



# RIGHTS

by Delmer Tzib

# 19



# 19

REVOL  
UTION!



British Honduras soldiers who returned from the theatre of World War 1 were treated inhumanely by the Colonial authorities. *Photo courtesy Meg Craig Family Collection*

This book was developed by the UBAD Educational Foundation + The Image Factory Art Foundation to commemorate the 100th anniversary of what we are calling the 1919 Revolution, when Black Ex-Servicemen and Belize townspeople rose up in rebellion on 22nd and 23rd of July, 1919 to protest racism, lack of land, jobs and inequality. It is part of making connections to the resistance, and resilience part of Ourstories that is still to be told.

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NAMES OF THE MEN OF THE RETURNED CONTINGENTS.

Lieut. O. J. Schofield,

Capt L. A. Jeffrey,

Lieut G. W. Hulse,

K. B. M. McDonald, F H E  
 R. Q. M. S. McDonald, G A  
 S. M. Esquivel, M  
 C. Q. M. S. Gray, F  
 L. Cpl Rosado, P  
 L. Cpl Forte, C  
 Sgt Jax, H B  
 " Eirington, P  
 " Skeete, C C  
 " Longworth, R W  
 " Vasquez, P E  
 " Grant, E A  
 " Tonnyson, E  
 " Landesta, I  
 " Staine, M M  
 Cpl Warner, A  
 " Worrell, G  
 " Campbell, W C  
 " Cornex, C  
 " Wright, J A  
 " Gentle, P R  
 L. Cpl Hope, M O  
 " Yorke, R M  
 " Vaughan, L E  
 " Jenkins, C A  
 " Harrison, O  
 " Rogers, H K  
 " Middleton, C O  
 " Apollonia, F A  
 Private Acosta, A  
 " Adolphus, A  
 " Algucho, A  
 Private Alford, J  
 " Adderly, G  
 " Anderson, C  
 " Brown, A  
 " Bennett, C H  
 " Brooks, E  
 " Bolton, F  
 " Bowen, A P  
 " Bowman, C A  
 " Bolton, D  
 " Baker, H  
 " Cacho, W  
 " Conorquie, E  
 " Cain, D  
 " Castro, M  
 " Cacho, A B  
 " Domingo, S  
 " Eimonfarios, E  
 " Ewen, C A  
 " Flowers, A  
 " Fraser, H  
 " Flores, E  
 " Frost, B A  
 " Gill, J A  
 " Gutierrez, A  
 " Guterria, B  
 " Griffiths, M  
 " Gabourel, H  
 " Gabourel, A  
 " Green, M  
 " Gillett, L  
 " Gladden, J  
 " Garcia, W  
 " Grant, W  
 " Godoy, J  
 " Gentle H  
 " Hall A

" Hyde W  
 " Hamilton J  
 " Hamilton P  
 " Hules E  
 " Hedman W  
 " Henry G.  
 " Hoar D  
 " Ingram B  
 " Ifield F  
 " Jones C  
 " Jones D  
 " Kelly J  
 " Landesta W  
 " Linch T  
 " Lemott J  
 " Lopez P  
 " Leal, S  
 " Lewis P  
 " Lorenzo M  
 " Lopez R  
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 " McKoy R  
 " Marin, A  
 " Miller, O  
 " Meggs W  
 " Miller E  
 " Morgan L  
 " McKoy, C  
 " Moss, Z  
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 " Murray, J  
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 " Patrick, D  
 " Perra, F  
 " Pollard, G  
 " Price, J B  
 " Prince, H A  
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 " Parkes, W  
 " Rivero, J T  
 " Richards, D  
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 " Rodriguez, L  
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 " Sealay, E  
 " Statber, D T  
 " Spratt, B  
 " Sebastian, E  
 " Smith, E  
 " Smith, W  
 " Sentill, H  
 " Sabido, G  
 " Swasey, L  
 " Taylor, T J  
 " Thompson, J  
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 " Panten, R  
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 " Hall, R W  
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 " Goff, A E  
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 " Rogers, W B  
 Private Taylor, A

Private Vasquez, F  
 " Vaughan, W H  
 " Welsh, R A  
 " Welsh, E A  
 " Williams, V  
 " Wright, E  
 " Webster, J  
 " Willecks, A  
 " Watlor, C  
 " Watson, D  
 " Yearwood, J  
 " Yates, H W  
 " Young, J  
 " Zalam, V  
 " Zaniga, J C  
 Sgt. Stanford, J  
 " Dalrymple, B  
 " Feltz, F  
 " Ogaldes, H  
 " Valasquez, G  
 " Wills, E  
 " Batson, C  
 " Lind, M  
 " Graham P  
 Private Barrow, D  
 " McDonald G  
 " Myvett, J  
 " Spooner G  
 " Sampson A  
 " Hamilton, H  
 C. S. M. Foster, C A  
 C. Q. M. S. Grant, J H  
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 " Gordon, A H  
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 " Yzaguirre, W  
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 L. Sgt Vernon, H  
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 " LaCroix H  
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 " Hemsley, T  
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 " Sutherland, C  
 " Young, A  
 " Savery, C  
 " Poo, N  
 L. Cpl Barrows, J  
 " Hulse, G  
 " Burns, C  
 " McGilvery, C  
 " Carcamo, P  
 " Avery, W  
 " Leslie R  
 " McDonald, R  
 " Walto, T H  
 " Gaskin, H  
 Private  
 " Aden, T  
 " Alarcon, M  
 " Anles, D  
 " Arnold, G P

