Grenadians seek greater political participation (The New Jewel Movement), 1973-1979

- (mainly or initiated by) people of color [1]
- an example of paradox of repression [2]
- an example of regime change [3]
- included participation by more than one social class [4]

Timing
Time period notes:
This nonviolent campaign is considered to have ended when the leadership decided to begin using violent methods.
March 11, 1973 to: March 10, 1979

Location and Goals
Country: Grenada
View Location on Map
Goals:
The NJM led the thrust for fundamental political and social changes in Grenada, and put forth a widespread array of goals that ranged from dictator Gairy’s resignation to visions for a new society. They published ‘blueprints’ with demands that called for “the implementation of land reforms; the establishment of agro-industries, free education, a national health insurance scheme, medical and allied health services, a new kind of tourism, the nationalization of banks, [and] a government-owned national insurance company.” They also published a manifesto calling for grassroots organizations to create programs to address education, public health, food, housing, and clothes, and participatory democracy through the establishment of Peoples’ Assemblies. At one point during the campaign, the NJM demanded to have a voice in the political process leading up to independence from the British, called for negotiations to deal with issues of reparations, and insisted on ‘creative projects’ rather than meaningless, expensive independence celebrations. At another point during the campaign, the NJM ‘People’s Congress’ called for Gairy’s resignation, and held that the NJM’s manifesto would act as the basis for the new Government’s plan for running the country.

Methods
Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
• 010. Newspapers and journals
• 016. Picketing
• 028. Symbolic sounds
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 048. Protest meetings
• 097. Protest strike
• 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
• 173. Nonviolent occupation
• 174. Establishing new social patterns
• 179. Alternative social institutions

Methods in 2nd segment:

• 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
• 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
• 010. Newspapers and journals
• 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
• 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
• 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
• 174. Establishing new social patterns
• 179. Alternative social institutions

Methods in 3rd segment:

• 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
• 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
• 010. Newspapers and journals
• 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
• 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
• 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
• 174. Establishing new social patterns
• 179. Alternative social institutions

Methods in 4th segment:

• 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
• 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
• 010. Newspapers and journals
• 122. Literature and speeches advocating resistance
• 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
• 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
• 174. Establishing new social patterns
• 179. Alternative social institutions

Methods in 5th segment:

• 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
• 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
• 010. Newspapers and journals
• 016. Picketing
Fraternization

Literature and speeches advocating resistance

Hiding, escape, and false identities

Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws

Establishing new social patterns

Alternative social institutions

Methods in 6th segment:

- Declarations by organizations and institutions
- Declarations of indictment and intention
- Newspapers and journals
- Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- Professional strike
- Reporting "sick." (sick-in)
- Literature and speeches advocating resistance
- Hiding, escape, and false identities
- Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- Nonviolent occupation
- Establishing new social patterns
- Alternative social institutions
- Alternative communication system

Segment Length:
1 year

**Classifications**

Classification:
Change

Cluster:
Democracy
Human Rights

Group characterization:

- All sectors of Grenadian society

**Leaders, partners, allies, elites**

Leaders:
The New Jewel Movement (NJM), led by Maurice Bishop

Partners:
Nurses, youth groups, trade unions, school children, rural communities, middle-class professional groups, business organizations, Committee of 22 (representing labor unions, the Taxi Drivers and Owners Association, the Chamber of Commerce, Grenada Hotel Association, Civil Service Association, Grenada Union of Teachers, and Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches), women, urban workers, and the unemployed, civil servants and teachers, Bank and General Workers Union, sympathizers among soldiers and police

External allies:
Joining/exiting order of social groups
Groups in 1st Segment:

- Committee of 22
- Nurses
- Trade Unions
- business organizations
- middle-class professional groups
- rural communities
- school children
- youth groups

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- unemployed persons
- urban workers
- women

Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:

- civil servants and teachers

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Bank and General Workers Union (BGWU)
- sympathizers among soldiers and police

Segment Length:
1 year

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Grenadian dictator Eric Gairy, and elements of his oppressive regime

Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not Known

Campaigner violence:
On March 13, 1979 NJM’s leadership decided (by a 3-2 vote) to adopt violent tactics to overthrow Gairy, to pre-empt Gairy’s plan to assassinate NJM’s leadership. Most of Gairy’s soldiers and police surrendered without a fight when surrounded by grassroots groups and lightly-armed NJM freedom fighters. Two of Gairy’s soldiers were killed while resisting NJM’s taking over police stations.

