

Racism and Private Assistance: The Support of West Indian and African Missions in Liverpool, England, during the Interwar Years

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In the years following World War I, the black population in Britain's port cities increased as a result of an influx of West Indian and African seamen who had been discharged from His Majesty's Service.¹ Many of these new arrivals, along with long-term residents, suffered as post-World War I economic conditions worsened, causing hostility from the host communities to increase. Blacks in cities such as Liverpool not only had to endure overt racial attacks, but they were also victims of hidden racism.

There was no legal segregation in Liverpool, and just as many whites as blacks lived within Toxteth, an area in the city's south end near the docks. Blacks and whites mixed freely in the area's numerous pubs, and black men often married white women. Despite the city's historical relationship with the slave trade and slavery, many of those who lived in Liverpool during the 1920s and 1930s accepted the pervasive myth of racial harmony in the city. However, some blacks who were more observant recognized that they were being denied adequate economic and social opportunities. Indeed, the city was not free of racial prejudice. In reality, the legacy of the slave trade and slavery and the negative stereotypes of blacks which had been developed over many years were so ingrained in the minds, hearts, attitudes and actions of many Liverpoolians that, wittingly and unwittingly, racism adversely affected the quality of life for black people in the city.²

To reiterate, there was no color bar in Liverpool and when blacks fell on hard times local agencies appeared to provide some degree of relief. Regrettably, many of these agencies possessed and expounded a racist, paternalistic ideology which viewed blacks as a problem. Blacks were seen as a people of naturally inferior ability and morals who needed special aid in order to survive in a foreign, white, and competitive society. These agencies believed their approach to providing desperately needed services for indigent blacks was beneficial. However, this was not the case because these agencies favored

individuals and institutions which shared their values and disfavored those who did not. Therefore, their approach embodied a form of hidden racism which hindered a more positive development of the black experience in Liverpool. This article analyzes a rather unique case of this by examining the operations and support of two missions which took different approaches to serving Liverpool's black population. The two missions were the African Churches Mission (ACM) and the African and West Indian Mission (AWIM).

Both the ACM and the AWIM provided significant welfare and religious services for blacks, but each was regarded differently by most local and regional support agencies concerned about Liverpool's black population. The AWIM and its supporters catered to its patrons in a Victorian, paternalistic manner.³ That is, their leaders appeared to believe that they had an imperial mission to civilize, control, or take care of blacks whether they were colonials or citizens of England. The leaders' position was that blacks were naturally inferior and had to be ruled. They could not care for themselves (Bolt 1971; Tinker 1976). The AWIM's main support came from the Liverpool Methodist Mission, the Liverpool University Settlement, and the Anti-Slavery Society. These organizations, especially the latter two, believed that the mere presence of blacks in Liverpool created severe social and economic evils which could eventually undermine the city's social order. These agencies inculcated Victorian values in their schemes to lessen the hardships of less fortunate people and to care for black people. Backed by these organizations, the AWIM was accepted and supported by the mainstream of society. But the AWIM's approach embodied a form of racial prejudice that hindered a more positive black experience in Liverpool.

The ACM, on the other hand, headed by the Reverend G. Daniels Ekarte, a Nigerian preacher, was unable to gain support from the mainstream. Ekarte articulated a more positive self-help scheme for blacks, and he constantly agitated for racial equality. For these and other reasons, Ekarte and his mission were often viewed with disdain by funding agencies in Liverpool and elsewhere.

Ekarte, known affectionately among blacks in Liverpool as Pastor Daniels, arrived in Liverpool in 1915 from Calabar, a province in southern Nigeria. Both of his parents were Christians and, as a youngster, Ekarte worked as an errand boy for Mr. Wilkie, a missionary and teacher from Liverpool. On one occasion, Ekarte encountered the teachings of Mary Slessor, a well-known Scottish Presbyterian missionary who traveled throughout Nigeria and worked in Calabar from 1878 until her death in 1915 (Livingston 1984, 37; Buchan 1980, 2). Ekarte immediately admired Slessor's sermons and became enamored with her ideals of Christian faith and charity. Slessor occasionally

stayed at the home of Mr. Wilkie and eventually Ekarte became one of her students; he referred to her as "holy mother."⁴

Subsequently, Ekarte learned to read and write and he developed a desire to become a missionary. He began to deliver sermons, patterned after Mary Slessor's, to Africans in surrounding villages. According to Ekarte, the success that he experienced in the villages of Nigeria motivated him to "go to the holy land (England), to the land of saints and apostles where my holy mother came from" (Anti-Slavery Society Papers [ASSP] "My Conversion," August 1933).

Unlike many other Africans who had traveled to England to be educated and then returned to their homeland to share the "western knowledge," Ekarte had a desire to do the opposite. However, when he reached Liverpool in 1915, he was greatly disappointed because he "thought the streets of Liverpool would be full of good men and women who were like Mary Slessor" (ASSP, "My Conversion," August 1933). Instead, he found men and women who were very irreligious. Although Ekarte had a burning desire to be a preacher, what he initially encountered in Liverpool overwhelmed him; therefore, he roamed the streets of Liverpool's south end for seven disillusioned years. During this period he worked as a seaman and in sugar refineries where he began to gamble, smoke and drink. Ekarte stated that the conditions in Liverpool caused him to feel a sense of betrayal. He felt that the missionaries in Nigeria had deceived him. He had a desire to return to his country, confront them, and get rid of them (ASSP, "My Conversion," August 1933).

After much soul searching, Ekarte decided to remain in Liverpool and preach. In 1922 he established the ACM and began to hold services in private rooms and the open air because he lacked sufficient funds to secure a building. In these early years Ekarte primarily preached to African seamen. On at least two occasions he was arrested for preaching in the streets and soliciting money. In July 1931, the mission received an anonymous gift, probably from an admirer of the late Mary Slessor or Mr. Wilkie, which allowed Ekarte to establish a home at 122/124 Hill Street. The mission was centrally located in Toxteth, a short distance from the docks (ASSP, "My Conversion," August 1933).

