

ABSTRACT

**ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE WITHIN THE IMPERIUM:
URBAN COLOURED AND BLACK UPPER MIDDLE CLASS
REFORM ACTIVISTS IN CROWN COLONY
TRINIDAD, 1880 - 1925**

William Adam Smith

This dissertation examines the lived experience of urban coloured and black upper middle class reform activists in Crown Colony Trinidad, 1880 to 1925. It is concerned with understanding the socio-political dynamics of their experience during the period; that is, the motive forces that determined their relationships with those who governed and the governed, their specific political actions, strategies and tactics, ideological affiliations, their state of mind, and the responses and reactions to their actions. A collective of four biographies was employed. The focus was on the public lives of four advocates: Edgar Maresse-Smith, Cyrus Prudhomme David, Emmanuel M'Zumbo Lazare and Henry Albert Alcazar. The biographies explored their ideas, principles, beliefs and attitudes to Crown Colony. They examined how they selected and influenced the nature of their situations, roles and careers, especially their master status as reformers from options available to them based on their frames of reference and socialization, and given their historical milieu which shaped their

experiences. The investigation revealed that their actions were not selfless and that ideology was an important factor; a result of socialization. They adopted the notions of Western Humanism and that influenced the internal dynamics of the group as well as their external relations with other groups. The State also reinforced and circumscribed their behaviour. The result was a dual logic in ideology that was reconcilable within a hierarchy; the hallmark of Western Humanism. Yet, the incongruities within a colonial context could not be swept under the carpet. Because of the motive forces, which shaped their actions, they were prepared to undertake liberal reforms on the basis of Western Humanism within the context of Empire. They could not see beyond the Imperium as the title of the thesis suggests.

KEYWORDS: *William Adam Smith; Urban Coloured and Black Upper Middle Class Reform Activists Trinidad; Social and Political History.*