways in which contemporary late capitalism informs our local realities.³² Eliza Noh, in “Problematics of Transnational Feminism and Asian American Women,” nonetheless cautions against the “flattening out of racialized geopolitical and economic hierarchies . . . particularly between empires and colonies” (135). She suggests that “‘transnational feminism’ and ‘feminism’ in general must be rehistoricized to focus on how third world women and women of color have always been concerned with cross-national issues of labor exploitation, imperialism, migration, and racialized gender” (144).

Feminist thinking, in the presence of globalization, cannot help but be minimally transnational. A more fully relational scholarship and activism allows us to find usable models that already existed in prior activist-intellectual work. Claudia Jones had clearly already gestured to this interconnection as early as the 1940s. Thus we can more definitively embrace a history of transnational black feminist *work*, making a distinction between black feminist theory as *ideas* singly. The Claudia Jones model reveals a labor-intensive set of activities that link activism with intellectuality. For those of us interested in

this phase of capitalist globalization, and in the presence of a phenomenal rise in the distinctions between those with and without access to power and resources, the critique of imperialism in its many forms has to be redesigned and refined. A feminism that sees the other only as a subject of research and not as a creator of meaning, or that cannot make the fine class distinctions or take the kind of political risks that earlier generations took, would have little relevance.

At the level of international law, one still has to be versed in specific local statutes as well as applicable international conventions in order to contest them or argue particular cases. The legal work of feminist scholars defending women's citizenship, or women's property rights, in a particular location provides the information to build relationally and with experience, but it still has to be activated in the particular context, history, and local paradigms out of which specific cases arise.³³ A clear example is found in the collaborations that led to the freeing of Amina Lawal, who was sentenced, by Sharia religious-legal authorities in Nigeria, to death by stoning for adultery (2002–2003). The outcry of feminists and others internationally was matched by the hard work of legal and feminist scholars on the ground in Nigeria. But consider also the efforts of Fauziya Kasinga³⁴ to gain political asylum to escape female genital mutilation. Her struggles, her consequent emigration, acceptance of refugee status, and incarceration created her as a particular category rarely defined publicly in this way — a gendered political exile. Her struggle to leave Togo led to her being imprisoned in the United States, from which place she extricated herself only with aid from a variety of sources.³⁵ In this she was unlike Somali Waris Dirie,³⁶ who as a supermodel had access to publicity. In Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan environmental feminist who won the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, we have an example of someone whose practice received international recognition for its attempts to sustain local African communities at the level of fundamental human rights, a practice in which women's rights (including her own) were solidly located.

Claudia Jones not only lived her life as a transnational black feminist subject but also articulated these conceptual positions in her practice as she did in her ideas. For her the transnational was a fundamental feature of understanding the local. Her clarity about the nature of Euro-American imperialism made her able to assert resisting positions — with respect not only to capitalism and imperialism but also to patriarchal dominance. Claudia Jones

lived and organized at the intersection of a variety of positionalities (anti-imperialism and decolonization struggles, activism for workers' rights, the critique of appropriation of black women's labor, the challenge to domestic and international racisms and their links to colonialism) and was therefore able to articulate them earlier than many of her contemporaries. In this regard, her ideas, as this book argues, have significant implications for contemporary articulations of transnational African diaspora/feminist politics.

Recovering Claudia Jones for the Caribbean

Claudia Jones was in effect a "sister outsider," as Audre Lorde³⁷ described herself in a variety of discourses, and she definitely remains a sister outside the Caribbean intellectual-radical tradition. The fact is that she is not well known in the Caribbean, just as she is also not remembered in the United States. This, we can say, is the result of emigrating from Trinidad to the United States as a child, and then being deported as an adult from the United States to the United Kingdom. But this lack of recognition is also related to the fact that women are not generally assigned importance as intellectual subjects, for she was sufficiently known in London, as was her compatriot C. L. R. James and many other writers who would be subsequently hailed as contributors from the United Kingdom to Caribbean politics and culture. One of the purposes of this book is to challenge the status quo in which Claudia Jones escapes a certain belonging in Caribbean feminist history and the larger Caribbean intellectual and political genealogy as well. The tendency has until recently been to identify only the men in this tradition, beginning with the early pan-Africanists and continuing up to our contemporaries.³⁸