Repressive Violence:

The NJM faced widespread domestic repression under Gairy, who violently unleashed his ‘Mongoose Gang’
police force against NJM activists and supporters

In April 1973, secret police shot an NJM supporter who was distributing The New Jewel (NJM’s newspaper). Shortly after, police opened fire on a mass demonstration at Pearl’s airport, and wounded a dozen demonstrators. On April 20th, police shot an NJM supporter. On May 26th and 28th, police badly beat up two NJM activists. On June 1st, secret police killed another NJM supporter while she was selling The New Jewel.

On November 18th—‘Bloody Sunday’—the Mongoose Gang violently assaulted six top NJM leaders, left them to bleed in jail, and shaved their heads with broken glass shards.

On January 21st, 1974, the Mongoose Gang assaulted a non-violent demonstration along St. George’s waterfront, and killed Robert Bishop when he attempted to tell secret police to let women and children escape to safety.

On June 19th, 1977, when the NJM staged a rally outside the annual meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS), police fired and killed one demonstrator.

**Success Outcome**

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
3 points out of 6 points
Survival:
1 point out of 1 points
Growth:
3 points out of 3 points
Total points:
7 out of 10 points
Notes on outcomes:

The New Jewel Movement (NJM) succeeded in ousting Gairy, and increasing participatory democracy in Grenada. The visions proposed in their Manifesto lay the groundwork for work later taken on by the People’s Revolutionary Government of Grenada (PRG). However, this only occurred after they adopted violent tactics. Many of the security forces had sided with NJM before this point and surrendered without much resistance. The lack of resistance and ease of the violent takeover was probably a result of the years of work during the nonviolent campaign and the support it had garnered.

NJM survived after overthrowing Gairy’s regime, and continued to develop programs and organizations under the name of the ‘People’s Revolutionary Government’ of Grenada (PRG).

NJM grew a large amount, and drew support from all sectors of society.

Grenada under the dictatorship of Eric Gairy suffered from economic deterioration and widespread corruption. In the face of domestic repression, support for the Left built strength during events leading up to the creation of the New Jewel Movement (NJM). In November 1970, 30 nurses staged a non-violent protest demonstration against poor working conditions at St. George’s General Hospital, their place of work. They were joined by youth groups, trade unions, and school children. Police responded by teargasing demonstrators and arresting 22
nurses. Two young lawyers recently returned from abroad—Maurice Bishop and Kenrick Adix—defended the nurses. Gairy’s increased militarization dramatized his repressiveness and resulted in an increasingly politicized populace. The nurse’s strike was followed in December by another demonstration, which was met with clubs and tear gas at the hands of Gairy’s police.

After Gairy announced the creation of two new arms of the Police Force, young progressives formed two populist organizations. Maurice Bishop and Kenrick Radix led the urban-centered Movement for Assemblies of the People (MAP), while Unison Whiteman led the rural-based Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation (JEWEL). Both groups featured a strong anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist orientation; the young intellectuals that led them had recently returned to Grenada from their university studies abroad deeply influenced by extra-parliamentary politics of the Black Power movement in the U.S. Their return also coincided with the emergence of the Caribbean Black Power Movement. These young intellectuals resituated Grenadian politics in the villages and streets.