Private Anderson, F  
 " Baptist, S  
 " Barcelona, M  
 " Biliary, E  
 " Brooks, T  
 " Bayles, B  
 " Bowden, C  
 " Blackwood, H  
 " Corres, J P  
 " Campbell, D G  
 " Castro, C  
 " Castillo, F  
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 " Clarke, D  
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 " Gardiner, R C  
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 " Handfield, J  
 " Harvey, G H  
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 " Laurence, J  
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 " McDonald, J  
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 " Moody, E  
 " Maldonado, S  
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 " Molino, F  
 " Miller, T  
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 " McField, S  
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 " Perry B  
 " Petillo O  
 " Pitts R A  
 " Quallo L  
 " Robateau J  
 " Reid, J  
 " Reno J  
 " Robertson, M  
 " Roche, F  
 " Savala E  
 " Spains M A

Private Shaw, J  
 " Smith, D  
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 " Savery L  
 " Spencer H  
 " Thomas S  
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 " Tillet A O  
 " Thompson R  
 " Thoms L  
 " Gillett G  
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 " Vernon, D  
 " Williams, B O  
 " Walker, N  
 " Wright, H  
 " Wright, W  
 " Welsh, J  
 " Yorke, E  
 " Young, W  
 " Yates, M  
 " Young, W C  
 " Martin, M  
 " Rogers, W S  
 " Sawyers, B  
 Sick  
 Private Hamilton W  
 " Flores, E

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Drawing of Government House grounds by Jose Colindres and Curt Smith, 2019

By the late 1890s, brown middle-class Kriols realized that the changes in colonial administration benefitted only white elites. They were also alarmed by the 1894 riot where forest workers rose up against the ruling class. As a result, they attempted to convince British officials to revive the system of an elected colonial legislature. This process was maintained by an allied-like relationship between the clearer middle-class Kriols and the British authorities.



Br. Honduras Volunteer Camp

**The middle class Kriols held an allegiance to the British master through loyalty to the British Empire. The strategy of empire loyalty centered on the Battle of St. George's Caye myth that advanced unequal but harmonious cross-race fraternity as the colony's central tradition. The myth was neither accepted nor appropriated by the popular classes as a basis for real political inclusion nor social inclusion.**

# R-RACISM

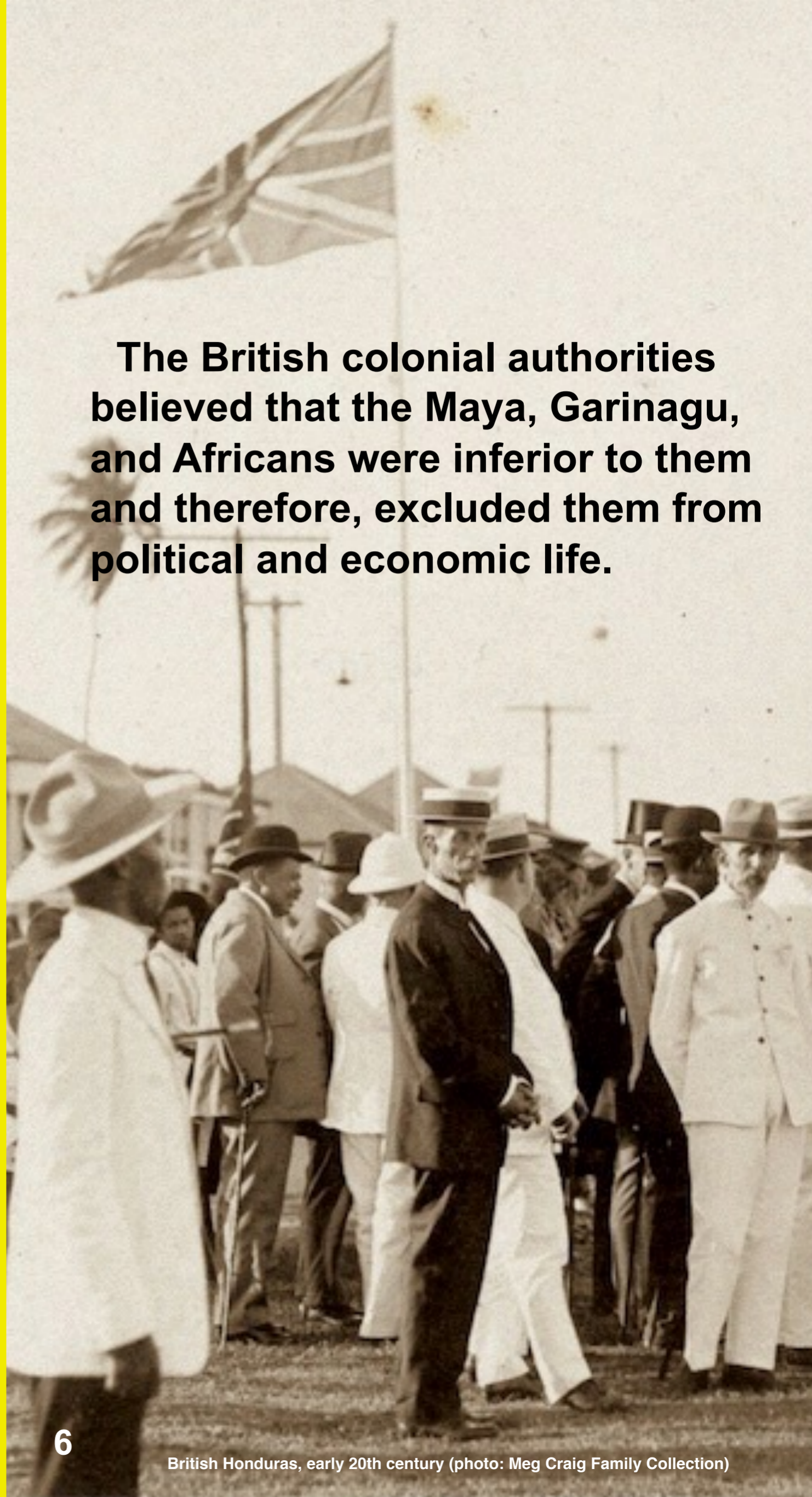


British Honduras, early 20th century (photo: Meg Craig Family Collection)

