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# Blood Diamonds: The Recovery of Black Unification Amidst White Hegemony

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Spring | 2015

*Blood Diamonds:  
The Recovery of Black Unification  
Amidst White Hegemony*

By: Christine Efua Ohenewah

American Studies

Honors Thesis

Professor Duchess Harris

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# Acknowledgements

They say the greatest research is the one your soul is most invested in. So much so, that it may even be the very research you wish to depart from. I encountered several days in this process where I wanted to leave this research alone; to stop mid-sentence and leave months of hard efforts in the hands of oblivion. I almost did. For that, there are many individuals to whom I owe my thanks and gratitude.

I would like to wholeheartedly thank my Honors Advisory Committee, Professors Duchess Harris, Leola Johnson, and Casey Jarrin for committing their time and profound intellect to this project. To Professor Harris in particular, your astounding wisdom and momentum has greatly influenced my development as a scholar. I want to thank you for being a tremendous inspiration, and I am honored to call you my advisor and Mellon mentor. To Professor Jane Rhodes: I want to thank you for simply believing in me. I would further like to express appreciation for my mentors at Harvard University, especially my ‘Big Sis’ Kyrach Daniels whose immense warmth and encouragement made this work feel worthwhile. I also want to recognize my dearest friend, Obiele Harper, whose boundless empathy and fierce wit has kept me going, has kept me laughing, and has kept me believing. Truly, you are my Godsend.

I extend my final and deepest gratitude to my family: Mom, Dad, Judith, and David, your unconditional love, benevolence, and support has sustained me through my most taxing days in this journey, and I cannot fathom how I would manage without you. Always, you have pushed me to be the best I can be, and this will forever remain my impetus to strive for more. I love you all. You are my life.

I first entered this journey believing I had found the research topic of my passion. With the passing of time, I am left convinced that this research found *me*. It arose to inform me that beyond scholarship, humanity has a long path ahead and there is much work to be done. The most amount of work, they say—arguably the best work—begins with the periphery. I think I am up for the task.

# Introduction

*“We the African people are our own liberators and thinkers whose task is to make a mighty stride towards genuine freedom by any means necessary.”<sup>1</sup>*

*~ Resolution of the Sixth Pan-African Congress*

I identify as African—Ghanaian, more specifically. Without question, I assumed this label, reasoning that Ghana is my birth country and my parents are Ghanaian natives. I later then discovered that African foreigner privilege is a real phenomenon in America. Claiming an African label, while not rendering me immune to racist treatment, grants me kinder demeanors and wide-eyed smiles of fascination at my Ghanaian heritage; smiles that code for, “Oh, you’re not *really* Black. Phew!” Yet while an African label may ease the blow of anti-Blackness, it indicates a peculiar tactic of Black ethnic disaggregation that is being used to strengthen a larger ulterior agenda.

However, to say that I am simply “African” oversimplifies the complexity of my identity. I am a second-generation Ghanaian immigrant to America, which means that although I am Ghanaian-born, I have primarily been acculturated to North American society. Albeit, in a Black Diasporic community, being a second-generation immigrant serves as the basis of my exclusion among Africans, African Americans, and even Caribbeans alike. I have experienced the sneers of Africans who charge that my American upbringing discounts my “true Africanness” (despite my upbringing in a Ghanaian cultural household). I have further encountered African Americans who intimate that I have an illegitimate understanding of U.S. structural racism and the Black American struggle *because* I am African (despite being raised in America).

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution of the Sixth Pan-African Congress, June 1974.

My second-generation African identity thus places me in an odd middle space of two ethnicities: African and African American. Inhabiting this space allows me to observe the ripples that occur between African Diasporic groups and to better understand how and why they emerge. The way I comprehend it, my identity signifies that I am either not “Black” enough, or I am too “Americanized” to be a true African. Such accusations bond over the common narrative of “acting too White,” without recognizing their subscription to limited constructions of Blackness that ultimately squander Black solidarity. I thus believe something is awry when my African and African American college mates choose to exclude me because I do not conform to perceived ideas of Blackness, yet happily embrace other White and non-White folk who want to sit with the Black kids at lunch.

In effect, these situations adapt elements of anti-Blackness by ensuring that Blackness can only exist through representations sustained by a colonial ethos. Those who venture outside of this ethos become otherized within our community, which is particularly evident in the way Africans and African Americans perceive one another. The aforementioned situations, no doubt, are akin to African Americans who abstain from accepting Africans as “real Blacks” by virtue of their cultural dissimilarities and alleged inability to comprehend the grave implications of slavery. They are further akin to Africans who refuse to immerse their children in an “oppositional” Black American culture, for fear they will not ascend into White American society. These situations hence elucidate the simultaneous and somewhat arbitrary interplay of (selective) Black acceptance and Black rejection, which unleashes schism within the Black Diasporic community. Upon further inspection, they emphasize an internalization of White supremacy that heavily contributes to Black discord. Despite these situations, one thing remains

true. White superiority will continue to prevail as long as we condone its applied division scheme.

So we have a lot of work to do. All of us.

White supremacy thrives on the transnational solidification of anti-Blackness, which seeks to annihilate the livelihood of peoples across the African Diaspora. It further seeks to dismantle Pan-African unity and advancement by inciting internal divisions. So long as we permit a White supremacist legacy to continue, we forsake the hope of eradicating globally oppressive systems that have lasted from history to present day. We need only look to the apartheid regime in South Africa; Jim-Crow segregation in the United States; the rape and pillaging of the African continent and the transatlantic enslavement of its gems.

The problem of White supremacy rests in its infectious and contagious narrative. It manifests on a structural, social, and internalized level, fueled by collective ignorance and naive beliefs of a post-racial world order. The internalized manifestation of White supremacy holds the most devastating repercussions for individuals of color; Black individuals in particular. As earlier mentioned, I have invariably observed the ways that internalized White racism spurs division among Blacks, ultimately reversing generations of anti-racist progress. While I emphasize that anti-Black racism born of White supremacy is a global pandemic, the reversal of Pan-African and anti-racist progress is ever evident in strained relations between Africans and African Americans in the United States.

