



In Defense of Grenada's

CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY

Martin P. Felix

© Grenada 2050

Copyright © 2021 Martin P. Felix

and Grenada 2050

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

... Any society where mass unemployment is found
Well quite naturally anti-social acts will abound
So before you start drafting any oppressive laws
do some researching and try and find the root cause
They had a brainwashed education,
Irrelevant to the Caribbean

you taught them about Drake, Hawkins and Morgan,
Winston Churchill and Napoleon
You didn't teach them about Fedon and Cuffe,
Marcus Garvey, and Jose Marti ...
- Black Wizard. "Tomorrow's People."

What a joy it is to hear the announcement of the flight attendant "Welcome to the Maurice Bishop International Airport"! You feel completely at home. Not only because you are finally grounded from a distant flight, but because of the intersection of history, place, and self. There is a sense of completeness.

How great would it be if more national monuments and other places of interests were named after our popular heroes and heroines? Most of our national symbols, monuments, and street names reflect a history of national oppression, horror, and violence. Unlike the Maurice Bishop International Airport (MBIA), these monuments and symbols celebrate mostly the colonial experience and not enough of our history of resilience. Yet these colonial relics populate our public spaces as if to taunt us! They have been with us for centuries and continue to shape the imagination of successive generations. Moreover, these national symbols were imposed by the very perpetrators of the horrible experiences our ancestors were forced to endure.

Unsurprisingly, in the United States, one aspect of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in response to the callous, extrajudicial murder of George Floyd at the hands of white policemen was heightened demands for the removal of contentious statues and monuments that have historically riled African Americans and others.

These equality and social justice protests and those that broke out around controversial monuments in the US reverberated around the world, including in Grenada. The protests have particular resonance in areas that were impacted by the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism such as Grenada. The global movement of rethinking of the past symbolized by these icons are ongoing and are gaining momentum. Many U.S. states and municipalities have since accelerated the passing of legislation mandating removal or other measures to come to terms with the growing consciousness. As the movement to confront symbols of racism sweeps the U.S., the Southern Poverty Law Center reports that in the first six weeks following George Floyd's death, local governments responding to grassroots uprising have removed or relocated [29 Confederate monuments](#). A bill was also passed in July 2020 in the U.S. House of Representatives to remove confederate or racist statues and busts in the U.S. Capitol, including that of former [Chief Justice Roger B. Taney](#), who wrote the majority opinion in the Supreme Court's Dred Scott ignoble decision of 1857, arguing that Black people were not U.S. citizens.

As the protests intensified, it coalesced around justice for people of African descent. The character of the global protests reflects the demands in specific locations. Demonstrators in the U.K. dumped the monument of slave trader [Edward Colston](#) into Bristol Harbor, sparking debate that echoed conversations that were happening in various American cities on statues of Confederate Generals, especially in the South. Actions taken against monuments of other colonial figures including Cecil Rhodes, and even Winston Churchill, who masqueraded as a fighter for 'democracy' but committed numerous colonial atrocities. Many of these actions have direct bearing on former colonized Caribbean countries such as Grenada because these operatives of British colonialism are likewise intricately linked to slavery, colonialism, and imperialism.

racist struggles around monuments and other symbols that are vestiges of oppression. But these demands are not new. In fact, many such campaigns have been waged for decades and are part of the global conversations around reparations and post-slavery reconciliation. Grenada should be no exception.

Reckoning with history

Though Caribbean countries like Grenada can now proudly claim to be independent with their national flags hoisted up, the "colonial flags" that these monuments and 'heroes' of the past represent remain firmly rooted in the region. These colonial stamps are made visible by names such as Fort George, Fort Matthews (named after Governor at the time, Edward Matthew), Princess Alice Hospital, and Sendall Tunnel (after British colonial governor Sir Walter Joseph Sendall).

Most of the streets in our towns honour colonial administrators and plantation owners. For example, Melville Street (after slavery-era Governor Robert Melville, 1770–1771), Carriacou's capital, Hillsborough (named after then British Secretary of the Colonies, Earl of Hillsborough: 1768 to 1772), Young Street (after Williams Young sugar plantation owner and governor, 1776), Halifax Street (after the Earl of Halifax), Lucas Street (after William Lucas, 1785–1787), and Green Street, after Charles Green (1797–1801).

Other examples include the Princess Royal Hospital in Carriacou (self-explanatory), Port Louis (named after King Louis IX of France), Grenville, founded and named after George Grenville (British Prime Minister, 1763–65), and Victoria, after Queen Victoria. Reminders of the colonial blight are enshrined through official documents and symbolic references to the British monarchy

as in the Royal Grenada Police Force, Her Majesty's Prison, etc. Many villages are named¹ after individual colonialists, colonial administrators, and slave owners. For example, on the island of Petite Martinique, the largest village, Madame Pierre, is so named after 'Madame Pierre', the wife of an early French slave owner on that island.

Our heritage

The parish of St. David needs special recognition as a heritage site and an area with great potential for heritage tours and historical trails. Among its rich heritage resources are Amerindian archeological sites at places such as La Sagesse, Grand Bacolet, and La Tante. The parish should also be recognized for its seminal role in establishing spice cultivation in Grenada. The [Spice and Herb Garden at Laura](#) should be a fitting stop in a St. David's heritage tour.

Although a main town or port is not presently situated in the parish, this was not always the case. A small coastal town was set up by the French in 1735, Bourg de Megrin (after the French province of the same name), at St. David's Point. The town was destroyed during the Fedon Rebellion of 1795–96 in an intense battle between the British and the Fedon soldiers to dislodge the British who were seeking overnight refuge in the town's cathedral.

St. David's also played a central role in the Eric Gairy 'Sky Red' rebellion against British colonialism. The Gairy movement was funded by wealthy St. David's residents. The parish was yet to play a leading role in the anti-Gairy struggles 20 years later. It was in the parish of St. David

¹ Because of our history of both French and British colonialism, many Grenadian villages' names were chosen after places in France and Britain, local geography, or eponymously after colonial figures.

that the New Jewel Movement was born as the local struggles against Lord Brownlow, a British aristocrat's attempt to make the La Sagesse beach exclusive, denying local access to the popular beach. This led to the coalescing of forces that ultimately birthed the political Revolution of 1979. It is significant that the Grenada United Labor Party² and the New Jewel Movement³, arguably Grenada's most consequential political parties, both had their beginnings in the Parish of St. David.