The AWIM was also established in 1922 but it was under the auspices of the Liverpool Methodist Mission. The mission was originally located away from the docks on Warwick Street, on the outskirts of the area where most blacks resided. In November 1928, the AWIM moved to Parliament Street into a building purchased for the mission by a private Liverpool charity, the Waddilove Trust Fund (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 12 November 1928). Reverend Earnest Adkins, a white preacher, was in charge of the AWIM until 1932. At that time he was succeeded by Reverend J. G. A. Lawson from Sierra Leone. Like Ekarte,

Adkins worked among seamen, but, unlike Ekarte, a considerable number of those he served were Liverpool-born blacks and long-term residents of the city. An additional difference between Adkins and Ekarte was that severe financial hardship was encountered by Ekarte but no such hardship was experienced by Adkins. Consequently, the financial circumstances and conditions experienced by the two pastors affected the effectiveness of their missions (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 1 August 1923; Harris to Ekarte, 1 January 1936).

Within a year of the opening of the AWIM, Adkins solicited financial support from various philanthropic organizations. In January 1923, he wrote to John Harris of the Anti-Slavery Society seeking operating funds (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 3 January 1923). As secretary of the Committee for the Welfare of Africans in Europe War Fund (Committee), Harris controlled funds that were to be used for the welfare of Africans in England. The fund was the nucleus of money raised by Harris for supplying comfort and other amenities to African soldiers serving in the African labor contingent in Europe during World War I. At the end of the war, a balance of £2,000 was invested and the income was used for the assistance of Africans in distress with a preference for those who had served in World War I (ASSP, Welfare Fund, 31 May 1936). This large amount of money made Harris and his Committee an important funding source for blacks.

Harris's interests in black affairs did not arise solely from the funding of Adkin's mission. His colonial experience in Africa had stimulated his interest in racial matters and had shaped his racial ideology. Harris had been a missionary in the Congo and he had advocated the segregation of whites and Africans in Rhodesia and South Africa as a means of guarding traditional African values. Later, he became increasingly more interested in the issues involving Britain's black population as the League of Nations assumed the role and responsibilities that had been the concerns of the Anti-Slavery Society. His colonial experience, however, hindered him from nourishing an enlightened attitude toward the growth of the black population in Britain (Rich 1984, 75). Instead, Harris became a leading proponent of the movement to repatriate blacks. He saw the presence of blacks in Britain's port cities as a "growing evil" and felt that the presence of blacks would lead to an increase in interracial relationships. Black men associating with white women would eventually create a population of mixed race children who, Harris believed, were unemployable and would contribute to the growth of crime, prostitution, illegitimacy, and further depression within the port cities.⁵ Thus, until his death in 1940, Harris maintained that the first "practical step was to limit the inflow" of black people, and the second was to repatriate those blacks who were presently living in the country. He recommended that the

government should assist in sending blacks back to their various African and Caribbean homelands. Harris wanted philanthropic institutions to assist in eliminating the problem of mixed race children and that of their parents who, for various reasons, could not leave the British Isles (ASSP, Harris, "An Open Sore." n.d.). Paul Rich, a contemporary political historian, succinctly described Harris as a "benevolent paternalist" from the old school (1984, 75).

Adkins quickly sought Harris's confidence. He informed Harris of the work he was doing at the AWIM and the problems he encountered as he worked among Liverpool's black population. He explained that he found the attitude of the English toward blacks to be a hindrance to his relief efforts. On one occasion he had to suspend services because of a fight between an African and his white neighbor. Harris did not want the incident to rekindle the tense atmosphere that had led to the riots of 1919 (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 2 July 1923). In Liverpool immediately after World War I there were nearly 5,000 blacks in or around Toxteth. The presence of these blacks along with the city's unemployment, housing shortage, and an atmosphere of sexual jealousy caused much anxiety among the white population and this led to racial violence. During the disturbances, blacks were randomly attacked and their property destroyed, and Charles Wootton, a 29-year old ex-naval reserveman, was drowned by a white mob (U.K. PRO 1919). The police responded by arresting and charging blacks, many of whom were innocent bystanders. In addition, Adkins related to Harris that he questioned the religious conviction of blacks in Liverpool. He felt that it was reasonable to believe that blacks, especially those from Africa, were not inclined to religion. Adkins based this assumption upon the fact that attendance at Sunday services was rather low among the African seamen (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 4 April 1923).

Adkins confided further in Harris. He wrote that the various activities and attitudes of blacks whom he encountered were not conducive to positive growth and development. Adkins expressed bewilderment as he tried to understand why blacks were not willing to accept the status quo in Liverpool. As he saw it, the city was experiencing economic hardship and, because of the depression in the shipping industry, everybody—black and white—was suffering. Adkins felt that, because they were so visible and were seen as depriving whites of jobs, blacks should be prepared to accept being targets of anger and racial hatred (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 2 July 1933).

Consequently, in his letters to John Harris, Adkins rarely advocated or suggested that the blacks whom he served were capable of personal growth, not to mention deserving of racial, economic, or social equality. For the most part, Adkins's intentions were well meaning and in accordance with Victorian paternalism, but, from a humanistic

perspective, he failed to grasp the intensity of frustration felt by those blacks who had lived in Liverpool for many years, manned its ships, and answered England's call for service during World War I.

Harris responded to Adkins's concerns by supplying him with literature issued by the Anti-Slavery Society. Then, in August 1923, Harris's committee presented Adkins with a grant of £10 to be used to finance the AWIM's services (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 1 August 1923). This amount may seem small even by 1923 standards, but this was not really so, when one takes into account that in 1926 the mission's yearly offering was only £8.2s (Methodist Mission, 1926). The AWIM continued to receive an annual grant during the interwar years, ranging from £10 in 1923 to £25 in 1939, and occasionally an extra £15 was presented (ASSP, Harris to AWIM, 1923-39).