To thus offer a brief prelude to what my thesis will entail, my first chapter examines the residing conflict between Africans and African Americans in the Twin Cities, arguing that

models of White citizenship aggravate their intraracial tensions. I further provide a timeline of African immigration to the United States (the Twin Cities specifically) before delving into issues surrounding American citizenship, high socioeconomic status, anti-Blackness, and varied racial treatments that all account for worsened relations between Africans and African Americans. Furthermore, I draw on the transcripts of ethnographic interviews I conducted. In chapter two I offer an extensive overview of Pan-African ideology to retrace the history of Black unity. While this chapter primarily serves as a synopsis on Pan-Africanism, I claim that Blacks must engage Pan-Africanism as a tool of resistance against White hegemonic subjugation. I further claim that Blacks must not only avoid interethnic neoliberalism, or disregard for the African Diaspora's ethnic heterogeneity in order to uphold Black unification, but we must also anti-assimilate from a Eurocentric world order. In my final chapter I use Ghana's Pan-African Movement as a case study to contend that liberalism is an ideology rooted in colonialism and serves as a global manifestation of White citizenship. It further works to halt Black unification efforts, which is demonstrated by the downfall of Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African Movement in Ghana. I conclude my thesis by calling for a new vision of Black unity that derives its unification from a shared "Black" skin color. All along, Blacks have overlooked the cruciality of a shared skin color enforced on us by a White supremacist regime. While Blacks are by no means monolithic, it is our "Black" skin color that bonds us. The choice is therefore ours to embrace it.

For the sake of my research, I have chosen to analyze tensions specifically between Africans and African Americans due to the following motives: 1) limited scholarship exists on the dynamic between these two particular ethnicities, which I hope to expand and contribute to; 2) my second generation Ghanaian identity equips me with better insight on this sensitive topic, to which I can more aptly speak, based on my personal experiences. For clarification purposes, I



use the terms “Black Diaspora,” and “African Diaspora” to denote all of Africa’s Black-skinned descendants, whether they are directly from the African continent or have resided in outside geographic spaces for generations. Finally, my use of the term “Black” diverges from the traditional connotation of “Black,” which is meant to mean “African American.” Rather, it operates under the inclusion of all African Diasporic peoples.

Internal divisions among Africans and African Americans is certainly not a new marvel and possesses a long, fraught history. However, the *active* recognition of these tensions must occur in order to transcend the “murmur” of dialogue around this subject that frequents in daily discussion. This is why I write. In America’s post-racial moment that has followed the Immigration Act of 1965 and further, the 2008 election of President Barack Obama, there appears to be an adamant push to ignore that thing called “difference.” The increasing sensitivity—and resistance—towards discussing racial issues, not only detracts from examining the dire affects of a historically enforced racial order, but also prevents the opportunity to identify and heal separations within racialized groups. Furthermore, due to the lack of scholarship available, chapter two’s prevailing scholarship on Pan-Africanism conveys the problematic male-centered perspective that leaves out the voices of female Pan-Africanists and their contributions to the Pan-African Movement. This is another problem that must be addressed. Finally, I acknowledge that this thesis does not explore the way internal tensions among Africans and African Americans permeates gender bounds. Such investigation would serve as useful for future research endeavors and would speak to the even deeper intricacies of not only traversing racial and ethnic identities, but also gender identities within the African Diaspora.

I write this thesis in hopes that as Blood Diamonds who have been scattered, abused, and exploited, Blacks will reunite once more in our desire for freedom.<sup>2</sup> Our struggle is ongoing and requires the reclamation of our self-love and unification to free ourselves from White supremacist bondage. It is time to face the truths surrounding our internal divisions and the entity from which they emanate, as we cannot hope to remedy our troubles without first confronting them. I further write this thesis in hopes that the mission to restore Black uplift will not befall Blacks alone, but will befall all; particularly those who have initiated the historic degradation and manipulation of Black bodies.

After all, it only takes one unassuming reader who yearns to change our world. May they read this and feel inspired to destroy the chains that arrest our collective humanity.

May they tell the truth.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Blood Diamonds’ is a term used to connote diamonds that are mined in a war zone and are sold to finance military activity. The term ultimately underscores the negative implications of the diamond trade in recent civil wars in African countries, such as Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. I thus employ the term Blood Diamonds as a metaphoric representation of Black individuals within the African Diaspora who, because of slavery and colonial agendas, have been scattered through blood lineage and have been used for savage labor practices. However, my capitalization of the term Blood Diamonds is also a political choice to symbolize how invaluable Black individuals are, for our solidarity—our collective shine—is eminent.

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# **Africans and African Americans:**

Models of White Citizenship and Its  
Impact on Their Tensions

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## **CHAPTER 1**

## Introduction

*“It would be duplicity longer to disguise the fact the great issue, sooner or later, upon which must be disputed the world’s destiny, will be a question of black and white.”*<sup>3</sup>

~ Martin R. Delany

The influx of African immigrants to the United States since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has drastically altered the composition of America’s Black population and accords the term “Black” a new meaning; one unconfined to African American individuals. Amidst this influx have emerged tensions between African immigrants and African Americans, which augment the fragility of their affiliation. It can be said that the current state of African and African American relations closely mirrors Michele Wallace’s theory on “specialness.” In her book, *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory*, Wallace defines “specialness” as “anything at all that sets you apart from a male-dominated, baby-having, uneducated, despondent welfare-receiving woman.”<sup>4</sup> Wallace’s theoretical assertion lies parallel to the type of separatist mentality that engulfs Africans and African Americans in modern America. Contrary to common perception, Blacks in America are becoming ethnically and culturally heterogeneous, which partially accounts for shifting trends in contemporary Black solidarity. I however believe that a more nefarious institution of dominance has implemented the polarization of ethnic Blacks: White citizenship, or a model embedded with ideals stereotyped to norms of Whiteness. I argue that demands of

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<sup>3</sup> Tunde Adeleke, “Black Americans and Africa: A Critique of the Pan-African and Identity Paradigms,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, (1998): 512

<sup>4</sup> Michelle Wallace, *Invisibility Blues: from Pop to Theory*, (New York: Verso, 1990), 135.

fulfilling a White American construction of citizenship exacerbate present conflicts between Africans and African Americans in the United States.