February 7th is celebrated as the day of our political independence. The primary goal of independence is to build a nation based on indigenous heritage and values, negating colonialism and its symbolic expressions. On the contrary, the main objective of colonialism is to suppress our national pride and impose external values and cultures on a country. Grenada has experienced 324 years of colonialism but only 47 years of political independence. As we approach our 50th anniversary of independence, we should revisit the values of nation-building and sovereignty by having a clear sense of the importance of who we are and what has kept us resilient.

We cannot build our future on the continuing colonial infrastructure that has the purpose of keeping us bereft of dignity. There is the need for a new interpretation of our national space, our history and of our future. For instance, the representation of heroes in the public spaces of Grenada does not reflect the people of our country that have made us proud. According to the latest Grenada population Census (2012), 82% of the population is Black, 13% is of mixed European, 2% is of Indian origin. Europeans account for less than 1% of the population. Yet, colonial icons and streets and places named after Europeans occupy our physical and mental spaces. At a very minimum, as

² See Alister Hughes "EyeWitness to History" p. 23-24; Bernard Coard "Sky Red" p. .

³ Movement for the Assemblies of the People (MAP) and Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education and Liberation (JEWEL), two separate organizations, fused to create the New Jewel Movement (NJM) through the 1973 La Sagesse struggle in St Davids.

Grenada continues to construct its own infrastructure of nation-building and de-colonizing, the country should begin to consider proportional representation in street naming, symbolizing, and memorialization.

The legacy of colonialism and racism continues to impact the lives of Grenadians spiritually, psychologically, and materially. One of the ways it has affected us is that the predominance of these monuments and landmarks serve as constant reminders of often sadistic, ex-colonial figures in many areas of our public sphere. The un-representation of our own people as heroes and actors in their own right also robs us of the perception of the agency that was necessary to keep us going in our historically darkest moments. These examples of our indigenous self-determination can serve to inspire us today in many aspects of our lives, from culture and politics to sports and business enterprises.

Like ex-colonial people everywhere, we need to re-examine landmarks, monuments, streets, hospitals, schools, forts, and even our security forces and other state institutions that are named by and after slave masters and colonial figures.

For example, why is there a monument in the compound of the Maurice Bishop International Airport for the 1983 invaders and occupiers of our country? Arguably this is the most visible of our monuments as its location grasps the attention of every visitor to the main port of entry in our country today. Are we celebrating being victims in our own homeland? Shouldn't there be a monument for the patriots who defended Grenada in that invasion instead?

A fresh look at indigenous heritage

It is encouraging to see that Grenada is at least rekindling the debate about its imperialist and colonial past in regards to historical symbols. As an independent people, how we memorialize should be an expression of our self-determination. Given their rightful place in our public spaces, renamed historical sites and the memorializing our people can provide inspiration, teachable moments and public education for our people and visitors.

Managed appropriately, our heritage can even be a source of revenue. We can be spiritually and materially richer as a people when our heroes are given their rightful places in history. A recent study of how Grenada tourism materials represent the Fedon Rebellion found that only half of these sources considered Fedon Camp and Belvidere Estate a historic monument. And the remaining sources situate it as the end point of a rewarding hike rather than as a historic monument and pilgrimage site to be commemorated as part of Grenada's struggle for freedom. (Nelson 2015)

The rethinking and reckoning with our past and a necessary critical debate about our heritage came after years of incremental changes. It reached its heights during the Grenada Revolution (1979-1983) and led to a number of significant changes, physically as well as in our collective psyche. Some old names in public spaces were altered. While new institutions were named after our martyrs and heroes. These include Bernadette Bailey Secondary School; Fort Rupert, the most important military camp named after Rupert Bishop; Butler House, after Grenadian and Trinidadian working-class hero Uriah Buzz Butler; Fedon Publishers, named after Julien Fedon; Camp Alister; Camp Fedon; Camp Butler; and The Sandino Industrial Plant. Indeed, the People's

Revolutionary Government was the first and only government to publicly recognize Julien Fedon as Grenada's first anti-colonial, antislavery, nationalist hero.

It is noteworthy that during the revolution, there was the annual Freedom March, held on Grenada's Independence Day, involving thousands of citizens and friends of Grenada of all ages, proceeding from Leapers Hill to Freedom Hill (north to south). It was decidedly symbolic of the Grenadian spirit of self-determination. This marathon exercise was consciously encouraged as a demonstration of the Grenadian people's struggle throughout our historical timeline.

To be fair, a few of these monument-making preceded the Grenada Revolution. Otway House, named in honor of George Otway, one of our earliest working-class heroes. Marryshow House, the School of Continuing Studies (Grenada) of the University of the West Indies, was named after Theolophus Albert Marryshow, the pioneering intellectual, statesman, regionalist, trade unionist, and journalist. Later, following from the Institute for Further Education and National College (of the revolution era), T.A. Marryshow Community College became our leading tertiary learning institution.

Other significant renaming followed, such as the Maurice Bishop Highway, Camerhogne Park, the Kirani James Stadium (formerly Queens Park), and Kirani James Boulevard. Significantly, a full-figure statue of Grenada's independence leader, Sir Eric Matthew (crafted by a local artist, [Maria McClafferty](#)), was erected at the Botanical Gardens in 2017. There is a modest plaque in Grand Roi, St John that celebrates Slinger Francisco (the Mighty Sparrow) as a son of the soil. Other examples include HA Blaize Street, instead of Tyrell Street in St. George's, and a street in

Grenville, St. Andrew's is named after Ben Jones, Grenada's fourth Prime Minister. But these recent acts of memorializing are unfortunately the exception rather than the norm.