Harris's influence should not be measured solely by the amount of money his committee provided. Once Harris accepted Adkins and his work, many more avenues of public and private support became available to the AWIM. For example, in 1929 Harris asked John Fletcher of the Society of Friends to send the AWIM funds that "would be well spent" (ASSP, Harris to Fletcher, 16 December 1929). The mission received its primary operating expenses from the Wesleyan Home Missions Committee (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 3 August 1923). It also benefitted from the Waddilove Trust Committee, a local agency that donated £226 in 1926; the money assisted the mission in acquiring new accommodations on Parliament Street two years later (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 30 April 1926; Methodist Mission, 1928). Before granting these funds, a representative of the Waddilove Trust Committee, accompanied by Harris, visited Liverpool's black population. The representative, William Davey, reported that it was difficult to find a more "distressed class of people...they are undesirable tenants...the only bright spot in their lives is the splendid devotion of Mr. Adkins...he has been appointed as a kind of lay missionary to watch over these coloured people" (ASSP, Davey to Harris, 24 February 1926). Davey's comments reveal that he also viewed blacks in Liverpool as helpless people who needed to be watched over and cared for.

The AWIM provided its black patrons with a place to worship, social welfare services, and emergency loans—which appear to have been its most popular service. From 1926 to 1930, the mission loaned an average of £32 per year to its patrons (ASSP, AWIM's Financial Reports, 1926-1930). This aspect of the mission's services reveals much about the conditions of Liverpool's black population during the depression years. The AWIM's financial reports show that many of its patrons were often in need of the bare necessities of life such as food, clothing, medicine, and housing. From September 1923 to March 1924, the mission granted 41 loans for the stated reason of purchasing food (ASSP,

AWIM's Financial Reports, 1923-24). In addition, certain names were listed numerous times which implies that many individuals were in dire crisis. For example, the name J. Bartels appears several times each year from 1925 to 1928 (ASSP, AWIM's Financial Reports, 1925-28). Although most of the loans were for 5s or less, that amount provided needed relief for blacks who were obviously experiencing difficulties.

To better serve its patrons financially, in 1926 the AWIM established a thrift club which allowed individuals to save money. Apparently, Adkins believed that many of the problems that the mission's patrons experienced resulted from their lack of financial responsibility. Therefore, the object of the thrift club was to encourage thrift by making it profitable to save. The Waddilove Trust donated £20 to serve as a nucleus (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 8 and 30 April 1926). Participants were allowed to deposit up to 3s per week, and at the end of the year they could withdraw their deposits and receive an interest of 3d. per shilling. In January 1929, the club had a balance of £65. Adkins was pleased but, owing to his lack of faith in the financial abilities of blacks, he was also surprised that the club was operating successfully (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 3 January 1929).

In addition to financial relief, the AWIM provided reading rooms, recreational facilities, hospital visitation, and Sunday services for those who wished to attend (ASSP, Adkins to Home Mission, 17 June 1927). Although the AWIM's various programs were needed by blacks in Liverpool and Adkins was officially in charge, in many ways the operations of the mission were an extension of John Harris's beliefs and works.

For instance, Harris's past experiences with African students had caused him to develop a certain mistrust of blacks in financial affairs. As secretary of the Committee, Harris was responsible for granting loans and other funds to Africans in England, especially students. On occasion, the recipients of these funds misused the money or failed to repay the loans. Therefore, Harris suggested that he should have complete control of all the AWIM's funds, including the money deposited in the thrift club. Undoubtedly this advice contributed to the absence of any blacks on the five-member advisory committee that administered the mission's funds (ASSP, Davey and Harris to Committee, 24 February 1926). The decision to exclude blacks from the advisory committee was indicative of how racial prejudice worked within the parameters of this paternalistic organization to stifle the cultivation of black leadership within Liverpool's black population.

In addition, the AWIM served as a clearinghouse for Africans who, for various reasons, were being sent back to their homeland. On many occasions, Harris solicited the assistance of Adkins in providing shelter and booking passage on ships departing Liverpool destined for

West Africa (ASSP, Harris to Adkins, 18 February 1924). Throughout his tenure at the Anti-Slavery Society, Harris was always willing to help blacks, whether they were students or seamen, return to their home colonies. But, Harris was devoutly against sending whites to these areas. Adkins often requested Harris's assistance in reuniting white women with their black husbands who were in Africa or the West Indies. On each request Adkins was denied help. Harris believed that such interracial relationships were the major problem associated with a black presence in cities such as Liverpool because the net effect of such unions was a large population of mixed race or "half-caste" children (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 3 October 1923; Harris to Adkins, 8 October 1923).

Consequently, it was through the issue of mixed race children that Harris, Adkins and the AWIM entered into one of their most damaging partnerships. The offspring of interracial couples, more than any other issue, displayed the racialization of thought in various charitable and welfare bodies in British seaports (Rich 1986, 136). In 1930 it was estimated that there were at least 1,350 mixed race children in the city of Liverpool (Fletcher 1930, 1). The condition of these children attracted the attention of the Liverpool University Settlement Movement, which was a minor supporter of the AWIM. The Settlement opened in 1908 and at that time it did most of its work among Liverpool's white working class, but as welfare programs gradually came under the control of the state after World War I, the Settlement began to engage in social investigation (King and King 1928, 127). During the interwar years, the social conditions of blacks, especially mixed race children, became a concern of the settlement. In the main, the organization's interest in mixed race children was well meaning, but because of its paternalistic philosophy, its views were usually tempered with hopelessness and despair. The tone was set during the early 1930s by Harold King, a long-term warden who propagated the belief that the presence of blacks created a most "disturbing moral and social condition which tended to worsen steadily if slowly as time goes on" (ASSP, King to Harris, 19 December 1935).