Focusing my demographic in the Minnesota Twin Cities region, this chapter investigates how White models of citizenship catalyze mutual contempt between Africans and African Americans. Mainly, do pressures of conforming to White American citizenship upset tensions between the two ethnicities? How do socioeconomic status and anti-Blackness become benchmarks in the attainment of White citizenship? Finally, how do differing applications of racism towards Africans versus African Americans complicate each ethnicity's acquisition of White citizenship? To situate my above inquiries, I examine four different themes in this chapter: the American model of citizenship, socioeconomic ranking, anti-Blackness, and contrasts in racial treatment towards Africans and African Americans. In addition, I provide a brief timeline and demographics of African immigration to the United States and Minnesota. This chapter further exposes that Africans and African Americans are two distinct ethnicities whose racial homogenization as Blacks overshadows the complexities of their internal stratification. Unequivocally, the demands of White citizenship (a concept of ideals stereotyped to Whiteness) and suspicions about the other group's "entitlement" to American prosperity have diverged African and African American relations.

## **Theories and Methods**

In this chapter I utilize transcripts of ethnographic interviews. For my interviews, I chose to target African and African American men and women residing in the Twin Cities; five of whom I managed to interview. Three of the participants were African American—two of whom were female—while the remaining two were African and male. I interviewed my participants on

a college campus and for confidential purposes, refer to them using pseudonyms. Furthermore, participants were to be age 30 and above, with a minimum residency of five years in the Twin Cities. I reasoned that it would be safe to rely on participants in this age range, given a likely solidification of personal views by this time. Most first-generation Africans who arrive to the United States before age 30 immigrate primarily for schooling purposes and are often less accustomed to America's racial dynamic. With this being stated, I bear in mind that this is not always the case, as reasons involving escape from a war-torn region may motivate their journey to America.

I additionally chose not to restrict socioeconomic status (for both groups) and country of origin (for Africans) in order to yield broader perspectives in my findings. African participants were also required to be dark-skinned, meaning that Caucasian-skinned Africans would be excluded from interviews. In an American cultural setting, a North or South African with Caucasian skin would not be classified as "African" or "Black" in these words' typical usage. They would therefore be exempt from the same racial discrimination as dark-skinned Africans in the United States. Finally, I excluded refugees from my sampling, as Macalester's Social Science Institutional Review Board (SSIRB) does not allow these subjects to be interviewed.

## **Scholarly Debate**

### *The Emergence of Multiple Black Ethnic Identities*

An increasing number of scholars attribute the division among Africans and African Americans to the growing plurality of Black ethnic identities within America, given the extensive migration of African immigrants within recent decades. Scholar Yvette Alex-Assensoh argues that African immigrants are bringing in a new era of Diasporic Black politics, marked by

distinct differences in associational membership, religious affiliation, and socio-economic status that all correlate with ethnicity.<sup>5</sup> Nyang reinforces Alex-Assensoh's assessment of these differences in identifying obstacles encountered by African immigrants upon their arrival to America.<sup>6</sup> These include the role of religion, issues of self-definition, and the acquisition of American values by second-generation African children. In weighing these myriad differences, Patterson asserts that Black Politics in America has been perceived as racially unified and homogenous, being generally defined by African American identity.<sup>7</sup> Swarns extends Patterson's assertion by further arguing that the emerging multiplicity of Black ethnic identities (i.e. Africans and Caribbeans) is contradictory to such homogeneity and signifies the increasingly transnational nature of Black Politics in America.<sup>8</sup> Nyang likewise states that African immigrants balance transnational, multiple identities, which affects their relationships with African Americans. According to Assensoh, this growing diversification gives rise to intra-racial conflicts between African immigrants and African Americans.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Yvette Alex-Assensoh, "African Immigrants and African-Americans: An Analysis of Voluntary African Immigration and the Evolution of Black Ethnic Politics in America," *African and Asian Studies*, (2009).

<sup>6</sup> Sulayman Nyang, *The African Immigrant Family in the United States of America: Challenges and Opportunities*, CAPCR Newsletter, (Washington D.C.: Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

<sup>8</sup> Rachel Swarns, "African-American Becomes a Term for Debate," *New York Times*, (2004).

<sup>9</sup> Akwasi B. Assensoh, "Conflict or Cooperation? Africans and African Americans in Multiracial America," in Yvette Alex-Assensoh and Lawrence Hanks's *Black and Multiracial Politics in America*, (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

The preceding scholars effectively introduce the question of what it is to be *Black* in America, as their acknowledgement of an expanding Black population in the United States underscores the reality that “Black” is no longer synonymous with “African American.” By further discussing incongruities between Africans and African Americans, these scholars discount misleading perceptions of an “immediate” Black unity. They also emphasize the tensions that arise out of the expansion of Black ethnic diversity, which is steadily becoming complex and ever more heterogeneous. I believe these distinctions are crucial to increasing understanding of the consequences resulting from racial categorization in America; however, an observable limitation in the preceding analysis is the lack of consideration given to how pressures of White assimilation may determine the social standing of Africans and African Americans in the United States.

### Negative Media Stereotypes

A different body of scholars argue that negative media tropes about Africans encourage conflict with their African American peers at school. Scholar Rosemary Traoré argues that harmful African stereotypes stem from the media into schools and make it difficult for African students to achieve their desires of a quality education.<sup>10</sup> For instance, young African students face challenges of exclusion from their American peers, lack of respect, and degrading notions about Africa that pathologize Africans as disease-ridden jungle savages who suffer from

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<sup>10</sup> Rosemary Traoré, “Voices of African Students in America: We’re Not from the Jungle,” *Multicultural Perspectives*, (2006).



starvation. Hawk<sup>11</sup> asserts that adverse stereotypes of Africa in the media severely demean African culture in the eyes of many Westerners, and as Waters<sup>12</sup> argues, these stereotypes separate African students from everyone else. Bearing this in mind, Traoré observes conflicts between African and African American students by noting the violent fights that take place between the two ethnicities. She further states that such animosity originates from the negative stereotypes of Africans promoted in the media, school, and home.

