

4-1-2011

F.S.J. Ledgister, *Only West Indians: Creole Nationalism in the British West Indies*. Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 2010.

Jerome Teelucksingh Ph.D.
The University of the West Indies, jtluxing@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#), [Environmental Studies Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Teelucksingh, Jerome Ph.D. (2011) "F.S.J. Ledgister, *Only West Indians: Creole Nationalism in the British West Indies*. Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 2010.," *Journal of International and Global Studies*: Vol. 2: No. 2, Article 9.

DOI: 10.62608/2158-0669.1054

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol2/iss2/9>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of International and Global Studies* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. For more information, please contact phuffman@lindenwood.edu.

**F.S.J. Ledgister, *Only West Indians: Creole Nationalism in the British West Indies*.
Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 2010.**

Only West Indians is aimed at determining the factors that shape Creole nationalism in the British West Indies. The work addresses the issues of creole identity during colonialism and in the post-colonial era. F.S.J. Ledgister delves into selected aspects of British and Caribbean historiography to compare and assess the development and evolution of Creole nationalism among the island nations of the British West Indies. He contends that during colonialism, Creole nationalism was “a Caribbean form of European liberal nationalism, one that takes into account both the European origin of dominant institutions and the African origin of the dominated mass” (p.25).

In the first chapter, the author explores the difficulty of devising suitable definitions of ‘creolization,’ ‘creole society’ and ‘Creole nationalism.’ In attempting to define these terms, the author examines the views of scholars of Creole nationalism such as Percy Hintzen, Nigel Bolland, Deborah Thomas, and Don Robotham. Ledgister and others limit Creole nationalism to that which resulted from the introduction of enslaved peoples from Africa into the Caribbean. The author does not consider, however, whether a form of Creole nationalism might also have resulted from the earlier interactions of Europeans with the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean islands.

Chapter Two, “Racist Rantings, Travellers’ Tales, and a Creole Counterblast,” deals with the impact on the British West Indies of racist ideas and writings by men such as James Froude, Thomas Carlyle, and Charles Kingsley. The caustic responses of West Indians to such biased writings provide the foundation of Creole nationalism. Both the third and fifth chapters focused on two influential personalities from Trinidad and Tobago: CLR James and Eric Williams. Both men helped shape Creole nationalism in the post-World War II era in the Caribbean and abroad. Ledgister argues that James’s pamphlet, *The Case for West Indian Self-Government* was a major contributor to West Indian political thought, providing ideas that were precursors to the Creole nationalism that would subsequently emerge in the British Caribbean. Likewise, the academic and political input of Eric Williams is thought to have had a major influence on the growth of nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago. Two sub-sections of the chapter on Williams, “Founding a Free State” and “The Democratic Nation-State,” examine the making of a Creole nation.

Chapter Four, “Norman Manley: The Dutiful Intellectual,” is dedicated to one of Jamaica’s iconic politicians, who appreciated the connection between nationalism, democracy, creativity, and liberty. For some readers it might be difficult to identify Manley as a Creole nationalist, however, due to his philosophy of democratic socialism, his work with the West Indian federation, and his pronouncement in 1957 that Jamaica was a multiracial society. In the final chapter, “Creole Dilemma, Creole Opportunity,” Ledgister argues that Creole nationalism constituted “...a progressive movement which sought to revolutionize the political structure of the West Indies by bringing to power the people of the West Indies via their elected representatives in either a single West Indian state or a group of West Indian states” (p. 151).

It was an oversight not to adequately consider the status and contributions of the Indo-Caribbean and ethnic minorities (such as the Syrians, Chinese, and Portuguese) within the framework of Creole nationalism. Ledgister briefly mentions these groups in Trinidad and Tobago (pp. 121, 142) but fails to properly situate them within a Caribbean context. A second major shortcoming of *Only West Indians* is the focus on Creole nationalism in two nations (Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago) to the exclusion of the Creole nationalism in other British West Indian territories. Readers are left to wonder about the contributions of politicians and intellectuals from St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Barbados, British Honduras, and Grenada to the development of Creole nationalism.

That said, *Only West Indians* is written in a coherent style and would be a useful introductory book for readers desiring to learn about the interaction of colonialism, politicians, and intellectuals in the emergence and growth of Creole nationalism in selected British West Indian colonies.

Jerome Teelucksingh, Ph.D.
The University of the West Indies
jtluxing@yahoo.com