At a Settlement meeting on 1 December 1927, Rachel Fleming, an anthropologist at University College, Aberystwyth, who studied child growth in seaport towns, stated "there is no doubt that the presence of increasing numbers of half-caste children inheriting disharmonious mental and physical traits, depresses very considerably the life of the Dockland population of Liverpool" (King and King 1928, 129). This type of sentiment led to the creation of the Liverpool Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children. The association consisted of representatives from the School of Social Science at Liverpool University, the University Settlement, the Liverpool Education

Committee, the Personal Service Society, and the Women Police Patrols. They decided to appoint Muriel E. Fletcher, a former student in the School of Social Science at Liverpool University, to conduct a full survey and to explore the nature of Liverpool's mixed race problem (Fletcher 1930, 5).

Supported by the Settlement, Fletcher published her results in a 1930 study entitled *A Report into the Color Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports*. Officials at the Settlement and the association praised the report as "a most thorough investigation and an important contribution to the problem." They took this view primarily because the 55-page survey upheld the Settlement's negative sentiments that the presence of mixed race children tended to create an environment of prostitution, illegitimate children, and moral decline, and the most viable solution would be to limit the influx of blacks (King and King 1928, 129; Fletcher 1930, 5).

The Fletcher study was based upon very questionable or dubious research methods. Fletcher stated that her study included a sampling of 450 black families, but a close examination of her research data revealed that she had met with only 91 families. Also, she did not collect her information by using a random sampling that might have rendered findings more representative of the entire black population. Instead, 359 of Fletcher's cases came from welfare organizations (Fletcher 1930, 10). Welfare organizations were by their nature designed to serve people who were not doing well in society. Therefore, the family cases that came from these agencies told a story of black people in dire crisis.

Indeed, Fletcher's study projected an extremely biased view of blacks in Liverpool and other port cities. Blacks already were experiencing difficulties in attempting to present a positive image and in breaking the barriers of color prejudice and negative racial stereotypes. The Fletcher study provided many white officials with what they perceived as scholarly evidence of the inferiority and moral ineptness of blacks. Blacks reacted angrily to the study's implications. Miss Fletcher herself was a victim of a knife attack and she left Liverpool rather hastily.⁶

Adkins at the AWIM was also rather disturbed at the possible effects of the report. He informed Harris that "it would take months or even years to repair the damage that it has caused," and he noted that many of his patrons were visibly upset over the report (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 7 August 1930; *Liverpool Post & Mercury* 16 June 1930). Correspondence between Adkins and Harris addressed the major criticisms Adkins had concerning the report. These objections were: 1) Adkins had not given permission for the name of the mission to be used in the report, yet, the study had mentioned the AWIM; 2) he had

welcomed Fletcher to the mission and had permitted her to use the mission to conduct research in good faith, but she had misused his hospitality; and 3) he was being blamed for supplying her with this damaging information. He intimated that the onus of the study was being unfairly placed on him by some of his patrons and many of the blacks he served were so put out with him that his life was being threatened. Indeed, Adkins reported that attendance at the mission had decreased and, on one occasion, a group of blacks planned to destroy the mission but "cooler heads prevailed" and nothing was done. Throughout all of the commotion, Adkins continued to maintain publicly that he was unaware that Fletcher was conducting research for such a degrading and hostile report (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 21 November 1931).

In reality, however, it is unlikely that Adkins was totally duped by Fletcher. She was very active in the operations of the mission while she was conducting her research. She attended women's meetings and established a Girls Club; Adkins' daughter even aided Fletcher in some of the research. Moreover, Adkins's letters to Harris reveal that he generally agreed with the report's findings. On one occasion he wrote, "of course, a great deal of the Report was only too true...[and in regards to] Miss Fletcher's cleverness and diligence, I have no fault to find" (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 21 November 1931). Later, in another letter, he asserted that the report was a very serious one and, though exaggerated in some points, it was true for the most part. But in his opinion, the report should not have been broadcast; instead, it should have been kept in the hands of responsible persons. Harris believed the report to be a "most able presentation of the position,...and he encouraged Adkins to continue his work (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 28 December 1931; Harris to Adkins, 30 December 1931). Adkins's views and behavior reveal much about the plight of black people in Liverpool during the interwar years. He allowed Fletcher to use his facility whose major purpose was to serve those blacks who needed relief. Then he publicly criticized—but secretly agreed with—Fletcher's negative and biased findings. Adkins's actions were truly indicative of how hidden prejudice and discrimination operated in Liverpool.

Under Adkins's tutelage, the AWIM spent little of its resources addressing the special needs of mixed race children. Other than the recreational facilities and Girls and Boys Clubs that were available to all children, the AWIM put forward no programs designed to alleviate the social and economic woes of Liverpool's mixed race population. Adkins, like the members of the University Settlement, identified the children's plight, but he initiated no constructive policies to improve their conditions. Therefore, his involvement in the issue had only negative consequences for the children and other blacks in Liverpool.

In the final analysis, the Fletcher study took its toll on Adkins and it contributed to his decision to retire in July 1932 (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, 29 July 1932). He was succeeded by a black minister, the Reverend J. G. A. Lawson from Sierra Leone. Lawson continued to send Harris annual reports and in return the AWIM received its yearly grant (ASSP, Middleton, "A Report on the AWIM" 18 May 1933). Several members of Liverpool's black population who were interviewed for this study remember Lawson as a kind, generous person who conducted relief work especially for the children.⁷ But, interestingly, Lawson never established the same trusted relationship with Harris that had existed between Adkins and Harris. The fluid and personal letters which were exchanged between Adkins and Harris were not continued during Lawson's tenure at the AWIM. Also, eventually, all of the mission's financial matters were taken over by the central office of the Liverpool Methodist Mission. Perhaps Harris's mistrust of blacks in handling money was a contributory factor in the central office's assumption of the AWIM's fiscal affairs (ASSP, Middleton to Harris, July 1934).