Not long after its founding, JEWEL received an appeal from a rural community to help them demonstrate against Lord Brownlow, who had recently blocked the customary right of access to a popular beach by erecting a fence on the access road through his La Sagesse estate. JEWEL organized numerous demonstrations and held a People’s Court. Older Grenadians testified that the access road had been used for generations, the informal tribunal found Lord Brownlow ‘guilty of obstructing the people’s rights,’ and demonstrators removed the fence. Bishop and Radix defended the more than twenty people who were arrested as a result of the demonstration.

The La Sagesse action brought MAP and JEWEL closer together. At a conference on March 11, 1973, the two merged to form the New Jewel Movement (NJM). Maurice Bishop and Unison Whiteman were elected Joint Coordinating Secretaries. The NJM led the thrust for fundamental political and social changes in Grenada, and began to publish a series of ‘blueprints’ for transforming Grenadian society. Demands called for “the implementation of land reforms; the establishment of agro-industries, free education, a national health insurance scheme, medical and allied health services, a new kind of tourism, the nationalization of banks, a government-owned national insurance company,” and even the resignation of the government. The NJM also published a manifesto reflecting wide-ranging concerns, and calling for grassroots organizations to fight for social justice by developing programs to address education, public health, food, housing, and clothes. The manifesto also called for participatory democracy through the establishment of Peoples’ Assemblies. Finally, although the NJM wanted independence from Britain, they didn’t want it at the price of Gairy acquiring more power.

Support for the NJM—and popular opposition to Gairy—grew as different interests joined in a multigroup united front. Since many Grenadians viewed Grenada’s electoral process with growing suspicion, opposition increasingly focused on direct action. Furthermore, Gairy’s use of violent force and coercion alienated most groups in society, such as established churches, trade unions, middle-class professional groups, and business organizations.

In April 1973, after secret police shot an NJM supporter who was distributing The New Jewel (NJM’s newspaper), the NJM staged a mass demonstration that succeeded in closing down Pearl’s airport for three days. When police opened fire on the unarmed crowd, they wounded a dozen demonstrators. Then, on May 6th, 1973, the NJM convened 10,000 people (a quarter of the electorate) at a People’s Conference on Independence. Demonstrators demanded to have a voice in the political process leading up to independence from the British, called for negotiations to deal with issues of reparations, and insisted on ‘creative projects’ rather than meaningless, expensive independence celebrations. Gairy responded to the rising tide of non-violent protest by violently unleashing his ‘Mongoose Gang’ police force against NJM activists and supporters. On April 20th, police shot an NJM supporter. On May 26th and 28th, police badly beat up two NJM activists. On June 1st, secret police killed another NJM supporter while she was selling The New Jewel.
Opposition to Gairy culminated on November 4th, 1973, when the NJM called a People’s Congress in the Seamoon Stadium. More than 10,000 people defied Gairy’s show of military force in order to attend. In a People’s Indictment, the Congress ‘convicted’ Gairy of 27 crimes, including corruption, brutality, murder, and incompetence. As the Congress read aloud each charge, attendees responded with a booming shout of ‘guilty!’ The Congress also called on Gairy to resign within two weeks—on threat of a general strike—and held that the NJM’s manifesto would act as the basis for the new Government’s plan for running the country. The People’s Congress was followed by ‘Bloody Sunday’ on November 18th when six top NJM leaders went to work out the final details of the planned general strike with business leaders. Gairy commanded the superintendent of police to block the meeting, such that when the leaders arrived, the Mongoose Gang violently assaulted them. Three leaders were thrown in jail and left to bleed, and after the other three gave themselves up, they were dragged off to jail as well. All six were denied bail and legal aid, and had their heads shaved with broken glass shards to humiliate them. “As one observer put it, Bloody Sunday ‘marked a turning point in the opposition to Gairy because it drew together large portions of Grenadian society—including the middle and upper class—in a reaction of fear and disgust at Gairy’s brutality’” (Mandle).