The above scholarship critically conveys frictions that not only stem from diversified environments, but the difficulties of navigating ethnic-based disputes, as seen between African and African American students. An important dimension of this analysis is the observation of arising conflicts between young African and African American students within the American educational system. As we recall, these scholars attribute inratriacial tensions to negative stereotypes reinforced in the home, school, and public media. Their assertion is valuable, for such tropes evoke interethnic schism by instilling damaging perceptions of African Americans and Africans. However, a visible weakness in this scholarship is its more extensive focus on *African* stereotypes generated by the media and the ways they affect African American perceptions of Africans. It is important to consider that African perceptions of African Americans may also likely be altered when shown harmful media images of African Americans (i.e. severely malnourished or impoverished Africans, Africans residing in huts or barely clothed). Furthermore, the focus on the school system as a site of African and African American

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<sup>11</sup> Beverly Hawk, *Africa's Media Image*, (Westport: Praeger, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Mary C. Waters, *Black Identities: West Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999).

dissonance is limiting. While it is relevant to name educational institutions as sites of conflict between Africans and African Americans, I believe these interethnic tensions permeate more than one facet of American society—especially on urban and suburban communal levels.

Overall, both pools of scholarship locate a range of factors that influence African and African American relations in the United States. Ranging from socioeconomic status to negative stereotypes in the media, these factors incite conflict between the two ethnicities. While the first set of scholars attribute African and African American tensions to an emergence of multiple Black identities in America, the second set of scholars contend that these tensions emerge through unfavorable stereotypes of Africans generated by Western media. Although these identified causes are crucial to grasping better knowledge on preexisting Black interethnic divisions, they discount pressures emanating from the imposition of White American citizenship. The remainder of this chapter will delineate the multiple ways that White citizenship, a model based in ideals ascribed to Whiteness, affects African and African American relations. In the section below, I provide a brief timeline and statistics of African immigration to the United States and Minnesota.

### **Black Immigration to the United States and Minnesota**

In recent years, African immigration to the United States has surpassed the immigration of other immigrant groups, including Afro-Caribbeans. The passing of the 1965 Immigration Act and its later implementation in 1968 resulted in the expansive increase of America's Black

ethnic population.<sup>13</sup> The presence of African immigrants thus amplified sevenfold, and by 1970, more than fifty thousand Black immigrants had arrived to the United States. Furthermore, African immigration has largely taken place over the past 25 years, with its newcomers settling in major urban centers, such as St. Louis, New York City, Minneapolis, and Pittsburgh.<sup>14</sup> The current total number of Africans residing in the U.S. nears over 40 million in estimation and comprises 3 percent of the Black population nationwide. The table below shows the progression of African immigration from 1960-2009 with a notable influx beginning in 1980.

**Table 1. Total and African Foreign-Born Populations, 1960 to 2009**

Year	Total foreign born	African born	
		Number	Share of total foreign born
1960	9,738,091	35,355	0.4%
1970	9,619,302	80,143	0.8%
1980	14,079,906	199,723	1.4%
1990	19,797,316	363,819	1.8%
2000	31,107,889	881,300	2.8%
2009	38,517,104	1,492,785	3.9%

*Source:* Migration Policy Institute, 2011.

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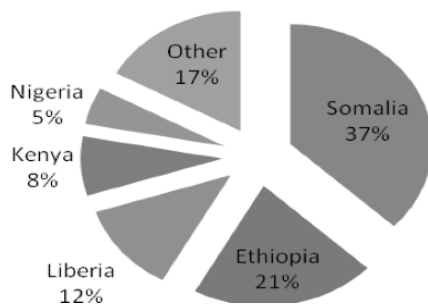
<sup>13</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnicity: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 40-41.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

African immigrants additionally comprised 3.9 percent of immigrants in 2009, and their top five countries of origin included Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt—nearly two-thirds of African immigrants were from Western and Eastern Africa.<sup>15</sup>

For Minnesota in particular, its African immigrant population is the ninth largest in the

### *African Immigrants in Minnesota*



Source: African Nonprofits, 2007.

nation, with estimates landing between 70,000

and 80,000 immigrants today. This is a

significant increase, as before 1990, it was

projected that fewer than 5000 immigrants

resided in the state.<sup>16</sup> Minnesota further

comprises the greatest number of U.S. Somali

residents—studies revealed that during the year

1992 to 1999, approximately 29,000 Somali immigrants arrived to Minnesota. Other African

countries represented included Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, and Kenya. While African immigrants

are increasingly settling in suburban areas of Minnesota, most of them choose to live in the Twin

Cities region.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kristen McCabe, “African Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/african-immigrants-united-states>

<sup>16</sup> Neal Remington, “African Immigrants in Minnesota,” (The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy), (2008): 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 5.

## Immigrants and the American Ideal of Citizenship

In America, the concept of “the good citizen” grounds itself on premises of national loyalty, hard work, and the desire to improve one’s self.<sup>18</sup> Based on their ability to succeed and contribute to society, these characteristics serve as a determining scale of assimilation for newly arrived immigrants. Said another way, immigrants are assessed by their dedication to achieving the American Dream. Scholar Jennifer Hochschild defines the American Dream as,

“The promise that all Americans have a reasonable chance to achieve success as they define it—material or otherwise—through their own efforts, and to attain virtue and fulfillment through success.”<sup>19</sup>

Although the American Dream appears detached from race, it bears ideals ingrained in White Anglo Saxon culture. These ideals attempt to homogenize difference, where ethnic heterogeneity only positively augments and contributes to U.S. national culture, while ignoring frictions between race and ethnicity.<sup>20</sup> They further dispense the notion that regardless of race or class, success can be achieved; however, those who fail to embody the paradigms of patriotism, hard-work, and economic mobility are classified as anti-citizens. We must then turn to analyze the implications of exemplifying “good” citizenship in a country where race and class are at the nexus of societal functions. Further, we must reexamine ways in which the “good citizen” and the “anti-citizen” are racially and socioeconomically pathologized.