Lawson was the only black on the staff of the Liverpool Methodist Mission and he was selected by the mission board to head the AWIM. The Liverpool Methodist Mission did not intentionally articulate racist epithets; yet, it obviously held a negative image of black people. This less than flattering imagery was displayed in an article in its 1935 annual report, which described members of the AWIM's congregation. The article glorified an observer's view of members of the AWIM in which they were described as "frizzy-haired girlies, little piccaninies...and polished blacks of...West Africa" (Liverpool Methodist Mission Report 1935). In addition, the agency's annual reports occasionally carried articles entitled "God's Other Children" in referring to blacks in Liverpool, and, in one edition, a photograph of black children was labeled "The Mixed Races" (Liverpool Methodist Mission Reports, 1936-38). These descriptions were symbolic of how racial prejudice and paternalism surfaced in an organization which served Liverpool's black population. Indeed, unwittingly, the Liverpool Methodist Mission sanctioned this negative imagery in its description of the AWIM's black congregation.

It was precisely this type of racist imagery that infuriated the Reverend G. Daniel Ekarte, and he directed the thrust of his protest to eradicate this perception of black people. Evidence suggests that Ekarte presented himself not only as a missionary, but also as a spokesman for racial and economic equality. On his arrival in Liverpool, he was disturbed by the manner in which blacks were treated, and he was surprised to learn of the negative image of the black population. He was dismayed when he discovered that the type of Christian equality and harmony that he had been exposed to in

Nigeria as a student of Mary Slessor did not exist in Liverpool. This absence of Christian brotherhood was made all too clear to Ekarte as he walked the streets of the city. On one occasion, a black person informed him that he had "come to the wrong country and the worst town in the country as far as Christian charity goes...black folk go to no church here, people here don't know God" (ASSP, "My Conversion," August 1933). On another occasion, Ekarte spoke to a white minister who was accompanied by two white women. When the minister ignored him, the two ladies informed the minister, "that boy is speaking to you." The minister curtly replied, "dare a nigger to speak to me in the street" (ASSP, "My Conversion," August 1933). In the minister's mind-set, Ekarte was inferior to whites; he believed that Ekarte should not have expected to have been accorded the same civil greetings that he would have bestowed on any white person.

Ekarte could not come to accept as a matter of course such a display of rudeness, a lack of Christian love, and the pervasiveness of racial and economic inequities. His refusal to accept the social and economic situation and racial imagery ascribed to black people led Ekarte, unlike Adkins and Lawson, to bring a strong racist approach to his work. His services at the ACM frequently contained prayers for black leaders in Africa and elsewhere (Manley 1959, 280). In August 1933, he sent a call for universal prayers in observance of the 100th anniversary of the abolition of slavery throughout the British Dominions and he praised those in England and America who had fought against slavery (ASSP, *ACM Newsletter*, August 1933). Although Ekarte contemplated creating a program that would have transported mixed race children to West Africa, he did not advocate a comprehensive "Back to Africa" scheme or segregationist policy for black people.

Garveyism was present in England during the 1930s but there is no evidence that Ekarte was an avid follower of Marcus Garvey. However, it is reasonable to assume that Ekarte would have had few problems with the aspects of Garvey's ideology that stressed racial pride and Black Nationalism. In one of the ACM's newsletters, Ekarte briefly mentioned the Universal Negro Improvement Committee which probably was a reference to Garvey's organization. Ekarte's beliefs that the struggles of blacks was a world-wide struggle, and his view that Africa was and always would be the legitimate home of blacks paralleled those of Garvey (ASSP, *ACM Newsletter*, August 1933). Also, in 1935, Ekarte and his followers protested the events in Ethiopia, whereas, the AWIM carefully avoided them as well as all other political issues (ASSP, Taylor to Harris, 4 December 1935).

On the national level, Ekarte was admired by the League of Colored People (LCP), a multi-racial organization established in London in March 1931 to promote the social, economic, and political

rights of Britain's black population. The LCP and its president, the Jamaican Dr. Harold Moody, favored the expansion of Ekarte's work in Liverpool. The LCP was particularly pleased that Ekarte worked to rejuvenate interest in the flagging Liverpool branch of the LCP (*The Keys*, July-September 1937, 2). In addition, Ekarte was recognized by Pan-Africanists in Britain as being very useful and doing good work among Liverpool's black population. Thomas Ras Makonnen, who later became the general secretary of Britain's Pan-African Federation, felt that Ekarte had found a need among blacks in Liverpool, especially among African seamen, as he proceeded to "build a little world for himself" (Makonnen 1973, 129-30). At the Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945, the ACM was identified as doing legitimate welfare work among blacks in Liverpool (Padmore 1971, 141). Ekarte developed a reputation for wanting to instill racial pride in his followers while, at the same time, he wished to motivate them to take full advantage of the opportunities which existed in England. Therefore, he encouraged his followers to participate in a struggle for their equal rights to work and live in Liverpool (ASSP, *ACM Newsletter*, August 1933).

Particularly during the 1930s, Ekarte was especially active in lobbying for better working conditions and higher pay for African seamen who worked for the Elder Dempster Shipping Company. African seamen usually performed the same work as English seamen but there was a substantial differential in their wages. For example, in 1939 the wage for an African seaman who served as a fireman was £7.10s per month. The wage for a white seaman who performed the same job was £9.2.6d (U.K. PRO 1941). African seamen who refused to sail on Elder Dempster vessels because of unfair wages were occasionally classified as strikers by the company. The company then would request that the Ministry of Labor not grant the men any relief payments (ASSP, Adkins to Harris, April 1923). Ekarte informed the National Union of Seamen, the Colonial Office, the Ministry of Labor, and various members of parliament of the manner in which the company mistreated African seamen by paying them less and the practice of confiscating their identification papers which often placed the men in danger of being declared aliens (U.K. PRO 1941). His protest of the conditions of black seamen made Ekarte very unpopular among the shipping companies. It also caused white seamen to become suspicious of the influence Ekarte was gaining among black seamen. The sentiment of a white seaman as he addresses Ekarte revealed this distrust:

You with that collar round your neck, you're not playing the game, mate. You don't know we [black and white seamen] are all together in the same bunker in the bowels of the sea; yet, you come

across here, and with your damn collar you try to divide the black from us (Makonnen 1973, 129).