Symbolic irony

It is ironic that in the largest settlements of the Grenada Diaspora—United States, The United Kingdom, and Canada—there are scores of places named after Grenadians and people of Grenadian descent while there are so few places to mark and recognize the contributions of our people in our tri-island state itself. For example, there is a street in Brooklyn named after diplomat Dr. Lamuel Stanislaus. Situated along a section of Rutland Road, Dr. Lamuel A. Stanislaus Way is in the heart of the Grenadian/Caribbean community. And, another Brooklyn, New York street is co-named after Grenadian educator Lenore G. Briggs who founded one of the first Montessori schools in Prospect Lefferts Gardens in the early 1970s. In Canada, the Jean Augustine Secondary School in Brampton, Ontario is named after Jean Augustine who migrated from Grenada as a domestic worker and became the first black member of the Canadian parliament.

In Cuba, the Maurice Bishop school for Special Education was established in 1980 to honor Grenada's second Prime Minister. Located in the municipality of Guanabacoa in Havana, the school specializes in preparing students with special needs for inclusion in the general educational environment.



The Maurice Bishop School of Special Education, Havana, Cuba. PHOTO courtesy of NOW Grenada.

In the U.K., a plaque at 200 North Gower Street in Camden, London, is named after Lord Pitt, commemorating the building where he worked as a doctor before becoming a member of the British Medical Association and the longest serving Black Parliamentarian. The annual "Lord David Pitt Memorial Lecture" at City Hall, London also bears his name, recognizing this Grenadian who also carries the distinction of Britain's first person of African descent to be a parliamentary candidate as well as his historic service tenure. The University of the West Indies (Cavehill, Barbados) holds the annual Patrick Emmanuel Memorial Lecture Series (15th year 2020) in honour of the late Grenadian and Caribbean scholar, Dr. Patrick A. M. Emmanuel. Alister McIntyre has received the Order of the Caribbean Community (OCC) and has been twice honoured by the Government of Jamaica, including the receipt of the Order of Merit (OM), and has also received the National Honours of the Government of Guyana.



UK-born Lewis Hamilton, son of a Grenadian parent, is the world's most successful F1 driver and also one of the world's most accomplished sportsmen.

Grenadian-American Malcolm X is honored with streets both named and renamed with monuments in various parts of the U.S. and around the world. Avenue Maurice Bishop, named after our revolutionary leader, is a busy commercial and diplomatic strip in the capital of our sister Caribbean island of Martinique that leads to their main airport. In Cuba, there is also a public statue

in honour of Maurice Bishop. The hero we share with our neighbour, Trinidad and Tobago, Uriah ‘Buzz’ Butler, is honored there in several ways, including a highway named after him in 1978, replacing its former colonial name Princess Margaret. In October 2020, the Barbados National Trust has announced that calypso aficionados will be able to visit the Caribbean Wax Museum in Bridgetown, Barbados, to see a life-like wax figure of the Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco). L’Esterre, Carriacou-born, internationally acclaimed artist [Canute Caliste’s](#) (1914- 2005) work is displayed internationally in such places like the Research Institute for the Study of Man in New York City, the OAS Museum in Washington, D.C. and the Pedro De Osma Museum in Lima, Peru. And the Staten Island, New York residence of Audrey Geraldine Lorde (1934–1992) Grenadian-American poet, writer, feminist, womanist, librarian, and civil rights activist, was given landmark designation by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1989. Her prolific body of work is archived in various repositories in the United States and Germany.

Our earliest heroes and heroines

As evidenced by our history, the will to never surrender the fight for our freedom is something that runs deep throughout the history of Grenada and should be celebrated. One of Grenada’s first recorded organized defence of its sovereignty was on April 1, 1609 when, according to British historian James Williamson, three shiploads of English settlers arriving on the island were attacked by the resident Kalinagos as soon as they disembarked. And according to Caribbean historian Lennox Honychurch, while the famous ultimate defiance at ‘Leapers Hill’ represents an embellished “tourism product” for modern Grenada, the Sauteurs episode by a group of Kalinagos led by Carib Chief Kairouane, should really be seen as a symbol of heroism, “a legend of nationalism”. The historian challenges the notion that the events of ‘Morne des Sauters’ marked

the end of the Kalinago resistance in Grenada, pointing to documented European accounts that “other [Kalinagos] survived [the French encounter] to carry on the fight in other parts of the east coast [of Grenada].” Getting rid of the Grenadian Caribs was an important goal of the colonialists because of the latter’s strategic interest in South America and the island’s location, and as a traditional rallying point of Kalinago resistance in the subregion. According to Honychurch, quoting Spanish sources, an example of this is when “...in 1569, 300 Kalinagos from Grenada in 14 canoes [attacked] Spanish settlements along the Venezuelan coast near Caraballeda.” (Honychurch, 2002)

Many Caribbean countries have National Heroes Day and National Parks. Since the tradition already has a precedent, it shouldn’t take much for Grenada to reintroduce a National Heroes Day, which the Grenada Revolution (1979-83) introduced and celebrated on June 19 every year. Like Independence Day, a day to recognize our heroes can be an impetus or catalyst to help forge deeper national unity and national consciousness and provide further depth to the meaning of independence. Reinstating Heroes Day on June 19, can be a fitting replacement for the US-inspired ‘Thanksgiving’ Day, which, as is presently conceived, has very limited spiritual or material value to Grenadians.

It is also an unfinished nation-project that a country like Grenada that has produced so many national and international heroes does not yet have a National Heroes Park. The creation of a National Heroes Park can memorialize luminaries such as Gertrude Isabel Blackman, Uriah “Buzz” Butler, Lenore G. Briggs, T.A. Marryshow, Jacqueline Creft, William Galway Donovan, Slinger Francisco, Audre Lorde, Julien Fedon, Lord David Pitt, Kirani James, Dame Hilda Bynoe,

Canute Calliste, Emerald Phillip (Bro Valentino), Eric Matthew Gairy, Maurice Bishop, Louise Langdon-Norton, Unison Whiteman, Henri Christophe, among others.