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<sup>18</sup> Bonnie Urciuoli, “Acceptable Difference: The Cultural Evolution of the Model Ethnic American Citizen,” *PoLAR: Politic* (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) *al and Legal Anthropology Review*, (1994): 19.

<sup>19</sup> Jennifer Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> Bonnie Urciuoli, “Acceptable Difference,” 31.

Historically, the “good citizen” represents holistically American values ascribed to Whiteness. These White-racialized values comprise a strong work diligence, patriotic allegiance to one’s country, strong familial values, and the motivation to achieve greater means, despite adverse conditions. However, in understanding the workings of Whiteness, we understand that Whiteness remains pervasive in U.S. culture and secures its dominance by appearing as a neutral, abstract force. Thus, because Whiteness never has to voice itself, it serves as an unmarked category against which difference is assembled.<sup>21</sup> Whiteness further bears advantages that have been reared from other groups’ disparities. As scholar George Lipsitz asserts,

“Race is a cultural construct, but one with sinister structural causes and consequences. Conscious and deliberate actions have institutionalized group identity in the United States, not just through the dissemination of cultural stories, but also through systematic efforts from colonial times to the present to create economic advantages through a possessive investment in whiteness for European Americans.”<sup>22</sup>

In other words, through institutionalized systems that function to preserve the privileges of Whites, the withholding of prospects for asset accumulation and upward mobility from minority groups sustains White supremacy.<sup>23</sup> We must hence bear in mind that ideals of familial values and economic advantage have been ascribed to those at the top of America’s hierarchy—White, middle-to upper class individuals.<sup>24</sup> It then follows that in contrast, Whiteness fuels an

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<sup>21</sup> George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, viii.

<sup>24</sup> Important note: “White” as well as “Black” is also a homogenized term that conceals the ethnic heterogeneity of Whites in America. To understand the historical context of this term, Please see Noel Ignatiev’s, *How the Irish Became White*.

environment that demonizes Black minorities for being targeted by systemic marginalization, which solidifies the vilification of a racialized “anti-citizen” who America deems as uneducated, unmotivated, morally inept, and dependent on government assistance. This citizen additionally fails to be self-sufficient and abstains from improving their adverse circumstances. In noting these distinctions, we observe that such archetypes have been assigned to those on America’s lower rungs of the social hierarchy: poor Black minorities. It is therefore the crevice between representations of the “good citizen” and the “anti-citizen” where the immigrant enters.

Throughout this chapter I will argue that pressures of conforming to White citizenship (a model of ideals stereotyped to Whiteness) exacerbate African and African American relations. Due to the myth of the “good” and “special” Black immigrant, Africans are deemed as exemplifiers of White citizenship’s good qualities.<sup>25</sup> So long as African immigrants conform to the prescribed model of American citizenship, they can safely contain their difference while gaining assimilation. Although African immigrants may not be perceived as model minorities like Asian Americans, they are elevated above African Americans—a tactic which reflects a larger attempt to solidify present racial hierarchies (I discuss this much later).<sup>26</sup> Despite African Americans’ tireless efforts to acquire economic stability and obtain positions of power, American society refuses to disassociate African Americans from representations rooted in slavery, such as “laziness” and “incompetence,” which in effect, depicts African Americans as

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<sup>25</sup> Reuel Reuben Rogers, *Afro-Caribbean Immigrants and the Politics of Incorporation: Ethnicity, Exception, or Exit*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 13.

“bad citizens.” Take, for instance, this statement made by a Jewish merchant in Jonathan Rieders’ *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism*:

“Face it, the Haitians and Jamaicans and the other islanders down in Flatbush don’t consider themselves Black. These island people are producing people; they’re up early sweeping their stoops and taking care of their homes. They’re producing people like we are! But the Black lower element don’t contribute to society, they just take. In my view, you should get what you put into. You have to contribute.”<sup>27</sup>

The above statement illustrates a general misleading perception that Black immigrants demonstrate a superior agency and work ethic to their African American peers who “remain where they are” because “they have not gotten themselves out of it.”<sup>28</sup> Therefore, regardless of their upward mobility, African Americans remain visibly “Black” to the general public, which indicates a racial obstacle they must overcome in their attainment of White citizenship.

The Jewish merchant’s preceding statement further makes evident that African immigrant success is used to perpetuate the inferiority of Black American culture. The relegation of African Americans to bottom society, while African immigrants receive what is called “elevated minority status,” thus becomes a point of contention in activating African and African American tensions.<sup>29</sup> However, elevated minority status—the promotion of ethnic Black populations over native-born Blacks—overlooks the deeper racial implications of an American system that has long disenfranchised African Americans.<sup>30</sup> We must understand that the terms “Black” and “White” arose out of necessitated labor demands fundamental to the birthing of America. In

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<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Rieder, *The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 105.

<sup>28</sup> Bonnie Urciuoli, “Acceptable Difference,” 23.

<sup>29</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 23.



doing so, a racial hierarchy entrenched with distinctive attributes for Whites and Blacks, was created to justify White superiority and Black enslavement and inferiority. Given this historical context, the American colonialist statecraft frames African Americans in opposition to White citizenship, ensuring their disqualification as full citizens. Later on I explain that despite their elevation in society, the same holds true for African immigrants. The subsequent section will discuss differences in socioeconomic status between Africans and African Americans and how this impacts their intergroup relations.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

In examining the causes of intraracial tensions between Africans and African Americans, the gap in the two ethnicities' socioeconomic status is a contributing factor. Socioeconomic status serves as a measuring scale for determining whether ideals of White citizenship are being reached, and statistics continue to confirm that African immigrants who arrive to the United States economically surpass native-born Blacks. Not only are African immigrants more likely to maintain two-parent households and earn higher incomes, but they also attain higher levels of education, with a vast number holding college degrees compared to African Americans.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, a substantial number of African immigrants who migrate to America emerge from countries where they are the majority and are not socialized to think in terms of race.<sup>32</sup> As a result, they may not readily adhere to the racial categories assigned them or identify

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<sup>31</sup> Nii-Amoo Dodoo, "Assimilation Differences among Africans in America," *Social Forces*, (1997): 533.