**Racism** is one of the central causes of the 1919 revolt in Belize Town, British Honduras. The British colonial authorities believed that the Maya, Garinagu, and Africans were inferior to them, and therefore, excluded them from political and economic life. Over the years, the systematic oppression towards non-whites created an exclusive society, where white elites controlled access to land, created and enforced laws, controlled trade, and suppressed workers. The following are key evidences that support the dominance of racism as a cause for the 1919 riot:

- a. In the 1800s the British enacted land acquisition requirements, such as high prices and size regulations, to deter free coloreds from obtaining land. The British also enforced labor laws that practically “enslaved” the free coloreds and tied them to the forestocracy.
- b. In 1907, as a response to the growing pressure for inclusion, the British authorities decided to create the People’s Committee (the first PC) proposing to include only seven white men—merchants and professionals. However, the kriols protested forcing the committee to include two prominent Kriols, H.H Vernon and Wilfred Haylock. Despite Kriol presence in the committee, white individuals dominated the Belize Town Board.
- c. Due to the continual inhumane treatment experienced by dark skinned women from white British oppressors (women, children, and men whose homes were cleaned, whose clothes were washed, whose food were cooked, and whose white skinned babies and children were nursed and cared for primarily by black skinned Black women) our sistahs felt justified when encouraging their Black lovers, husbands, brothers, uncles, sons, family members and friends to rise up and rebel in the face of the unequal treatment. The horrific realities of Black people in 1919 were intentionally created within the white supremacy infrastructure by European oppressors, similarly as it continues today in Belize 100 years later in 2019.
- d. The men that joined the West India Regiment in World War 1 experienced blatant racism:
  - a. They were allotted insanitary, unlighted quarters with primitive galleys.
  - b. They were forced to clean latrines, to compile and bury dead soldier’s bodies.
  - c. They received indifferent medical treatment and many contingent members died due to untimely treatment.
  - d. They carried out exhausting duties for the Europeans.
  - e. They were transported for long distances in cattle trucks; while whites travelled in much comfort.
  - f. They were excluded from white mess huts, playing fields and bathing quarters.
  - g. They were abused by the white troops physically, psychologically and verbally.
  - h. They were not allowed to sing “Rule Britannia.”
  - i. A white Chaplain refused to administer communion to black officers in Gabbary Camp.
- e. The settlement’s authorities organized a reception to welcome the war veterans into Belize Town. But during the celebrations, the whites, that is, the British, the Forestocracy, and citizens of direct/pure European and white descent, received preferential treatment, food and position (under covered areas). The Blacks, on the other hand, received low quality treatment, food, and position (under the blazing sun). Although the celebrations honored the veterans, the whites enjoyed “white exclusive zones” with better conditions to enjoy the festivities.

**The British colonial authorities believed that the Maya, Garinagu, and Africans were inferior to them and therefore, excluded them from political and economic life.**





# I-INSURRECTION

**On July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1919, two contingents of veterans—after experiencing racism, late and no payments, no access to land, and no access to jobs—marched through the streets of Belize City smashing windows and merchant houses.**



Illustration based on a rare photo showing Belize Stores in North Front Street

The oppressive political, social, and economic systems imposed by the colonial British authorities created spaces of resistance within primarily the Black population of British Honduras. When Garveyite ideas entered the colony, the population consumed the messages of Black nationalism and reignited a hope for inclusion. Aside from racism, the citizens also experienced (1910s) a rise in the cost of living, diminishing wages, higher land rental payments, diminishing job opportunities and the closure of dominant companies. On July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1919, two contingents of veterans—after experiencing racism, late and no payments, no access to land, and no access to jobs—marched through the streets of Belize City smashing windows and merchant houses. The contingents were tightly disciplined, coordinating their separate activities with whistles and stopping in front of each store after the order 'halt' and waiting for the order to smash. Both groups made no attempts to loot the stores. Fueled by the actions of the veterans, 3,000 residents of Belize Town joined the revolution.