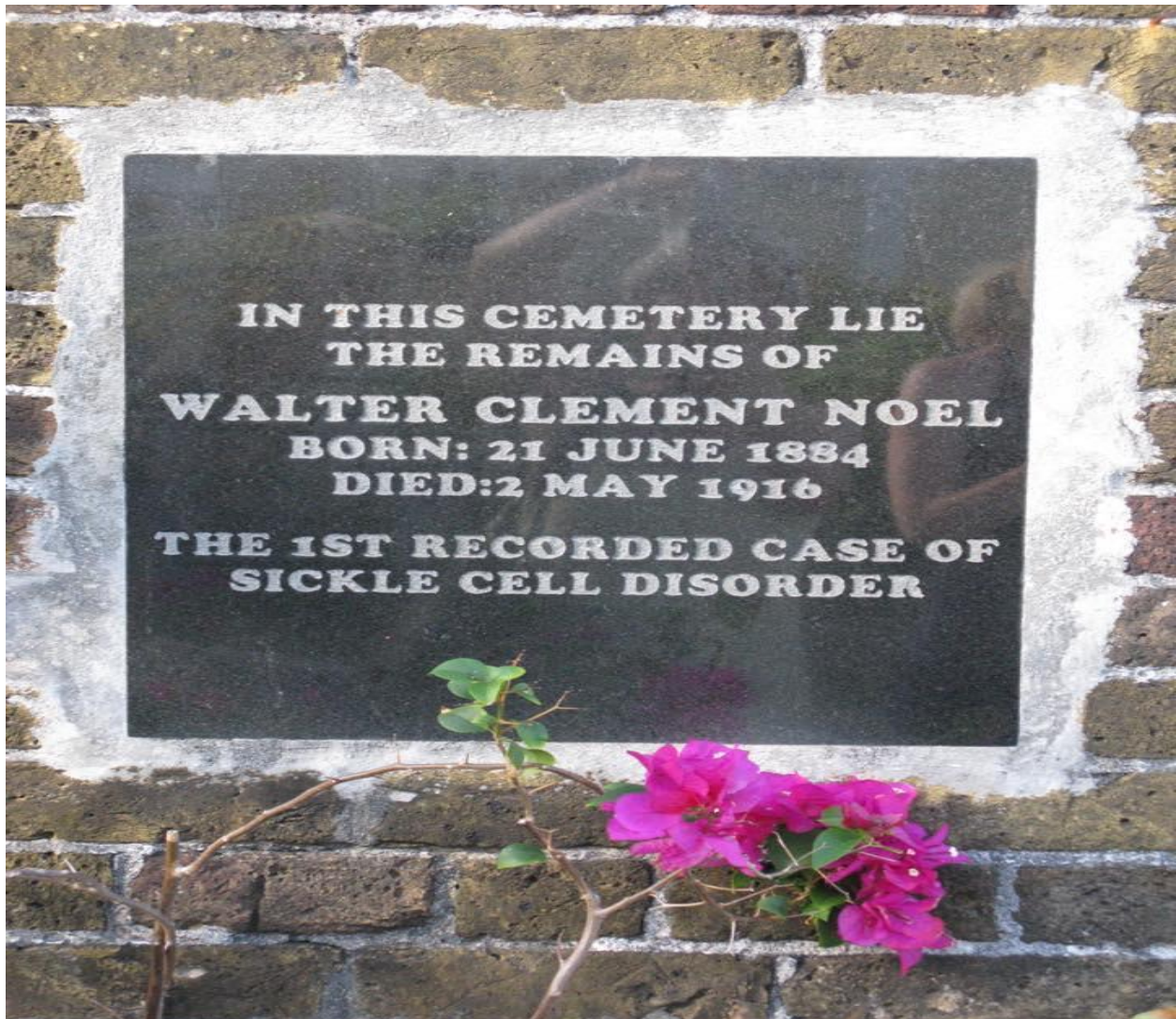
Of course, no recognition of Grenada's heroes is complete without the inclusion of our Indo-Grenadian people who have collectively made immense contributions to our history and culture. One such hero is Grenada-born Joseph "Lall" Mc Laren, an overseer on an East Indian estate in South Trinidad in the 1880s, who created a new religious denomination by combining elements of Hinduism, Christianity and African spirituality. According to Grenadian historian Caldwell Taylor, [Mc Laren took his church to the then British Guiana](#) where he had further migrated to in the early twentieth century. In Guyana, the Church became the Jordanite Church (named after Lall McLaren's ablest disciple, Nathaniel Jordan).

Grenadian Walter Clement Noel (1884–1916), was the first person in the world to be diagnosed with the sickle cell disease. After studying dentistry in Barbados, Noel eventually became a dental student at the prestigious Chicago College of Dental Surgery, defying the limitations of entrenched American segregation and discrimination of black people at the time. Noel's condition became famous when an article appeared in the Archives of Internal Medicine in 1910 describing, for the very first time, the disease that soon came to be known as sickle cell anemia (SCA). According to Dr. James Bryan Herrick⁴ (1861–1954), "an intelligent 20-year-old Negro...professional student" from Grenada, British West Indies, ... appeared at Presbyterian Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, complaining of respiratory and other problems. Noel graduated from dental school in 1907 and

⁴ While Herrick is credited, it was his intern, Ernest E. Irons, abreast of the latest developments in medicine at the time, who actually performed the blood work and alerted Herrick about Noel's odd-looking cells.

then returned to Grenada to set up a private general dentistry practice in St George's. Dr Noel died suddenly at a relatively young age of 32.

Certainly, Dr. Noel should be recognized for his indelible mark in global medical history. One should expect the Grenada General Hospital or, at the very least, the regional medical center where Clement Noel is buried to be named after Clement Noel.



Walter Clement Noel's tombstone, Sauteurs, St Patrick's, Grenada.

Gouyave, Grenada-born [Leslie "Hutch" Hutchinson](#) (1900–1969), was one of the biggest cabaret stars in the world in the 1920s and 1930s. A stage, television, and nightclub sensation, Hutch was the highest paid entertainer in Europe at the time. He wooed high society and recorded over 400 songs. In 2012, an English Heritage plaque was placed on Hutchinson's former home in north London where he lived from 1929 to 1967.

Grenada-born [Dr. Roy A. Hastick, Sr.](#) (1950–2020), founder of the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. is widely recognized for his contribution to business leadership and as a motivational speaker. Dr. Hastick is being considered for a [permanent tribute in Brooklyn](#) where he was an important business and civic personality since the 1970s.

Born in Grenada in the year of the revolution, British soldier [Johnson Beharry](#) is another Grenada-born hero in a foreign land. Beharry received the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award, for two instances of supreme bravery during the Iraq War.