<sup>32</sup> Nii-Amoo Dodoo, "Assimilation Differences," 530.

with the larger Black racial group as a whole.<sup>33</sup> Being unaware of America's racial detriments, African immigrants hold more positivity about their new environment and preserve strong cultural values about work and education. Because they are *initially* free from knowing the magnitude of American racial and class inequalities, Africans may not regard racism with the same severity as African Americans. In response to being asked if he had experienced racism, Archibald Boss, an African male participant from St. Paul stated,

“I have been affected, but I don't really take it seriously because in Nigeria, you know, we are all Blacks. I've never experienced anything like it, I guess, because African Americans went through slavery and it's still affecting them. 400 years later, they won't let it go.”<sup>34</sup>

Boss's statement reflects his socialization in a different environment, as his assumption that the “absence” of slavery in his own history facilitates his ease at intimating that African Americans must move on from an event that occurred long ago. The argument, therefore, that African Americans possess an inferior work ethic to Africans is disingenuous, for it fails to consider the variation in African and African American socio-historical backgrounds. Whenever a newly arrived group of individuals to a new society outperforms its bottom rank, it becomes easy to obscure institutional oppressions that relegate particular groups to the lowest socioeconomic class. The narrative of “If they can do it, then you should be able to do it too,” becomes pervasive and opens the path for victim blaming; it further suggests that one should be able to overcome their race. Scholar Michael Dawson however notes that racism remains a deep-seated issue in America, to the degree that even upwardly mobile African Americans encounter racism

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<sup>33</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 21.

<sup>34</sup> Archibald Boss (Interview Participant #1), interview by Christine E. Ohenewah, November 2013.

and prejudice at nearly the same rates as lower-class African Americans.<sup>35</sup> Damaging stereotypes of high crime rates, drug abuse, lack of education, and unstable familial structures serve as justifications for blaming African Americans for their disparities, thus discounting them as true American citizens. These flawed perceptions not only ignore African American successes, but also fail to confront systemic modes of oppression that severely disenfranchise people of color in general and Black individuals in particular.

In his article, *Beyond Love: A Critical Race Ethnography of the Schooling of Adolescent Black Males*, scholar Garrett Duncan addresses the marginalization of Black male students in the education system by using City High School in Midwestern America as a case study. Duncan argues that “Black male students in schools suffer a condition characteristic of a population that is beyond love, a condition of those who are excluded from society’s economy and networks of care and thus expelled from useful participation in social life.”<sup>36</sup> He in other words posits that classifying Black males as a strange population that is unable to be identified with, normalizes their marginalization as “the result of their own doing,” inducing others’ resentments for their needs of assistance. The City High School case reveals how larger society criminalizes marginalized African American communities for their adversities. Thus, the perceived lack of advancement among African Americans, coupled with African immigrant ambitions for upward mobility, legitimizes the troubling notion of “pulling oneself up by the bootstraps;” a notion discounting systemic oppression.

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Garrett Duncan, “Beyond Love: A Critical Race Ethnography of the Schooling of Adolescent Black Males,” *Equity & Excellence in Education*, (2002): 140.

In turn, African immigrants are not innocent of absorbing demeaning tropes of African Americans or blaming them for their lower socioeconomic status. African respondents expressed beliefs that Africans were more driven to seize opportunities. However, they declined to say the same for African Americans. Sampson Orwell, an African male participant from St. Paul, remarked on African Americans' inability to economically uplift themselves and develop better work attitudes:

"I do not understand why they never want to work hard. Many of us come here seeking opportunities. That's why we come here. But the opportunities are here already for these people...for these who were born here. And they're not taking it. And that is why I blame them and get discouraged. Just work and you'll be fine. We have come all this way overseas to earn a better life, so I don't see why they who are already here with opportunities won't try the same. They make us look bad."<sup>37</sup>

In Orwell's statement, his use of the rhetorical terms "they" and "us" represents African Americans and Africans respectively, which conveys their affective division. Orwell's remarks not only reinforce the sentiment that African Americans are to blame for their disparities, but they also reflect Africans' dissatisfaction with a "tarnished" Black image. Furthermore, the most compelling element in Orwell's statement is his silent recognition of race. In stating, "They make us look bad," Orwell reveals his simultaneous awareness and disdain that Africans are racialized as Black. By therefore underscoring ethnicity, his remark admonishes African Americans' "unambitious" behavior and privileges the pursuit of higher economic mobility. In essence, Orwell exhibits a proclivity towards imbibing ideals of White citizenship.

African Americans in turn display resentment towards Africans whom they feel threaten their opportunities on the job market and take-up affirmative action seats that are meant to

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<sup>37</sup> Sampson Orwell (Interview Participant #4), interview by Christine E. Ohenewah, November 2013.

advance “traditional Blacks.” According to Caesar Jameson, an African American male participant from Minneapolis,

“I respect Africans as a people. But I think that they are over-represented on college campuses. Where are all the domestic Blacks? Affirmative action was meant to help African Americans who historically have been wronged, overcome the barriers of institutional discrimination. When I see more African faces than I do African Americans, I don’t think it’s doing its job.”<sup>38</sup>

Jameson’s response not only reflects general disappointment held by African Americans, but also nativist sentiments expressing dissent towards an increasingly competitive (and racist) American society; one which aims to displace African Americans from advancement opportunities. In fact, Jameson’s response highlights an ongoing societal disregard for African Americans, as research suggests that Whites are more likely to accept Black success if it stems from Black *ethnic* individuals who are different from, and thus “culturally superior” to African Americans.<sup>39</sup> In their struggle for assimilation, the presence of African immigrants therefore threatens African American claims to a potentially higher standing.<sup>40</sup>