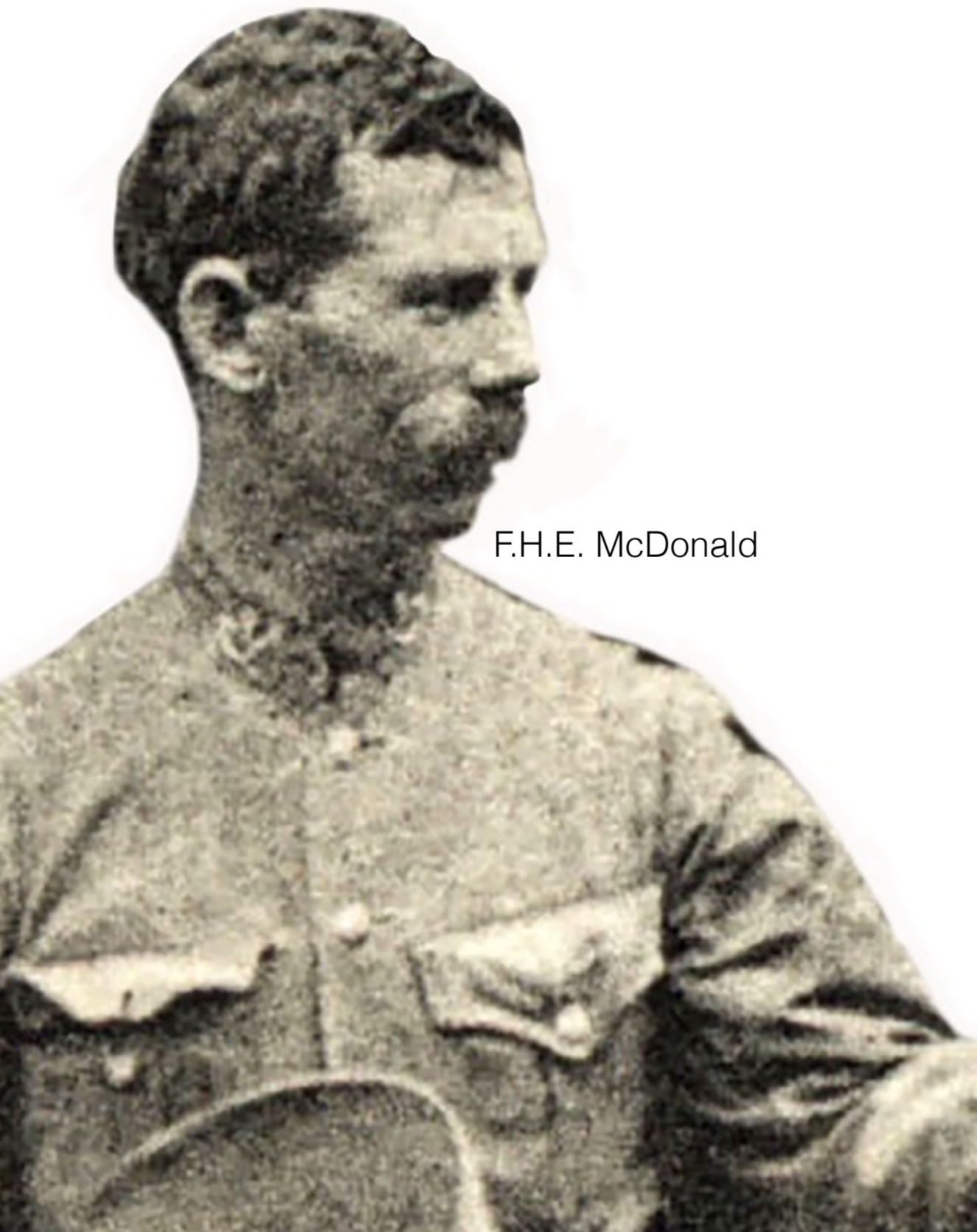
The angry, predominantly, Black crowd, rampaged throughout the town attacking white and Kriol elites and looting stores. By 10pm even the police forces joined the riots, forcing the white elites to establish a “safe house” at Drill Hall on Queen Street. The revolutionaries took full control of the town, nonetheless, they were pacified by two of their leaders, Samuel Haynes and F.H.E. McDonald. **Despite the outcome of the insurrection, the revolution expressed disgust for the oppressive political and economic system enforced on the Blacks of the settlement.**



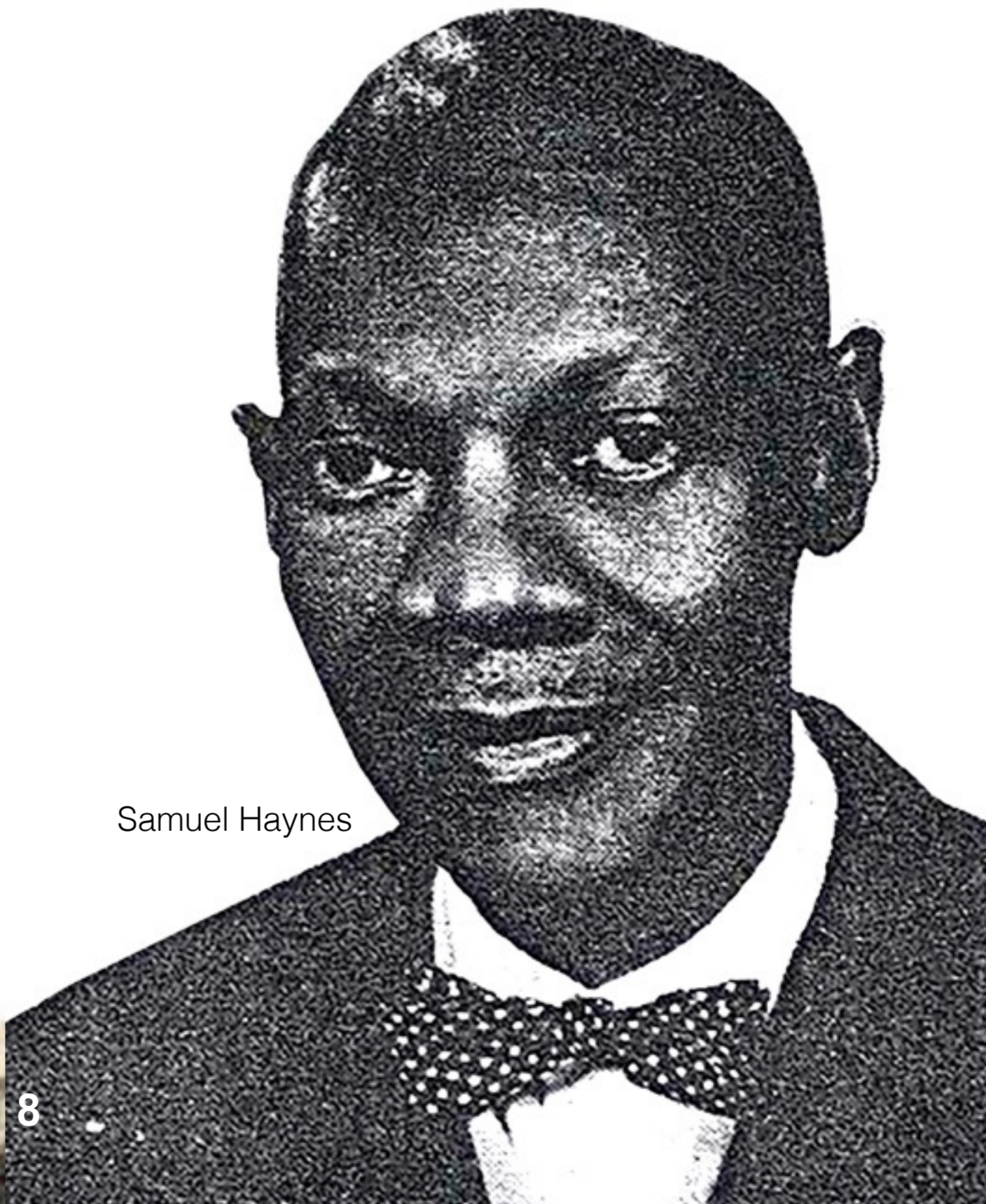
Samuel Haynes and F. H.E. McDonald led the calming efforts by patrolling Belize Town, and confronting the rioters and looters.