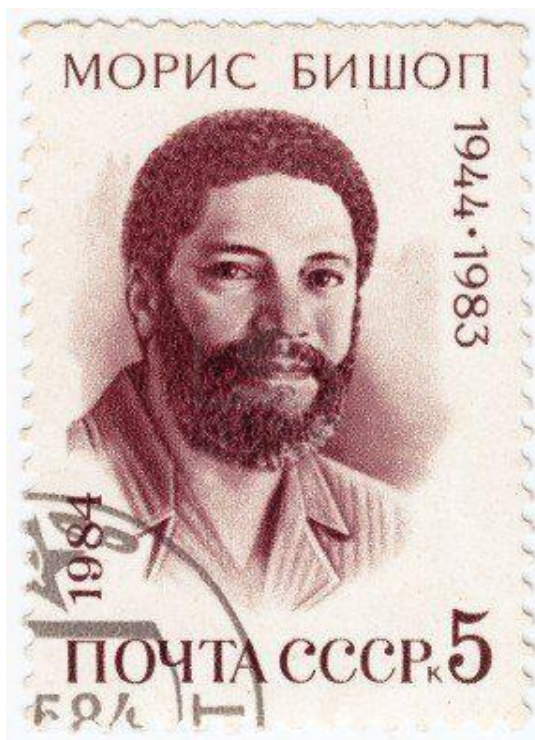
[Lewis Hamilton](#), the son of Grenadian parents from the Belvidere Estate area, was knighted on New Year's Day, January 1, 2021. This makes the seven-time world champion Formula One driver, who had previously been awarded the MBE in 2008, Britain's highest-achieving sportsman of his era. Hamilton is the world's most successful Formula One driver and one of the world's most accomplished sports personalities.

Grenada-born, Hermione McKenzie, Senior Lecturer in the University of the West Indies Mona's Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work for over 40 years, is an advocate for the

Caribbean women's movement. She is a former President of the Association of Women's Organisations of Jamaica (AWOJA). The Hermione McKenzie Prize in Social Policy at UWI, Mona, Jamaica is named in her honor. Interestingly, while Jamaica-born Phyllis Coard is recognized for her pioneering work in building Grenada's women's movement, a Grenadian is similarly credited among Jamaican women.

Honoring our own

Although this list is neither definitive nor complete, it illustrates an important lesson from our collective history: Grenadians throughout the centuries have never accepted the limitation of geography, enslavement, colonialism or oppression, and have persisted against great adversities, at home and in the diaspora. This is a logical interpretation of a living social reality of which George Brizan has dubbed the country an "Island of Conflict".



We should heed the New Testament caution that '[o]nly in his [her] hometown and in his [her] own house is a prophet without honour' (Mark 6:1-6). After close to half a century of independence, Grenada continues to honour and memorialize primarily non-Grenadian heroes and heroines, as deserving as they may be outside of Grenada. The latest being former United States Supreme Court [Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#) (1933–2020) who was [memorialized](#) on two Grenada government issued souvenir sheets

following her death on September 18, 2020. Grenada has had several stamps celebrating non-nationals, such as [supermodel Heidi Klum](#), Cleveland Cavaliers basketball star [Zydrunas Ilgauskas](#), and American presidents ranging from George Washington to Barack Obama. Interestingly, the former USSR released a postage stamp in Maurice Bishop's honor in 1984. We have yet to issue a Grenada-issued postal stamp in Maurice Bishop's honor.

Perhaps the most visible and important recognition of a misplaced heroism is the monument commissioned by former U.S. President Ronald Reagan to commemorate the 19 Americans killed in combat during the invasion of Grenada in October 1983. This monument is conspicuously positioned outside the Maurice Bishop International Airport in St. George's, inescapably visible to those entering or leaving our country. On the contrary, the contributions of Grenadian veterans and others who resisted in this war continue to be largely absent and whiteout from our history.

'[Thanksgiving Day](#)', a national holiday since October 25, 1984, commemorates the 1983 anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion code named 'Operation Urgent Fury'. A national holiday has been observed since 1984. Activities mainly consist of church services. However, at the St. George's Cemetery, the October 19th Martyrs Foundation and the Grenada Revolution Memorial Foundation use the occasion, in separate events, for an annual tribute to People's Revolutionary Government leaders, fallen People's Revolutionary Army soldiers, and others who lost their lives between October 19–25. Similarly, the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba pays tribute at a Point Salines memorial for the fallen Cuban workers who contributed to the almost then completed construction of the Maurice Bishop International Airport.

One of the more notable opposition to the imposition of colonial honors and monuments on our soil was when veteran Grenadian journalist and poet Alister Hughes (1909–2005) cited this misplacement as his reason for turning down a British knighthood offered to him. According to Alister Hughes, in his estimation, colonial honours “scramble our brains”. (Hughes 2018) Conversely, in accepting an honor bestowed to him by the University of the West Indies for his cultural resistance as well as for his contribution to journalism (“telling the truth”), Hughes pointed out “I am very happy to take any honours given me by my own people.” In his most famous poem [“Caribbean Man”](#) (1993), Hughes laments the predominance of foreign memorabilia over our indigenous heroes:

... history for us never touched on our shores
But focused on Europe, kings, treaties and wars
What mattered, developed, continued, began
In no way included Caribbean Man.

They taught us of Raleigh and Hawkins and Drake
Their exploits and how brave a fight they did make
We saw this with pride, as true British eyes can
But not with the eyes of Caribbean Man

We knew naught of Fedon, Toussaint or Quacko
Nor Christophe, Quamina or loose-mouthed Cudjoe
We knew not of Cuffie away down in Guyana
And what he had done for Caribbean Man ... (Hughes 25-38)

Similarly, Concord-born, award-winning writer, and education campaigner, Professor Augustine ‘Gus’ John, who immigrated to the U.K. in 1964 and was voted one of the "100 Great Black Britons" in 2020, had snubbed an offer to accept a Commander of the British Empire honor from former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, replying that '[he regards the title] Commander of the British Empire as part of the iconography of British imperialism.’”