## **Anti-Blackness**

In this chapter I have alluded to an important notion that is never explicitly named in the attainment of White citizenship, or a concept of ideals based in Whiteness: anti-Blackness. Anti-Blackness results in the degradation of Black culture, and in general aims to maintain Black inferiority. The term “Black” itself, symbolizes a negative connotation as a disavowal of

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<sup>38</sup> Caesar Jameson (Interview Participant #3), interview by Christine E. Ohenewah, November 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

Whiteness and a dismissal of assimilation.<sup>41</sup> In a United States cultural context, it is especially important to observe that anti-Blackness works to disgrace *African American* existence in particular. Once in America, foreign migrants have entered an already racialized society, where Whiteness pits people of color against one another.<sup>42</sup> They immediately learn to elevate their social status by adapting Anti-Blackness, which seduces them into the agenda of a racist, capitalist society. As author Toni Morrison states,

“In race talk, the move into mainstream America always means buying into the notion of American Blacks as the real aliens. Whatever the ethnicity or nationality of the immigrant, his nemesis is understood to be African American....It doesn’t matter what shade the newcomer’s skin is. A hostile posture toward resident Blacks must be struck at the Americanizing door before it will be open.”<sup>43</sup>

For African immigrants specifically, their group standing is either upheld as ethnically superior or integrated into a larger Black racial grouping. However, in their hopes to assimilate into America, African immigrants realize that their “Black” label prevents them from gaining the same American incorporation as other non-Black immigrants.<sup>44</sup> In thus recognizing that they must fall more so on the “White ethnic” side of the color divide, many African immigrants assume an anti-Black mentality in attempts to distinguish themselves from African Americans and to prevent their children from imitating an “oppositional” African American culture that

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<sup>41</sup> Geneva Smitherman, "What Is Africa to Me?: Language, Ideology and African American," *American Speech*, (1991).

<sup>42</sup> George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> Jemima Pierre, “Black Immigrants in the United States and the ‘Cultural Narratives’ of Ethnicity,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, (2004): 141.

<sup>44</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 23.

accords little value to educational achievement.<sup>45</sup> It is imperative to recognize that the desire to be separate from African Americans is not solely reliant on a strong pride for cultural uniqueness, but also on the need to escape perceptions of Black inferiority. For Africans, the desire to remain “foreign” in fact leads to a stronger sense of American inclusion by Whites and upper echelons of society.<sup>46</sup> By therefore devaluing Black culture and criticizing African Americans for failing to behave in more “respectable” ways, Africans maintain their distinction and superiority. While several of the African participants I interviewed refrained from explicitly stating they were superior to African Americans, their sentiment was apparent when they remarked on African Americans’ “bad behavior” and lack of work discipline. In turn, African Americans expressed irritation towards the lack of respect they received from Africans. Nadine Rousseau, an African American female participant from St. Paul, stated,

“Yeah, they think they’re above us. Because they weren’t slaves they think they’re above us. And it’s messed up, you know, because they’re different—sure—but people still see them as Black just like us and I don’t think they understand that. It’s sad.”<sup>47</sup>

Many scholars further perpetuate the denigration of Blackness by asserting that assimilation is undesirable for Black immigrants. According to scholars, assimilation for Black immigrants means that they will assimilate into “Black America,” thus resulting in the downturn of their sociocultural mobility. Given that ethnicity overrides race in this scenario, scholars posit

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<sup>45</sup> Pamela R. Bennet and Amy Lutz, “How African American is the Net Black Advantage? Differences in College Attendance Among Immigrant Blacks, Native Blacks, and Whites,” *American Sociological Association*, (2009): 72.

<sup>46</sup> Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Nadine Rousseau (Interview Participant #5), interview by Christine E. Ohenewah, November 2013.

that it is better for Black immigrants to remain ethnic, since their possibilities of success will be substantially higher.<sup>48</sup> Scholars further proclaim that Black immigrants are described as hardworking, different, and more ambitious than African Americans, which ignores African American participation in the labor force and their acquisition of educational and occupational achievements.<sup>49</sup> Thus accepting the promise of a favored status, Africans reject Black culture in their path to attaining White citizenship. However, African immigrants who partake in anti-Blackness also partake in their self-deprecation, for they are still racialized as Black. Scholar Jemima Pierre captures this irony when she asserts:

“Because Black immigrant ‘cultural distinctiveness’ is based on an essentialist deployment of culture and is constructed through notions of Black inferiority in general, it perpetuates anti-Black racist ideologies and practices that ironically affect all who are racialized as Black.”<sup>50</sup>

In her book, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*, scholar Lisa Lowe maintains that Asian American cultural productions are countersites to U.S. national culture. America, in other words, otherizes Asian Americans from mainstream society. Lowe’s assertion successfully pinpoints a racialized U.S. economy that solidifies power hierarchies by excluding minority populations from attaining full citizenship. Full citizenship requires what Lowe describes as “the negation of a history of social relations that publicly racialized groups and successively constituted those groups as ‘nonwhites ineligible for citizenship.’”<sup>51</sup> This negation unequivocally applies to Africans and African Americans who must deny features of their

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<sup>48</sup> Pamela R. Bennet and Amy Lutz, “Net Black Advantage,” 72.

<sup>49</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> Jemima Pierre, “Black Immigrants,” 144.

<sup>51</sup> Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: on Asian American Cultural Politics*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 27.



identity in order to achieve acceptance in a hegemonic Western milieu. This negation is particularly true of African immigrants who engage in anti-Blackness by repudiating their racialization as Blacks. Anti-Blackness therefore deceives African immigrants into believing they advance their social status by extricating themselves from African American culture, which enforces their own degradation as a result. As scholar George Lipsitz states,

“The power of Whiteness depended not only on white hegemony over separate racialized groups, but also on manipulating racial outsiders to fight against one another, to compete with each other for white approval, and to seek rewards and privileges of whiteness for themselves at the expense of other racialized populations.”<sup>52</sup>

Ultimately, we must acknowledge that the perpetuation of anti-Blackness reinforces White supremacy by inciting tensions that not only initiate African and African American schism, but also obscures the possibility of assimilation for Blacks.

