

With the help of the Golz Fellowship, I created a podcast using interviews with former youth activists during the Bahamian Independence movement. The purpose of my research was two-fold: to provide an alternative perspective into 1960s/70s Bahamian political thought, and to discover the nature and impact of youth activism in The Bahamas.

I began my research with a literature review of 1960s/70s Bahamian history. This gave me an overview of the defining tensions of the time, particularly the intersection between issues of race, representation and domestic policy. I found the most salient political tension to be the battle between the ruling United Bahamian Party, a predominantly white party with significant economic power, and the Progressive Liberal Party, a predominantly black party vying for a more progressive agenda, particularly in areas of healthcare and education. The dynamism of the 1960s made the decade an exciting time in the Bahamian political imagination.

I interviewed several former members of Unicom, the largest and most influential youth activist group leading up to Independence in 1973. Among my interviewees were the former president of Unicom, founding members of the Bahamas' only socialist party, and one of the youngest elected members of parliament in Bahamian history.

Perhaps the most revealing piece of Unicom's history is its disintegration—a story missing from current sources. Leading up to the 1973 general election, the PLP invited Sir Franklyn Wilson, a prominent Unicom member, to run as a candidate against the UBP. This invitation prompted a landmark meeting to discuss the nomination and discuss future plans. While many members were optimistic about the nomination, a small group disavowed aligning with the PLP, as they thought the party was far too moderate. This splinter group formed into the Vanguard Nationalist and Socialist Party.

The interviews also revealed the global nature of political discourse at the time, even in an isolated island nation like The Bahamas. The Bahamian youth of the 1960s discussed the African socialist movement, Latin American liberation theology and the Black Power movement. They read works from all around the world—from Marcus Garvey's memoirs to Franz Fanon's anti-imperialist essays. They drew conclusions about their leaders by comparing them to Tanzania's Nyerere and Cuba's Castro.

It was energising to hear first-hand of the enthusiasm that Unicom's members held for the future of The Bahamas. Many members went on to become leaders in politics, business and civil society. Indeed, the founder of Unicom, the Rt. Hon Perry Christie served two terms as Prime Minister of The Bahamas. Unicom is an inspiring story of youth uniting on the search for solutions to issues in the nation: a story that is all the more important because of the rising challenges to achieving economic development as a small-island developing nation.