Reclaiming our cultural heritage

As we approach our half century of political independence, it is a good time to review historical insignias, iconography and other memorials associated with British and French colonialism, neo-colonialism, and global white supremacy in the interest of representations that are nationally and culturally appropriate and empowering to our Grenadian people. Foremost on our list to be changed or removed should be those that directly and indirectly negate black lives, such as the insignia associated with Offices of the Governor General in many former British colonies, including Grenada. The Order of St. Michael and St. George insignia used by the Governor General depicts a white man as a triumphant archangel, with his foot on the neck of a black man representing ‘Satan’. It is recognized that this depiction is hauntingly reminiscent of what the world saw when the white U.S. policeman had his knee on the neck of George Floyd in May 2020.

Grenada coming to terms with its legacy of colonialism and enslavement also fits with its obligation as a signatory to the UN General Assembly proclamation of 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent ([resolution 68/237](#)). One of the main objectives of the Decade is the obligation of individual countries to “[p]romote a greater

knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies.”⁵

Also, an important aspect of our reckoning with the past is our country’s participation in the [CARICOM Reparations Commission](#) (CRC) in pursuit of compensation for the Crimes Against Humanity committed by the French and the British on the islands of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique beginning in 1650. Like other Caribbean people, Grenada has a strong national case for reparations. However, there is yet to be an official apology from France nor Britain for over 300 years of colonialism, slavery, and the complete genocide of the Grenadian Kalinagos. After slavery was abolished, the British honored 993 claims to Grenada-based slave owners with compensation amounting to \$458 million in today’s currency.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/programme-activities>

Compensation – Caribbean Comparisons

Colony	No. of claims	No. Enslaved	Comp'n (£)	Percentage Comp'n	Modern Equivalent (£)
Jamaica	13,240	311,455	6,121,446	37	4,550,000,000
British Guiana	2,674	84,075	4,281,032	26	3,180,000,000
Barbados	5,334	83,225	1,714,561	10	1,280,000,000
Trinidad	2,052	20,428	1,021,858	6	760,000,000
Grenada	993	23,729	615,671	4	458,000,000
St. Vincent	757	22,786	579,300	4	431,000,000
Antigua	1,027	29,003	424,391	3	316,000,000
Saint Lucia	861	13,232	331,805	2	247,000,000
St. Kitts	767	17,514	293,331	2	218,000,000
Dominica	871	14,266	277,737	2	207,000,000
Tobago	338	11,592	233,367	1	174,000,000
Nevis	304	8,792	149,611	1	111,000,000
Montserrat	229	6,392	103,556	1	77,000,000
Honduras	290	1,896	100,691	1	74,900,000
Virgin Is.	267	5,135	72,635	0	54,000,000
Anguilla	213	2,260	35,669	0	25,500,000
TOTAL	30,217	655,780	16,356,661	100	12,163,400,000

Shepherd, Verene. *Reparations, Psychological Rehabilitation, and Pedagogical Strategies. 2nd Lecture of the 2020-2021.* [PowerPoint Presentation slide]. St. Lucia National Reparations Lecture Series, University of the West Indies, Open Campus, St. Lucia. September 24, 2020.

In the act of memorialization, we will pay tribute to our militants and outstanding women and men—beginning with the freedom-fighting Caribs and resistance to the 1983 U.S. invasion—as well as those who continue today to protect our dignity. At the very least, we can also recognize those who have excelled in the creative and professional spheres, historically and currently.

‘Fedon’ Rebellion and Market Square

Among the popular locations that needs to be appreciated better as a heritage site is the St George’s Market Square. While this has been a location of exchange of our local commerce and a gathering site of political action over the centuries, we should not be made to forget its more sordid history.

The Grenada Market Square in St Georges was a place for the buying and selling of enslaved Africans. At Market Square, notices were posted by slavers announcing their newly arrived cargoes and would appear beside playbills for the opera and recitals. The Market Square was also a site for the incarceration, torture and punishment of the enslaved and for executions. Many of the captured insurgents of Fedon's Rebellion were executed at Market Square. (Kilgore and Moore 2010)

Overall, while the white minority and free blacks were given the semblance of a trial, the formerly enslaved, the vast majority of the participants, were not even given a hearing in the wake of the rebellion. Africans found to be associated with Fedon's camp "were summarily sentenced—to corporal punishment, sale, or execution—by largely untrained Justices of the Peace". In addition, all 'foreigners' (even if naturalized) and all women with any connection to the Rebellion were permanently deported from Grenada. (Murphy 1996)

In this connection, another unrecognized early anti-slavery rebel is Father Pascal Mardel, a Roman Catholic priest who was a leader of the Fedon-led rebellion and was also executed in the Market Square. After Mardel's execution, the British colonists extricated all records of his contribution from the Roman Catholic Church in Grenada. But this is great evidence that until his execution, Mardel's leadership straddled his priestly and military roles. Mardel refused last-minute offers to renounce his belief and denounce the rebellion, facing the gallows instead. (Jacobs 2010)

As one of the most spectacular anti-slavery, anti-colonial struggles in the Caribbean during the "Age of Revolution" (1770–1830), the Fedon's Rebellion (1795–96) needs to be better appreciated

as part of Grenada's cultural heritage and a pivotal turning point in Caribbean history. While most published works on the Fedon Rebellion characterize Fedon as a mythical leader, very few accounts are centered on the agencies of the estimated 14,000⁶ enslaved Africans who participated in the rebellion at the peak of the uprising. It is telling that during the 18 months of conflict, 7000 black Grenadians were casualties of war. Overall, 7222 enslaved were missing or unaccounted for according to the British Government, using estate records and other documentation⁷. Fedon allegedly escaped and is believed to have settled in Cuba. Another account has him in Haiti and subsequently involved in the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804).⁸

Some scholars are even raising the issue of whether the rebellion should appropriately be called 'Fidon Rebellion', considering the overwhelming numbers of enslaved and free blacks involved and their agency in the uprising⁹. At the very least, the courage of the thousands of enslaved that took part in the uprising should be given greater credit given the odds they were up against.