This seaman expressed precisely what provoked Ekarte. Indeed, blacks and whites did work together in the "bowels of the sea." The problem was blacks were not treated the same as whites, either at sea or on land. Most assuredly, as Ekarte saw the situation, it was whites who were not "playing the game" fairly.

In addition to advocating improved working conditions, on numerous occasions Ekarte accompanied blacks who had been victims of racial attacks, unscrupulous landlords, and unfair labor practices when they were taken before courts and the labor exchanges (ASSP, *ACM Newsletter*, October-December 1933). His persistent desire to obtain a fair deal for blacks brought him notoriety among blacks but it also incurred the displeasure of Liverpool's police. The police rarely made specific charges against Ekarte, but he was constantly annoyed by them (U.K. PRO 1941).

A survey of 30 people who lived in or near the center of Toxteth in the 1930s revealed that 27 (or 90 percent) knew of Ekarte, had met him personally, or knew about his work. Ekarte was generally described as a "helpful person," "religious," "always preaching," and "conscious about Africa" (Wilson 1988). A seaman from Nigeria described Ekarte as "a good man...I sang in his choir...he got me out of jail when I was arrested for not having proper papers" (Menberre 1988). A Liverpool-born black woman said that her father was a printer for Ekarte and Ekarte was always caring for blacks who got into trouble (Hanning 1988). George Quarles, a Liverpool-born black, remembered that Ekarte often marched down Pitt Street at 6 a.m. on Sunday mornings singing hymns and summoning people to the mission (1988).⁸ Admittedly, some West Indians felt that Ekarte was mainly concerned with Africans and the needs of West Indians were secondary, but they too admired him for his work (U.K. PRO 1941).

From the beginning in 1922, Ekarte's primary goal was to provide religious services for African seamen and other blacks in Liverpool. But after Ekarte acquired accommodations on Hill Street in 1931, he greatly expanded his services. Although the ACM lacked adequate financial support, it was not an haphazard operation. The building at 122/124 Hill Street consisted of two large houses merged into one; there was a large hall for services and meetings, room for classes, three bedrooms, a canteen, and a club room (ASSP, *ACM Newsletter*, October-December 1933). The mission had an executive committee which consisted of a president, five vice presidents, a chairman, treasurer and a secretary (ASSP, Ekarte to Harris, 21 April 1934). Unlike the AWIM, practically all of the ACM's committee members were black (U. K. PRO 1941).

The ACM's annual report for the year 1933 reveals the extent of its services and activities. The mission had a total of 726 registered members. For the year, its Sunday morning and evening services had an attendance of 6,452; Sunday school, 3,611; prayer meetings, 2,104; mother's meetings, 955; gospel meetings, 2,079; Boy Scouts, 1,173; and Girl Scouts, 677. In addition, Ekarte wrote 1,734 letters to blacks who were at sea, made 5,088 home visits and 352 hospital visits. The report also revealed that Ekarte aided 31 individuals in matters pertaining to passports and unemployment papers, and the ACM for the year cost approximately £260.10s.6d (ASSP, ACM Annual Report 1933). These figures show that the ACM was a beehive of activity and provided significant relief for Liverpool's black population. Not only did seamen rely upon its services, but other members of the black population—as well as other organizations such as the LCP—began to look towards the ACM to provide a measure of relief for blacks in Liverpool.

However, the respect that Ekarte and the ACM generated in blacks was not mirrored in the mainstream of society. It appears that Ekarte's outspokenness on issues pertaining to racial and economic equality inhibited his ability to secure sufficient operating funds. Thus it became increasingly difficult for the ACM to operate as a relief agency. During the interwar years, none of the agencies which funded the AWIM granted financial assistance to Ekarte. Furthermore, to make Ekarte's situation more difficult, not only did they refuse to give any money to him, but they also referred to him as a "troublemaker" and suggested that others not get involved with his activities (ASSP, King to Harris, 29 October 1937).

Like Adkins at the AWIM, Ekarte requested funds from John Harris and his Committee for the Welfare of Africans in Europe. In 1934, Ekarte explained the nature of his work, the daily operation of the mission, attendance at the mission's services, educational programs, and the various other services offered by the ACM. He also presented Harris with a detailed listing of members of the mission's working committees. Ekarte especially explained to Harris that he had been renting the ACM's building at £80 per year but he preferred to own the building. He pointed out that it was difficult if not impossible for an African to borrow money to buy the property. If the Committee would provide funding, the mission would be owned by the Committee and the ACM would pay an annual mortgage of 6 percent interest. Ekarte thought this was a fair deal and he pleaded for aid. He emphasized that the ACM's financial situation was critical. Obviously, he was desperate and would have appreciated any assistance. Nevertheless, Harris steadfastly refused to offer any money (ASSP, Ekarte to Harris, 21 and 24 April 1934).

Ekarte was persistent and continued to request money from Harris. The mission subsisted on small private donations and the support of trustees, one of whom was the Bishop of Liverpool. But in 1936, for no stated reason, the mission lost the support of the trustees and, therefore, funds were no longer forthcoming. Ekarte was in a difficult position because he desperately needed funds to lease the premises for another year (ASSP, Ekarte to Harris, 13 March 1936). In two letters to Harris dated 31 March 1936, Ekarte appealed to the "Christian spirit and sympathy" of Harris to prevent the mission's doors from closing. Ekarte reminded Harris that his Committee was established to offer Africans in Liverpool financial aid and advice. Ekarte also felt that, although Harris refused to grant him money, he could at least use his office to connect him with other philanthropic organizations. In a final plea, Ekarte requested that Harris ignore the color of his skin: "look not upon me because I am black, the skin of a man is no barrier to salvation" (ASSP, Ekarte to Harris, 31 March 1936).