**“If the truth were told, it was I whose appeal to sobriety and reason saved the handful of Europeans in Belize from a savage massacre when the returned soldiers rioted in an orgy of rum in the summer of 1919 . . . I rose to the occasion and silenced the radicals.”**

- **Samuel Haynes**, Belize Independent, 18 June 1930



F.H.E. McDonald

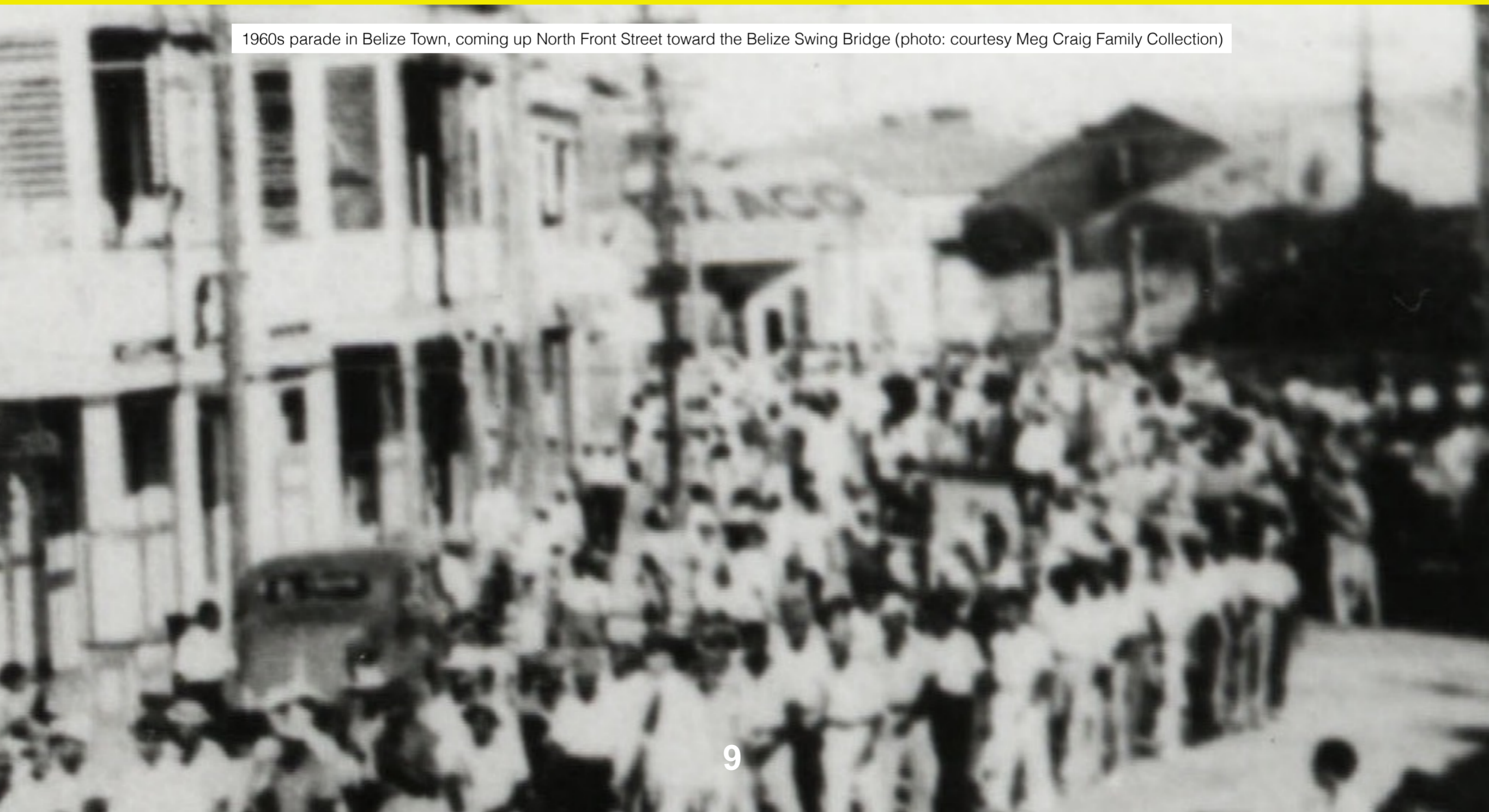


Samuel Haynes



In 2002 The Old Post Office building burnt down. It was that same building at the corner of North Front Street and Queen Street that was a center of focus for the rebellion on the night of 22nd July 1919.

Fueled by the actions of the veterans, 3,000 residents of Belize Town joined the revolution.



1960s parade in Belize Town, coming up North Front Street toward the Belize Swing Bridge (photo: courtesy Meg Craig Family Collection)

# G-GUIDANCE

Political guidance is usually understood as information given by someone of authority aimed at addressing a particular problem. In the British Honduras scenario, the situation was complex because people of high governmental authority did not give advise for a violent uprising. In fact, they used the narrative of a peaceful colony to oppress the masses. However, two contrasting views guided the 1919 revolution to address the systemic exclusion of natives and Blacks. On one hand, individuals such as H.H. Vernon, Samuel Haynes, and F.H.E McDonald guided the revolution to get more political and legislative representation in government. They envisioned that through legislative representation they could improve the economic and political conditions of the masses. On the other hand, at the grassroots level, individuals such as Annie Flowers and Rufus Hall, envisioned complete administrative control of the settlement. They saw the revolution as an avenue for a complete transformation of British Honduras that would put black interests at the forefront. Although the revolution took influences from conformist and radicals, citizens used the well-organized violent uprising to express their discontent. There was, to an extent, the lack of planning and concrete guidance towards a clear political outcome. Once the revolutionaries took full control of Belize Town there was no clear action after the revolt. Although it would be unfair to judge the events based on today's standards, the settlement could have become the second black republic in the region with different consequences (for good or bad).