History shows there was only one instance of a successful slave rebellion in human history, that of the Haitian Revolution. The 1795 rebellion in Grenada was among the closest to succeed among anti-slavery Caribbean rebellions. Historian Kit Candlin, for example, posits that apart from the Haitian Revolution, the Fedon Rebellion was the most successful rebellion in the Caribbean and the single most destructive revolt against Britain's rule in the Caribbean. He argues that the 18-

⁶ There are some discrepancies regarding the actual numbers of blacks that participated on the side of the rebellion. Estimates range from 14,000 (Candlin (2018) to 7,000 (Murphy 2018), among others.

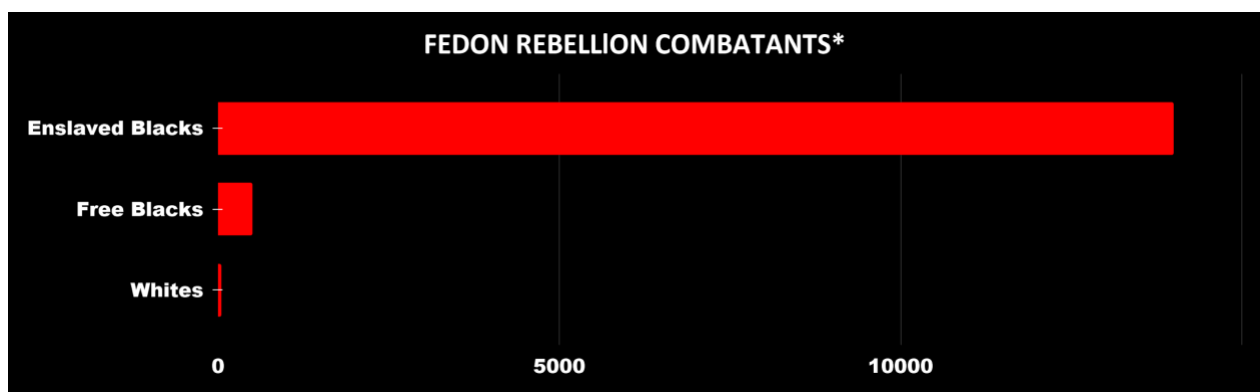
⁷ These include members of the Corps of Loyal Black Rangers, a pro-British counter-revolutionary force specially created to capture rebels and Grenada Maroons seeking refuge in the forested interior. Among the incentives offered to the Corps was obtaining free-black status.

⁸ See Curtis Jacob, *Revolutionary Priest: Pascal Mardel of Grenada*.

⁹ See Kit Candlin "The role of the enslaved in the 'Fidon Rebellion' of 1795", *Slavery & Abolition*, 39:4. December, 2018

month slave rebellion was the deadliest in the history of the British Caribbean. The so-called Fedon Rebellion was far more destructive for the slavers “...than the better-known slave revolts in Barbados (1816) and Demerara (1823) and far more costly in terms of lives than the Jamaican Baptist War of 1831.”¹⁰ The rebellion should therefore be seen for what it was, one of the earliest and one of the more consequential blows to Caribbean slavery. And it ultimately helped to end British slavery by highlighting to the British authorities the danger of keeping slavery, especially in light of the Grenada rebellion happening in the midst of the [St. Domingue rebellion](#), the other major turning point in Atlantic slavery.

The courage and vision of individual leaders, such as the heroic Fr. Pascal Mardel, who was also critical to the success of the 1795-96 insurgency, need to be recognized. It is typical that accounts of our history highlight a paramount leader and give greater agency to the European explorers and colonizers of Grenada but trivialize the hardships faced by hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans. But this is often an incomplete story.



*Fedon Rebellion Combatants: Enslaved Blacks 14,000; Free Blacks 500; Whites 50

¹⁰ See Candlin, for an insightful analysis of this conclusion.

Heritage and culture: the soul of nationhood

Part of the project of self-determination and deepening our independence is the importance of building institutions to memorialize and archive our past, and our collective accomplishments. An important aspect of such a project is establishing our national archives and invigorating a national historical and heritage trust. For example, efforts should be made to properly catalogue documents and other artifacts stretching from the classic colonial era to those taken illegally from Grenada during the U.S. invasion and occupation. Formerly curated at the George Washington University (Washington, D.C.), the [US State Department has recently established](#) that these documents are now in Grenada's possession. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States has further revealed that these documents are slated to be part of [a regional heritage project](#).

In a [2009 General Assembly Resolution](#), the United Nations encouraged the return or restitution of cultural property to countries of origin, characterizing culture as the soul of a nation. And the removal of cultural property from countries of origin as against all principals that culture represents. The repatriation, cloning and digitization of Grenada-related artifacts and other relics from former colonial capitals and those in other former colonies should be seen in this light and be of top national priority if we are to invoke the true meaning of nation-building and political independence.

Much is made of the Georgian architectural heritage of St. George's and other relics of the colonial built environment, which is not entirely without merit. But we should also see the value of

preserving other aspects of our heritage, including our notably strong African cultural retention. This includes the wealth of ethnographic and anthropological works documented by local and international scholars on Carriacou and Petite Martinique. One of the highlights of this appreciation was the 250-year formal reunion of the people of Carriacou with their ancestral kins, [the Temne people of Sierra Leone](#), West Africa in September 2016. In a ceremony that included officials from both Grenada and Sierra Leone, museum officials and historians, it can be seen as embodying a teachable moment illustrating how cultural memory can serve profoundly educational, social, and economic purposes.

Marcus Garvey wrote “A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots”. As a result of its tumultuous past and proud history of resistance, Grenada is one of the most written-about countries in the region. Yet, there is no centralized repository for these works. How are we to know where we are going if we know not where we come from? A concerted effort to collect these writings is crucial to our project of nation building and our people’s understanding and ownership of their history. What better place to house this collection than the Grenada Public Library. Famously located on the Carenage, the 129-year-old institution was damaged in 2004, during Hurricane Ivan. The building fell into further disrepair and was officially closed in 2011 due to a termite infestation. Today, there is an online petition, with well over [7,700 signatures](#), demanding the restocking and reopening of the library, a testament to its value to the Grenadian people.