By this point, Harris was really fed up with Ekarte's repeated requests for money. He told Ekarte to refrain from addressing any more letters to his office because they caused a great deal of trouble without any advantage. He further stated that the constitution of the Committee prohibited him from making any grants to the ACM (ASSP, Harris to Ekarte, 1 April 1936). An examination of the Committee's mission statement does not indicate that an organization such as the ACM was ineligible for financial aid. In fact, its provisions stated that the funds were to be used for the assistance of blacks in any way which the local trustees thought necessary (ASSP, Committee Annual Report, 1936). The ACM and the AWIM were engaged in many of the same types of activities and provided services for blacks in Liverpool, yet the AWIM qualified for money from the Committee and the ACM did not. Harris's constitutional objection was not valid.

Indeed, it appears incontrovertible that it was Harris's objection to Ekarte's strong racist behavior and his agitation for the social and economic improvement of blacks that caused him to refuse Ekarte's requests for funds and not a constitutional restriction. This was revealed when Mr. Bottomly of the Colonial Office asked Harris to help Ekarte (ASSP, Bottomly to Harris, 21 October 1937). In his reply to Bottomly, Harris stated that the Committee would not consent to awarding Ekarte any money because he was a "Vigorous Beggar" and they had no funds available for his purposes (ASSP, Harris to Bottomly, 22 October 1937).

Ekarte continued his work in Liverpool, he gradually engendered the wrath of members of the University Settlement. Their paths crossed as Ekarte became more concerned about the plight of Liverpool's mixed race children. Of course, Ekarte did not hold the same views

regarding mixed race children as the Settlement; instead, Ekarte, along with the LCP opposed the Settlement's policy of regarding these children as a problem and encouraging the repatriation of blacks (ASSP, Collect to King, 28 October 1937). Harold King of the University Settlement contested Ekarte's efforts to become more involved in the various issues surrounding Liverpool's mixed race population. But King's efforts were not as effective as he would have liked. Ekarte proceeded to publicize a proposal to alleviate the distress of Liverpool's mixed race children. Apparently, Ekarte informed a rather obscure newspaper referred to as *The People* that he intended to address the conditions of these children by devising a plan whereby those who had African fathers could voluntarily go to places in West Africa (ASSP, King to Harris, 29 October 1937). Although Ekarte's plan was never put into operation, his action showed that he was willing to put forward an effort to aid Liverpool's mixed race children. In addition, it should be noted that during and after World War II, Ekarte was involved with the so-called "brown Babies" who were the offspring of black American soldiers and English women. In association with Learie Constantine, the West Indian Cricketer, and George Padmore of the Pan-African Federation, Ekarte unsuccessfully attempted to purchase property and establish a home for these children (Constantine 1954, 100). Ekarte also attempted to develop a program whereby black women in America could adopt the children. This plan failed primarily because of negative publicity and the disapproval of both the British and American governments (Smith 1987, 210).

Ekarte realized that mixed race children in Liverpool faced additional discrimination and hardship because of their mixed parentage. Unlike Adkins at the AWIM, Ekarte believed that providing special services for these children was an important step in improving the overall condition of Liverpool's black population. However, both King and Harris were annoyed at Ekarte's proposal to relocate these children to West Africa, although, on previous occasions, Harris had been in favor of getting rid of mixed race children, or, for that matter, all blacks. When Ekarte approached King for operating funds for the ACM, King flatly refused him any money. King then informed Harris that Ekarte was viewed in an unfavorable light by most officials in Liverpool (ASSP, King to Harris, 29 October 1937). It appears that King's rejection put an end to Ekarte's pursuit of funds from these sources. Although the ACM was unable to secure funds from Harold King, John Harris, and other philanthropic agencies, the mission did not fold. It continued to subsist on small offerings, donations, and a few private gifts (U. K. PRO 1941; Menberre 1988).

By the end of the interwar years, the influence of King and Harris and their respective organizations was weakening. John Harris

died in April 1940, and Miss E. K. Batty became the acting secretary of the Committee (ASSP, AWIM Annual Report, 1940). At the same time, the onset of World War II led to a marked decline in the funding of missions and other relief organizations in Liverpool and elsewhere. Consequently, as a result of wartime constraints, the Committee adopted a resolution in 1940 calling for the Colonial Office to repatriate all Africans who were without visible means of support, in receipt of public assistance and unemployment benefits, ineligible for military service, or not students. There is no evidence to suggest that the Colonial Office officially accepted this resolution. Nonetheless, the resolution provides a clear example of the mind-set in which the Committee viewed blacks in Britain. Apparently, it felt that Britain had no place for blacks from the Empire who were not serving the Mother Country. Furthermore, within the confines of good Victorian paternalism, the Committee's resolution implied that, although removal was compulsory, it was being done for those people's own good because of the wartime dangers in Britain (ASSP, Committee Resolution, 1940). It should also be noted that the Committee planned to use the AWIM to organize those in Liverpool who would be deported.

Fortunately, by this time Ekarte had received considerable attention from the national government and officials at the Colonial Office decided to investigate him and his work. Their investigation revealed that he was performing useful services and was very well acquainted with the black population and, furthermore, that it would be politically advantageous for officialdom to support Ekarte. The Colonial Office felt that Ekarte's activities were positive despite the reservations of the Committee and those connected with the shipping industry. Ivor G. Cummings of the Colonial Office was so impressed with the ACM that he suggested the Colonial Office fund Ekarte (U. K. PRO 1941). Cummings, along with John L. Keith of the Colonial Office, was appreciative of how Ekarte worked among Liverpool's black population and provided relief especially for the African seamen and West Indian technicians who were arriving in Liverpool to help with the war effort. Keith eventually proposed to the treasurer that a grant of £75 be presented to Ekarte (U.K. PRO 1943).