**Samuel Haynes**

guided the revolution to get more political and legislative representation in government.

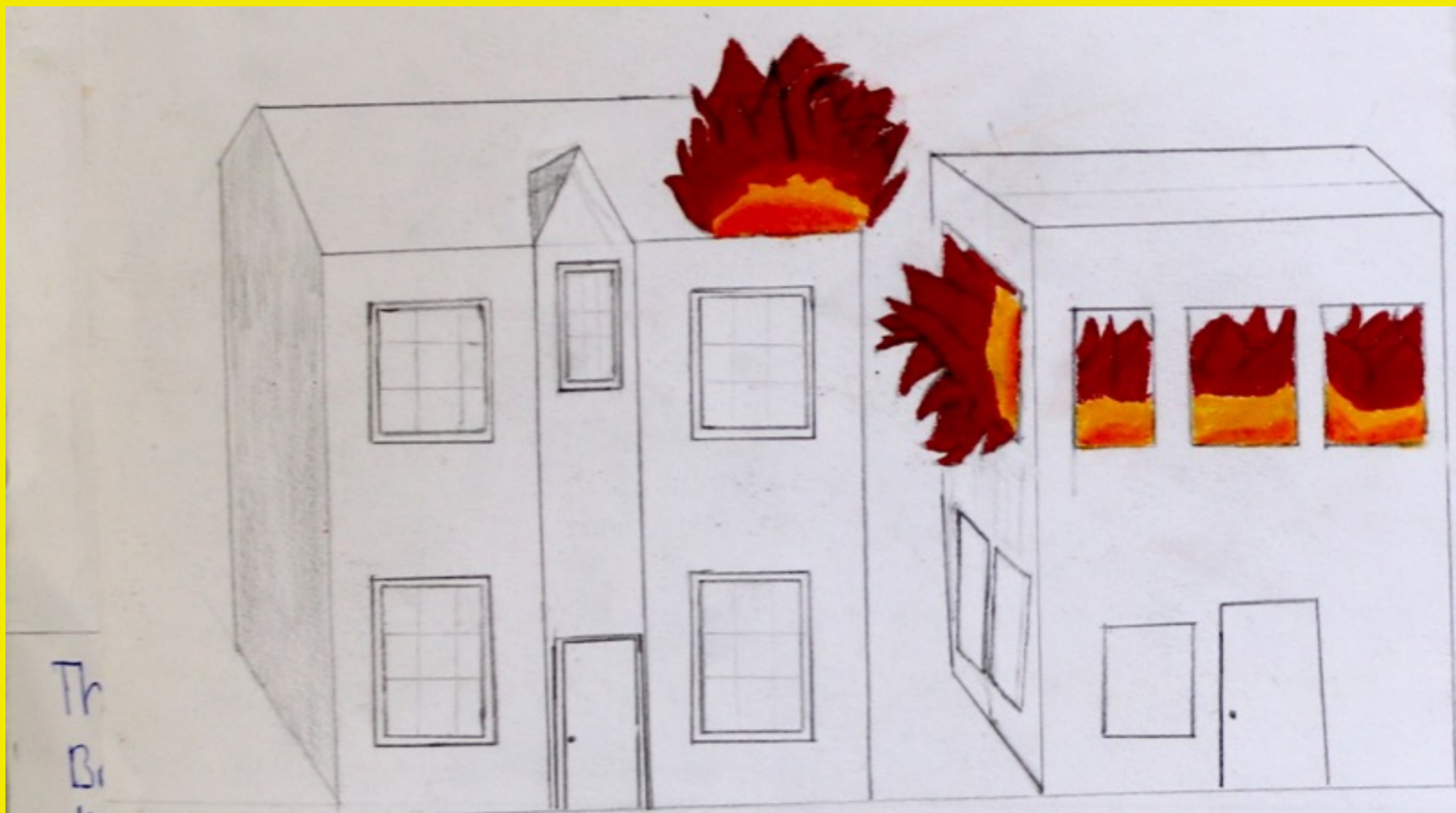
# H-HOSTILITY

During an insurrection there is a great level of hostility towards the systematic oppression enforced by the government and elites. In British Honduras during the insurrection, both women and men showed great disregard for order when showing their discontent. During the 1910s, women increased their resistance both legally and illegal means. They started suing some of the elites for abuses committed against them, incited the men to start hostilities and also participated in violent acts. Although the men were the main actors in the creation of disturbances, they received great influence from women. It is also worth mentioning that before the 1919 revolution, two instances proved the growing discontent and disgust towards the government. In 1916, WJ Slack, a prominent lawyer and commander of the soldiers in the settlement, was assassinated. Instead of mourning, the citizens celebrated his death and asked for his murderer to be pardoned.



