

Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford (1866- 1893)

J.E. Casely Hayford was born in Cape Coast. He, too, attended Wesley School and later, his family was able to send him to Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which was highly recommended at that time and even called the “Athens” of West Africa. For a time, he worked as a law clerk in Cape Coast. Then, he went to Cambridge and London to study jurisprudence at “St. Peter's College” and “Inner Temple” to promote his political ambitions. In Fourah Bay College, Hayford had become a follower of the West Indian born African educator Edward Wilmot Blyden (see below). This man was the foremost pan- African of his time who edited the first explicitly pan- African journal in West Africa, the “Negro”. Although a militant advocate of African and pan-African causes, Hayford never became bitter and always acted "constitutionally." He began his career as a journalist, serving as assistant editor and editor on different pan- African (national) magazines. In 1902 together with three other colleagues, he founded the “Gold Coast Leader” which became his main work.

Hayford's formal career as a teacher was short-lived. For two years, he was headmaster of the Wesleyan Boys' High School in Accra. Nevertheless, throughout his entire adult life, he was a staunch advocate of education at all levels along "racial and national lines." In 1902, he became one of the founders of the “Mfantasi National Education Fund” to provide for the "proper education" of the children in Gold Coast. Pupils were to be taught to read and write in Fanti and study the history, geography and customs of the land, but the scheme aborted. In 1911, in his book “Ethiopia Unbound”,¹ Hayford publicly advocated the establishment of a national university with a curriculum relevant to African needs and conditions. In 1919, he and other colleagues sought unsuccessfully to establish secular independent high schools through the newly formed “Gold Coast National Education Scheme”. His dream was partly realized when the government opened the above-mentioned Achimota College. Its curriculum was mostly African, and throughout the last years of the colonial period, it was the premier primary and secondary educational institution in Gold Coast. Hayford was a member of its council and served on the “Gold Coast Board of Education”.

As a politician with law knowledge, Hayford successfully argued and agitated against two measures which would have resulted in the alienation of African lands to the British crown: the Lands Bill of 1897 and the proposed Forest Bill of 1911. The research for his briefs against these

¹ J.E. Casely Hayford, *Ethiopia Unbound* (London: C. M. Phillips, 1911)

two bills formed the basis for three books.²³⁶⁵ In the Legislative Council, Hayford fearlessly criticized the shortcomings of colonial rule and constantly demanded a larger African say in running their affairs. He served on several government commissions.

Early in his career, Hayford came to see the essential problem of Africans- both in the ancestral home and abroad- as regaining self-confidence and self-respect, which had been crushed by European exploitation and degradation. He therefore inveighed strongly against the uncritical acceptance of European ideas, customs, and institutions. In 1888, he publicly stressed the need to retain African languages and dresses. In his newspapers, Hayford regularly recalled the achievement of outstanding Africans so as to foster racial pride. He took an especially keen interest in Afro-Americans and encouraged the pan-African aspirations of Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey and their followers. His dream for West Africa was to form an independent federation of the British colonies Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, and Nigeria within the British Commonwealth. In 1914, Hayford succeeded in convening a conference of 50 British West African delegates in Accra, which resulted in the “National Congress of British West Africa”, meeting at Freetown in 1923, at Bathurst at the turn of the year 1925/’26, and at Lagos in 1929. Unfortunately, they lacked support from their people, could not realize any of their goals and did not manage to continue when Hayford died. However, it was an important stimulus to African nationalism.

² J.E. Casely Hayford, *The Truth about the West African Land Question* (1898; Reprint 1913 and London: Cass, 1971)

³ J.E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions- With Thoughts Upon A Healthy Imperial Policy for the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (1903; Reprint London: Cass, 1970) ⁶⁵ J.E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Land Tenure and the Forest Bill* (1911)