The crackdown on NJM leadership sparked support for the movement from anti-Gairy elements of the bourgeoisie, who formed the Committee of 22. Sympathy came from all strata of society, as the Committee grew to include labor unions, the Taxi Drivers and Owners Association, the Chamber of Commerce, Grenada Hotel Association, Civil Service Association, Grenada Union of Teachers, and Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Although the Committee of 22 didn’t share NJM’s anti-capitalist stance, they did oppose Gairy for his patronage, corruption, and repressiveness. The Committee called an island-wide strike on November 19th, demanding the release of the six political prisoners and an end to arbitrary arrests, and called it off when Gairy agreed to their demands.

On January 21st, 1974, when it became apparent that Gairy had no intention of fulfilling the promises he made after Bloody Sunday, demonstrators assembled non-violently along St. George’s waterfront. The Mongoose Gang assaulted the crowd, and killed Robert Bishop when he attempted to tell secret police to let women and children escape to safety.

Grenada gained independence from Great Britain on Feb 7th, 1974, and Gairy assumed the post of Prime Minister. By March, the NJM decided it needed to organize more effectively. From 1974 to 1976, it developed local support groups, expanded public discussion, and made steady gains among women, youth, urban workers, and the unemployed.

In 1975, Gairy issued a law requiring a hefty deposit for the right to publish a newspaper, effectively forcing NJM’s newspaper—The New Jewel (circulation 10,000)—underground. This constant and consistent repression forced the NJM to develop a strong sense of security and a stronger collective leadership.

In 1976, the NJM participated in elections for the first time under the name ‘The People’s Alliance.’ Despite vote rigging, the NJM won three of fifteen legislative seats, and Maurice Bishop became the chief spokesperson for the opposition.

On June 19th, 1977, the NJM staged a rally outside the annual meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) to call attention to human rights violations and poor living conditions on the island. Gairy’s reputation suffered when police fired and killed one demonstrator.

After the elections, the NJM continued creating support groups in villages, and placed an emphasis on political education. Unbenownst to most members, it also developed a clandestine wing that fraternized with soldiers and policeman. Meanwhile, anti-Gairy sentiments increased among civil servants and teachers, such that in June
1978, secondary school teachers conducted a sick-in to protest low salaries. The NJM continued to win considerable support from urban workers and trade unions. It founded the Bank and General Workers Union (BGWU), led by a top leader of the NJM, and bank workers went on strike from February to early March 1979 to protest racist employment practices. At this time, Gairy put plans in place to eliminate NJM leadership. On March 10th, thanks to word from sympathizers among soldiers and police, the NJM leadership became aware that Gairy had given the order to assassinate them during his planned absence from the Grenada. The NJM convened, decided to act first, and abandoned non-violent tactics. Only five votes were recorded. The vote in favor of military action was 3-2, and Maurice Bishop was in the minority.

Gairy’s regime came to a sudden end in the pre-dawn hours of March 13th, 1979, when fifty armed NJM ‘freedom fighters’ stormed Gairy’s army barracks, and found the soldiers fast asleep. The soldiers surrendered, NJM members seized the unguarded arsenal, and then set the barracks on fire. They then moved on to capture the Radio Grenada broadcasting station, and established it as their temporary headquarters. Following a radio message to take control of every police station, grassroots Grenadians spontaneously organized. At most stations, police that sympathized with the NJM ran up the symbolic white flag themselves. However, two of Gairy’s soldiers were killed while attempting to resist, and a third, civilian, death was accidental. Within twelve hours, the NJM succeeded in taking over the army barracks, the radio station, and all police stations—effectively ousting Gairy’s regime and taking political control.

As a result of the March 13th insurrection, the People’s Revolutionary Government of Grenada (PRG) was established, and its leadership came to reflect an alliance between the working class and bourgeois elements of Grenadian society.

**Research Notes**

Influences:

Not Known

Sources:


Additional Notes:
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Anjali Cadambi, 15/11/2010