The particular process of recovery, for Claudia Jones, has meant beginning at the end: in London, the place where she spent the last ten years of her life and, paradoxically, the place where she is still best known. This period of her life began in 1955, when she was deported from the United States under the Smith and McCarran-Walter Acts for being a thinking and practicing communist. The high point of her British career was her founding of the *West Indian Gazette* (later the *West Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian Caribbean Times*) and of the London Carnival, which since has become the Notting Hill Carnival. The period ends with her death, in 1964. The life of Claudia Jones is relatively better known and documented in the United Kingdom. Indeed, organizations and centers have been named after her in London.³⁹

Recovering Claudia Jones has meant, for me, negotiating for and being personally charged with the responsibility of traveling (with trepidation) with her available papers from London to the United States, cataloging them, and delivering them to the Schomburg Research Center in Harlem — in effect, returning Jones to the Harlem she loved.⁴⁰ It has meant pursuing her youthful activism and her mature radicalism, finding as much information as is available about her work in the United States. The last and most significant portion of the work took me back to her place of birth, Trinidad, where logically this portion of the research ends.

My search for and recovery of Jones's birth certificate makes possible the full identification of her as a Caribbean woman. I started from Claudia Jones's own words, which identify her place of birth as Woodbrook in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Repeated journeys to the Registry of Births and Deaths in Port of Spain in 2002, queuing in lines with folk who were tracing documents for purposes of travel, land acquisition, rights to family property, and the like, turned up nothing. I was finally referred to church records for Woodbrook, only to be told there that the older records for the period under question are in such poor condition that they have been sealed. Finally, after being given a contact (as often happens in Trinidad) with someone who is a senior worker in the office that handles searches, and with the necessary formal introductions made, I requested a more developed search. I returned, as directed, a week later to learn that a Claude Vera⁴¹ had been found in the Trinidad records of births. "Claude Vera" (her first and middle names) was the Claudia I had been looking for. On the slip of paper that I was handed was written, in red, information about Claude Vera in relation to two of her siblings. Her birthplace was identified as Cazabon Lane, Belmont (not Woodbrook). Her father was identified as Charles Bertrand Cumberbatch; her mother as Minnie Magdalene Cumberbatch, formerly Logan. The birthdate recorded was February 21, 1915, and the record was registered as entry number 505 for the year 1915. This allows me to speculate that the family must have moved from Belmont to Woodbrook during Claudia's childhood and that she was unaware of it or had not remembered the actual location (see chronology).

The reclamation of this radical intellectual-activist as a Caribbean woman allows this black woman to enter history, and in particular the history of Trinidad and Tobago, her birthplace, which includes other important figures such as Sylvester Williams, George Padmore, C. L. R. James, Eric Williams,

and Kwame Ture. The facts of Jones's birth were conclusively established in this elusive birth certificate. Another tangible representation of the kind of belonging/nonbelonging that she had as a member of the then colonized Caribbean is her British colonial subjecthood. She had to appeal to Trinidad's prime minister at that time, Eric Williams, who interceded on her behalf, as she sought and finally received a passport; this event also is critical to her Caribbean definition. She is also identified as Caribbean, or as representing the Caribbean, in a number of international forums during her London days. At the end of her life, then, Claudia Jones was operating fully as a Caribbean woman.

Claudia Jones was a person whose politics was practiced in myriad ways, from community organizing to journalism to writing to cultural development. Her final location⁴² to the left of Karl Marx, for me, indicates a politics that, by its practice, critiques Marxism-Leninism, though she saw it as her basic orienting politics. Still, accounting for gender, for race, for black communities in migration, for carnival and Caribbean culture was not within the range of positions that Marxists took at the time. And Jones invariably had to do battle to argue for the place of culture in a people's articulation of themselves. In the end, these were precisely the sites of community transformation and conceptual formulation of the Claudia Jones legacy, a politics that advanced well beyond the limitations of Marxism and thereby locates Claudia Jones forever left of Karl Marx.