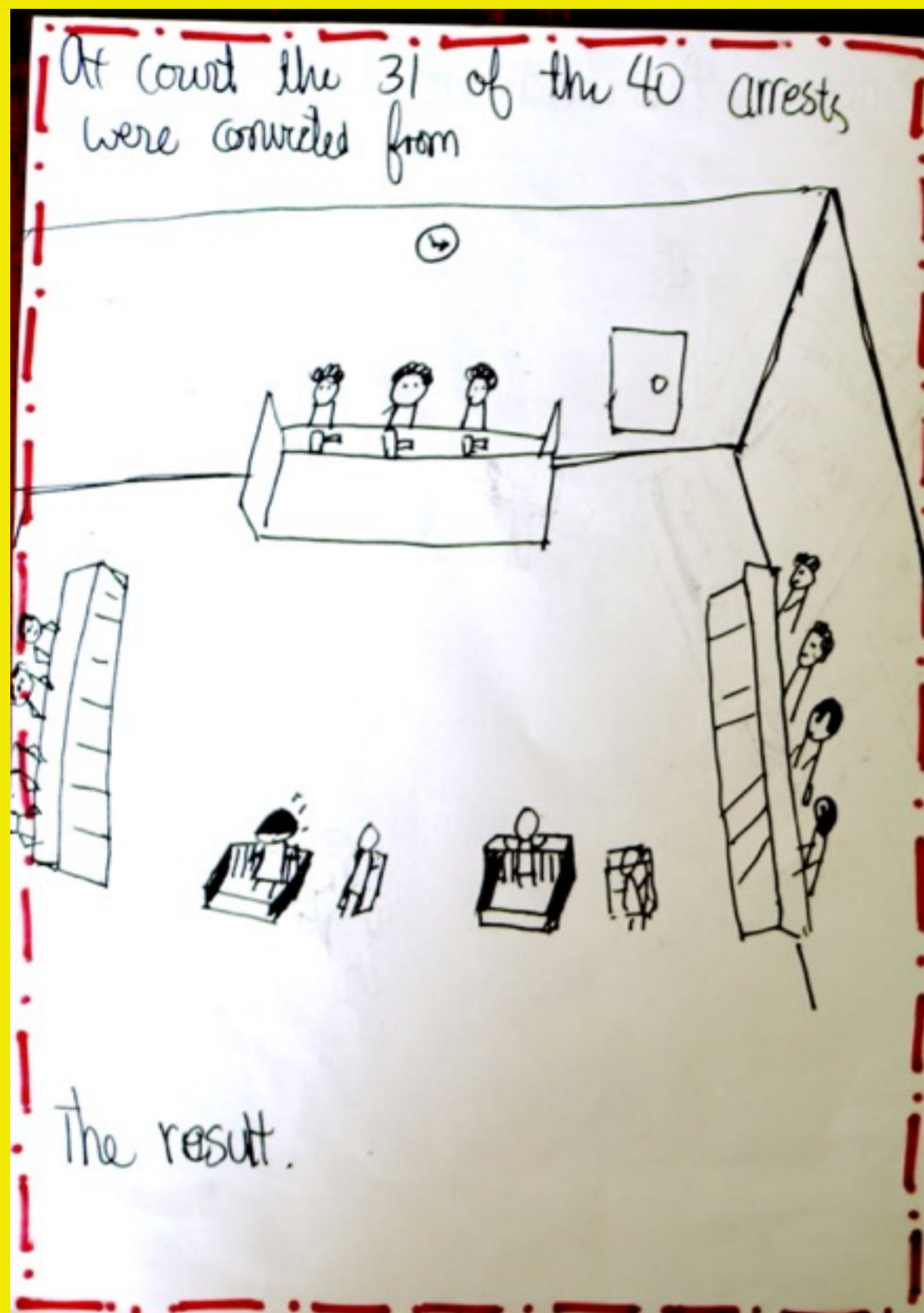
Albert Street, Belize Town early 20th century, an area where the riots took place on the night of July 22, 1919 (photo courtesy: Meg Craig Family Collection)

The second incident was in 1918, when arsonists torched public buildings in Belize Town, the people cut the Fire Brigade's hoses. WJ Slack's murder and the cutting of the hoses led up to the 1919 revolution, which was an organized event of violence. During the revolution, the whites had to find a safe fort because they were being persecuted and accosted physically and verbally. The white elites feared for their lives. In addition, the methodical smashing of businesses and public buildings sent strong tremors throughout the settlement. The show of hostility became an avenue for citizens to express their anger with the system which oppressed them racially, socially, economically and politically.



In 1918, when arsonists torched public buildings in Belize Town, the people cut the Fire Brigade's hoses.

# T-TREASON



Treason is generally understood as the betrayal of one's country by trying to take over a government or by killing the leader. The 1919 revolution can be catalogued as an act of treason, shaking the foundations of British administration in the settlement. British officials lost control of the settlement and asked for assistance from the military regiments in Jamaica. They feared that British Honduras would become another case like Ayiti (Haiti), where rebels killed and persecuted whites. The whites knew that they were the minority in the settlement and also observed how the local police joined the revolutionary efforts, instead of protecting them. The instigators of the revolution could have faced charges of sedition and treason, but because of their participation in calming the crowds, some were pardoned. For example, Haynes and F.H.E. McDonald were pardoned while

**Rufus Hall along with 31 other revolutionaries were convicted.**

The British preferred to give some sort of representation—to those who wished to collaborate with them in a subservient role— rather than losing control of the settlement. The British considered the revolt to be acts of treason, yet they did not charge the leaders, rather they arrested and jailed the grassroots people. In his view, Peter Ashdown considers the premeditation and framework of the rebellion to be a “clumsy attempt at a coup d’etat.”



British Honduras, mid-20th century looking from the Swing Bridge looking east on the Haulover Creek. Boats line up on the bank of the then Central Market (photo: Meg Craig Family Collection)



# S-SERENITY?

## Who calmed the revolutionaries in 1919?

Contrary to what many would expect, the revolutionaries were pacified from within. Samuel Haynes and H.E. McDonald led the calming efforts by patrolling Belize Town, and confronting the rioters and looters. The government, on the other hand, asked for military reinforcements from Jamaica, notably HMS Constance, to calm the situation. After the revolution, Governor Hudson met with representatives from the contingents to hear their concerns. To maintain serenity, the governor ordered for investigations into the Welfare Committee, land grants, price fixing, separation of allowances and the role of the faithful contingent members. The governor saw a clear distinction between Royalist (who conformed) and Loyalists (who revolted). However, negotiations to improve the lives of the popular Black Town residents failed because the colonial government arrested and charged key figures who participated in the revolt. The colonial British authorities were successful in subduing the revolution, they arrested revolutionaries and sentenced them to jail. **More importantly, they were successful in hiding this riot from Belizean history by focusing on the narrative that British Honduras did not have any violent uprising. It was a strategic move because the British did not want a “Belizean” identity to form on the ideas of resistance or rebellion against them.**



British Honduras Volunteer soldiers on the Barracks, Belize Town image early 20th Century (Meg Craig Family Collection)



War ship HMS Constance sent from Jamaica to calm the situation



1919 Revolution poster design by Carlos 'lito' Quiroz

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### Writer's statement:

The text that I have researched and written is a Maya Man's perspective on a Black People Revolution in Belize.