From Crimes Against Humanity to lessons for humanity

The experience of Grenadian and other peoples of the Americas with centuries of slavery and colonialism has been characterized by the United Nations as and other international agencies as Crimes Against Humanity (CAH). It is our obligation to learn from this history and recognize the resilience and popular agency of our ancestors that have kept us alive today. One of the means of doing this is building our indigenous institutions and teaching and creating culturally relevant curricula for the mass education of our people, including scholars, and taking history out of the confines of the classrooms and into the public spaces. At a minimum, the renaming of our streets and institutions should be accompanied by plaques and interactive information nodes to take advantage of the digital age.

This need to build our country based on our own images should be seen in light of the [Caricom 10-point Agenda](#) for reparatory justice. But the 10-point Agenda highlights as a point of irony that European nations have invested in the development of community institutions such as museums and research centers based on the lessons of slavery and other Crimes Against Humanity. Thus, preparing their citizens for a better comprehension of these CAH conducted by European empires¹¹. For a variety of reasons, Caribbean countries, such as Grenada, have made little investment in the development of such indigenous institutions. Yet, investing in such institutions, curating these studies and making the relevant artifacts and data accessible to our people can help us better understand ourselves, and to learn from the various aspects of the legacy of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, and to ensure that such crimes are not repeated.

¹¹ See Caricom Ten Point Plan # 4. "Cultural Institutions."

The existence of these institutions can adequately prepare European citizens for a future that promises a better understanding of enslavement and colonialism, and the possibility of fostering humanitarianism and reconciliation. Paradoxically, Caribbean countries, such as Grenada, where these CAH were committed, have little or no such institutions. The ones that do exist are in need renovation, enhanced technology, and overall greater resources. Our collective humanity, heroism and agency are not recognized by our own people and the lack of these institutions may put us in danger of thwarting our national development. Grenadian schoolteachers and researchers should be given the same opportunities as their ex-colonial counterparts to benefit from our history. This is a situation needing urgent change and can be part of Grenada's reparations agenda within the wider Caricom community.

Such measures of memorialization, including the replacement of old monuments and adding our own, may not immediately heal the trauma of slavery, colonialism, racial injustice, inequalities, and national oppression, but will be an important first step in the direction of coming to terms with our painful but heroic past. These measures can serve as a basis for national reconciliation from our centuries-long history of slavery, colonialism (with its engendered social and political strife), and imperialism. It can take us further along the road to national self-determination, social justice, and true independence. The late Rex Nettleford reminds us that one cannot effectively drive without a rear-view mirror. And to echo Black Wizard: how can we come to terms with social violence of the present while honoring and celebrating those violent colonial figures that have enslaved and killed Grenada's ancestors?

The lion must tell its story

There is an African proverb that says, “Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter” or “If the lion does not tell his Story, the Hunter will.”

Education plays far too important a role in the identity formation of a people. We need grounding, a foundation. The right place to begin this work is to refocus our educational system. We must begin to reframe the way we see ourselves and that starts with a culturally-responsive curriculum. We have to teach our history from the point of view that we are not the victims but the subject—the actors. When we are the actors, we determine who and what is worthy of memorializing. We determine the monuments in our towns, villages and communities.

Our annual awards continue to recognize the slave traders, masters, racist colonialist institutions and their insignia. After nearly 50 years of independence, we still seek out British symbols and insignia. When will we begin to look inward?

The current global conversation around certain insensitive monuments and statues is an opportune moment for Grenada to examine its history while continuing to mature as a nation. With these initiatives of renaming our national icons and creating a coherent narrative for the people of Grenada, we would have finally arrived at the Maurice Bishop International Airport!

Work Cited

Black Wizard. "Tomorrow's People." *Making Music*, Charlie's Records, Inc., 1980. Vinyl EP.

Brizan, George. *Grenada Island of Conflict - From Amerindians to People's Revolution 1498 -1979*. London: ZED Books Ltd, 1984.

Candlin, Kit. "The role of the enslaved in the 'Fedor Rebellion' of 1795", *Slavery & Abolition*, 39:4. December, 2018, 685–707.

Caribbean Reparations Commission. n.d. CARICOM—Caribbean Reparations Commission. CARICOM—Caribbean Reparations Commission. Available online: <http://caricomreparations.org/caricom/> (accessed on 1 January 2021).

Coard, Winston Bernard. *Sky Red: A Tale of Two Revolutions (volume III)*. McDermott publishing: Kingston, Jamaica & St. George's Grenada; January 13th, 2020.

Cox, Edward L. "Fedor's Rebellion 1795–96: Causes and Consequences", *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 7-19.

Grenada National Trust. *St. David*. <https://grenadanationaltrust.org/st-david>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2020.

Honychurch, Lennox. "The Leap at Sauteurs: The lost cosmology of Indigenous Grenada". Last revised 19 March 2002. Accessed 21 Dec. 2020

<https://www.open.uwi.edu/sites/default/files/bnccde/grenada/conference/papers/LH.html>

Hughes, Alister. *EyeWitness to History: A Grenadian Journalist Memoir*. Erni Druckerei, Switzerland, 2018.

Jacobs, Curtis. "Revolutionary priest: Pascal Mardel of Grenada." *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2015, p. 317+. Gale Academic OneFile.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A417471927/AONE?u=fitsuny&sid=AONE&xid=983211>
ff. Accessed 6 Nov. 2020.

Murphy, Tessa "A Reassertion of Rights: Fedon's Rebellion, Grenada, 1795-96", *La Révolution française [En ligne]*, 14 | 2018, mis en ligne le 18 juin 2018, consulté le 23 janvier 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lrf/2017>; DOI :<https://doi.org/10.4000/lrf.2017>

Nelson, Velvet. "Emplaced myths of Fedon's Rebellion in tourism representations." *Southeastern Geographer*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2015, p. 276+. Gale Academic OneFile.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A437058783/AONE?u=fitsuny&sid=AONE&xid=b6a089>

26. Accessed 6 Nov. 2020.

Smith-Spark, Laura. Remembering the Black cabaret star Britain almost forgot. CNN.

October 24, 2020 <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/leslie-hutchinson-black-history-month-gbr-intl/index.html>

Steensma, David P MD, Kyle, Robert A., Shampo, Marc A, PhD, Walter Clement

Noel—First Patient Described With Sickle Cell Disease, Mayo Clin Proc. 2010 Oct;

85(10): e74–e75. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2947974/>. Accessed 7

Dec. 2020