Ekarte's popularity continued among blacks in Liverpool until the early 1950s when new black immigrants began to arrive. These new arrivals, many of whom were West Indians, were usually young and were not enamored of Ekarte's work. Resentment toward the aging African preacher arose among these recent arrivals and attendance at the ACM declined because they did not want to hear the sermons of an old preacher (Manley 1959, 280-82). At the same time, it appears that Ekarte did very little to nourish a more positive relationship between himself and the new arrivals. He isolated himself from certain

community activities, such as Stanley House, a community center sponsored by the government to provide an integrated social environment for blacks and whites (U.K. PRO Stanley House n.d.). The Colonial Office wanted Ekarte to expand the ACM to include more social functions; however, Ekarte preferred to concentrate on his pastoral work (U.K. PRO 1941). Accordingly, Ekarte became regarded by some of the new arrivals as a man who "was out for himself."⁹

To sum up, both the AWIM and the ACM provided needed services, but the AWIM rather than the ACM was favored by funding agencies because its operations and activities did not overtly promote social, economic, and racial equality and it possessed a rather paternalistic outlook towards its patrons. The AWIM was judged as the more suitable organization by John Harris and Harold King who held paternalistic beliefs regarding black people. The AWIM was often used, especially by Harris and the Committee, to carry out their beliefs and programs. The ACM was deemed as a less fitting organization because it was under the directorship of Ekarte who dared to attack the racism buried in the infrastructure of Liverpool society. Ekarte refused to accept the paternalistic notions that black people were inferior and helpless; instead, he believed that racial prejudice was pervasive in British society and blacks were victimized by it. Thus, in addition to missionary relief work, Ekarte attempted to provide blacks with positive leadership oriented toward racial, social, and economic equality. Subsequently, the failure of Ekarte to gain adequate backing during the interwar period was another means through which hidden racism surfaced to adversely affect the lives of Liverpool's black population.

During the interwar years, "benevolent paternalist" was a euphemism for "benign racist." Racist ideology, attitudes, and policies were disguised and distorted under an umbrella carried by paternalistic humanitarians or do-gooders. The relationship between the ACM and the AWIM and paternalistic agencies illustrated the insidious problems created by hidden racism in Liverpool. Ostensibly, the race relations decisions of the interwar years have had a significant impact on present-day racial inequities in that city. The employment, housing, and educational problems that are prevalent among Liverpool's black population today are, in part, products or legacies of the black experience during the interwar years.

Notes

1. The black population in Britain is estimated to have been 20,000 during the interwar years. Liverpool in 1919 had about 5,000 blacks, in 1948, about 8,000 (Fryer 1984, 296; Walvin 1973, 206).

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2. Beginning with their initial contacts with blacks during the 16th century, the British and other Europeans developed certain negative attitudes toward black people. Over the years, these attitudes were further shaped by slavery, missionary activity, pseudo-scientific racism, and colonialism. For various insights into the social construction of race on a global scale over the last four centuries, see Banton (1977, 1988), Barker (1978), Barzun (1965), Benedict (1983), Bolt (1971), Cohen (1980), Cox (1959), Franklin (1969), Harris (1969), Jordan (1968), Stepan (1982), Tinker (1977), and van den Berghe (1967).
3. Although they do not depict the Victorians as sympathetic to black people, the following studies note the Victorian ideal of service, charity, and social welfare for the less fortunate: Burns (1964), Greewood (1966), Houghton (1957), Langbaum (1967), Sorenson (1969), Walvin (1987), Young (1957).
4. Anti-Slavery Society Papers, Rhodes House Library, Oxford. MSS. Brit. Emp. S23 H1/21 African Churches Mission Newsletter, "My Conversion," August 1933). The Anti-Slavery Society Papers will hereafter be cited as ASSP.
5. In Liverpool during the interwar period, children of interracial relationships were referred to by the pejorative term "half-caste."
6. This information was supplied by Margaret Simey, the wife of the scholar T. S. Simey. Mrs. Simey published a study on charitable institutions in Liverpool and a work on the Merseyside police Authority entitled *Democracy Rediscovered*. She also represented Toxteth on the Liverpool City Council and continues to be respected by scholars and members of the community as an authoritative observer of the black experience in Liverpool.
7. These observations were made by Kate Aynsu, Eric Caddick and Joan Gibson. Aynsu was born in Liverpool in 1910. She has lived in Liverpool since her birth and, for many years, lived with an aunt in Toxteth where she experienced many of the developments which affected the black population during the interwar years. Eric Caddick is a Liverpool-born black who over the years has become a spokesman for blacks in Toxteth. He has supplied information for researchers and television documentaries. Joan Gibson was born in Liverpool in 1923; she was very helpful in relating how she and others struggled to find employment in Liverpool during the 1930s. All three individuals knew of Pastor Lawson.
8. Douglas Menberre was a seaman from Nigeria who arrived in Liverpool in 1939. Menberre worked for the Elder Dempster Company during World War II. He survived the torpedoing of his ship and has resided in Liverpool since the end of the war. Bessie Hanning was born in Liverpool in 1927. Her father Archie Lyttle, was an African seaman who arrived in Liverpool in 1920 and later married the daughter of a middle-class Irishman. Bessie Hanning was educated by her parents at home before she attended school. Her father was well known around the area where most blacks resided and was an associate of Ekarte. George Quarles was born in Liverpool in 1921. His father arrived in Liverpool from Barbados before World War I.
9. Manley (1959, 280-82). Basil Headley was a seaman from Barbados. He arrived in Liverpool in 1940 as a result of the increase in shipping because of the war. Eventually he was conscripted although he was already in the merchant navy. After refusing to serve on a vessel that was destined for North Africa, he acquired a job collecting scrap metal for the war industries. Constantly harassed by the military, he finished the war by serving as a guard for German prisoners. Headley noted that he knew of Ekarte, but he did not "have time for his sayings."

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