### Publisher's statement:

The opportunity for other community members to share their perspectives on the 1919 Black Revolution may also be included in our community conversations throughout this centenary year.

## Key words and terms used in the book

**Racism** - "Interpersonal practices (behaviors, acts, interactions) where white people discriminate against people of color." from *SOUL Training Manual "Building Power, Sharpening Minds!"*

**Oppression** - The act of heavily weighing down by unjust use of force or authority.

**System** - A group of institutions, social relations, and cultural norms working together (to function as a complex whole)

**Garveyite** - A supporter of Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), a Jamaican-born political activist, publisher, journalist, entrepreneur, and orator. He was the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL, commonly known as UNIA). Ideologically a black nationalist and Pan-Africanist, his ideas came to be known as Garveyism.

**Riot** - a form of civil disorder commonly characterized by a group lashing out in a violent public disturbance against authority, property or people.

**Revolution** - a fundamental and relatively sudden change in political power and political organization which occurs when the population revolts against the government, typically due to perceived oppression

**Forestocracy** The "principal inhabitants" that controlled the harvesting of the forests within the settlement of British Honduras. They controlled the settlement.



Belize City Swing Bridge c. 1930s | photo courtesy: Meg Craig Family Collection

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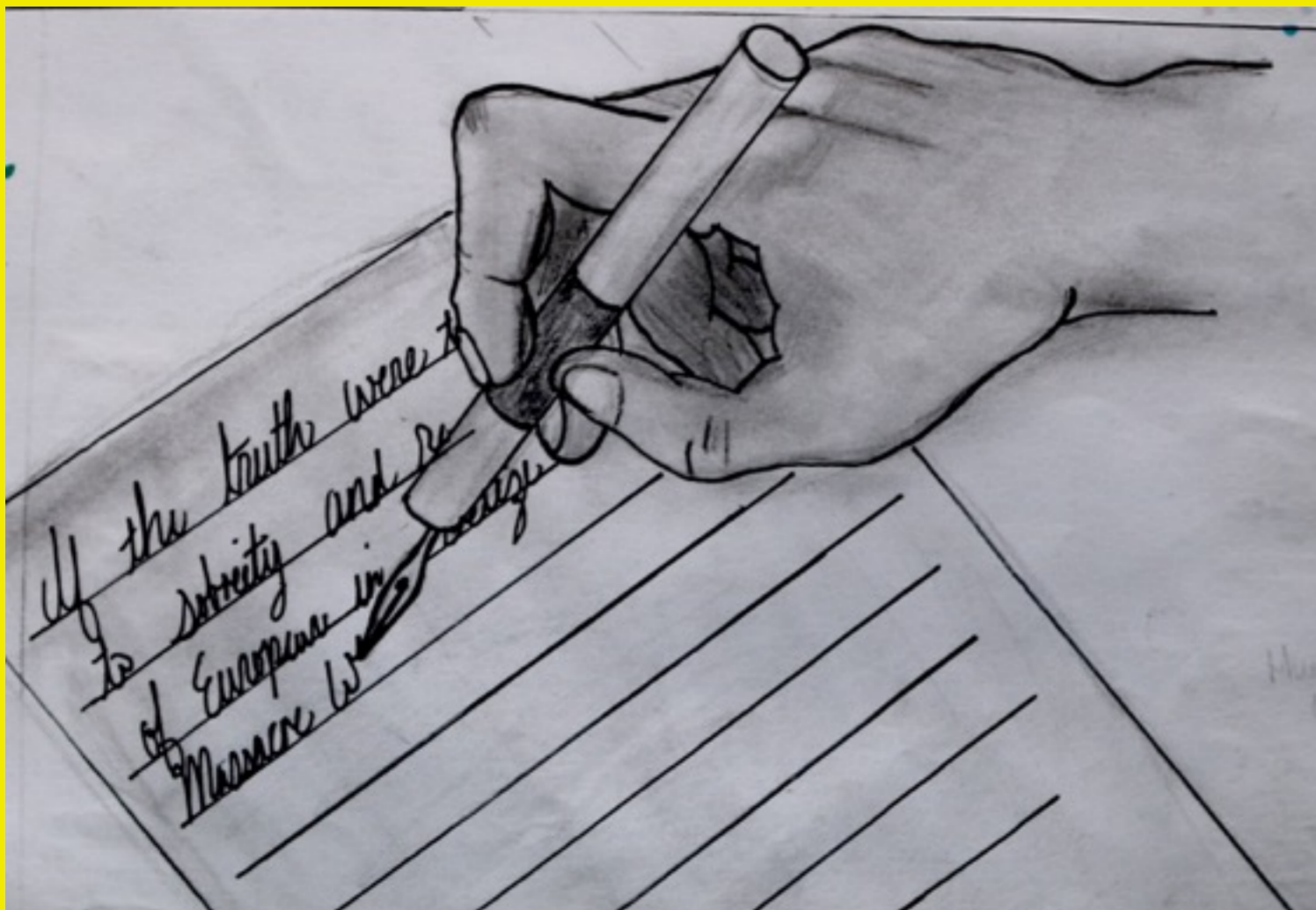
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Drawing by Jose Colindres



Illustration by Carlos 'lito' Quiroz



Photo: Belize Townspeople waiting to collect water, early 20th century | Meg Craig Family collection



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