### **The Variegation of Racial Attitudes**

As long as race is involved, the attainment of White citizenship does not solely rest on the extent to which White American ideals of citizenship are being emulated. For minorities in particular, their racial categorization is likely to disrupt their full assimilation into American society. Scholar Christina Greer observes,

“The external observer’s perspective is often not objective, but subjective, and embodies that particular observer’s interactions and understandings of black groups in America—that is, whether that person has preconceived notions of Afro-Caribbeans’ and Africans’ perceived levels of success or whether that person is assessing all black individuals as one large race-based group.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 37.

In other words, a racial disclaimer—regardless of ethnicity—stagnates the assimilation processes of Africans and African Americans. Thus, for both ethnicities, the most insidious obstacle that arises in their path to attaining White citizenship (a model embedded with ideals ascribed to Whiteness) is the differentiation in racial treatment they receive. As the previous sections allude to, African immigrants are treated differently than African Americans within American society. As one article perfectly captures, “Racism wears a smile when meeting an African; it glares with hostility when meeting an African American.”<sup>54</sup> Africans in other words experience a helpful, patronizing racism in contrast to the threatening and defensive racism that African Americans encounter. Take, for instance, literary scholar Mukoma Wa Ngugi’s anecdote on UN secretary general’s experience while seeking a haircut in the South:

“He was in need of a haircut, but this being the Jim Crow era, a White barber told him, ‘I do not cut nigger hair.’ To which Kofi Annan promptly replied, ‘I am not a nigger, I am an African.’ The anecdote, as narrated in *Stanley Meisler’s Kofi Annan: A Man of Peace in a World of War*, ends with him getting his hair cut.”<sup>55</sup>

In essence, Kofi Annan benefited from “African foreigner privilege.” Despite being perceived as Black, Annan’s ethnic emphasis deflected the hostile racism he would have received, had he been African American. Here, I take the opportunity to observe that my own experience with African foreigner privilege mirrors that of Annan’s who is also an alumnus of Macalester College. At a predominantly White liberal arts institute like Macalester, I have become accustomed to the ways that my Ghanaian ethnicity is capitalized upon. Non-Black individuals are not only more likely to remember this facet of my identity, once revealed, but because a

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<sup>54</sup> Mukoma Wa Ngugi, “African in America or African American?” 3

<sup>55</sup> Mukoma Wa Ngugi, “African in America or African American?” 2

Ghanaian ethnicity aligns with the college's promotion of *multiculturalism*, they also repute my "Africanness" in a distinctly positive light.

Given my own personal account above, the differentiation in racial treatment deliberately aspires to divide Africans and African Americans by provoking mutual tensions. While the racist Black-White binary in the United States extends to African immigrants in various forms, it has granted African immigrants more positive advantages.<sup>56</sup> Surveys conducted have shown that White individuals view Africans more positively than they do African Americans. Many of them stated that Africans were more polite, less hostile, and "easier to get along with," while they perceived African Americans in the opposite manner. The preference for African immigrants in selective college admissions processes further evidences this dynamic, as studies have revealed that college enrollments of African immigrants surpass those of African Americans.<sup>57</sup> In an attempt to thus bridge the Black-White gap while preserving culture and ethnicity, African immigrants have been substituted as Blacks.<sup>58</sup> It has also been observed that African immigrants face different experiences in the labor market. Studies expose that Whites maintain better relations with Black immigrants than with African Americans, which boosts their employment favorability.<sup>59</sup> Because Whites often perceive African immigrants as "special," the distinction between African and African American therefore impacts each ethnicity's attainment of White citizenship.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 21.

<sup>57</sup> Pamela R. Bennett and Amy Lutz, "Net Black advantage," 70.

<sup>58</sup> Pamela R. Bennett and Amy Lutz, "Net Black Advantage," 72.

<sup>59</sup> Pamela R. Bennett and Amy Lutz, "Net Black Advantage," 73.

<sup>60</sup> Christina Greer, *Black Ethnics*, 7.

The participants I interviewed also concurred that Africans and African Americans were treated differently in terms of racial attitudes, believing that Africans received fairer treatment.

Archibald Boss, the African male participant from St. Paul, commented,

“They treat them different when it comes to a job. They will rather hire the African because they're hardworking before they hire an African American. When it comes to business, White people would rather give business with African people than African Americans because they believe African people are more reliable and don't go to jail on a daily basis. And when it comes to African Americans, they don't give them a chance. They think they're all lazy.”<sup>61</sup>

Gardenia Summers, an African American female participant from Minneapolis, furthermore observed the less-hostile treatment her African husband would receive when pulled over by the police:

“Yes, racial attitudes are different. My husband has noticed that when he gets pulled over and the minute he opens his mouth, he can see the police officer adjust the way that they're dealing with him. So it's the whole idea of ‘Oh, Africans are better workers.’ You know? They're just better.”<sup>62</sup>

Not only does the differentiation in racial treatment implement a divide-and-conquer tactic to keep Blacks stratified, but it also employs Africans as pawns to reinforce a White supremacist empire and to foil efforts to advance the Black struggle.<sup>63</sup> Africans become deceived into believing that they are superior to their African American peers and are closer to achieving assimilation. However, while Africans may receive “better” racism, the underlying agenda is to

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<sup>61</sup> Archibald Boss (Interview Participant #1), interview by Christine E. Ohenewah, November 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Gardenia Summers (Interview Participant #2), interview by Christine E. Ohenewah, November 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Mukoma Wa Ngugi, “African in America or African American?” 3

enforce a class and racial hierarchy that permanently keeps African Americans at the bottom.<sup>64</sup>

However, the question remains: at what point are Africans differentiated from African Americans? Benevolent racism did not prevent New York police officers from firing 41 bullets at Amadou Diallo, a 22-year-old African male from Guinea.<sup>65</sup> Only after his assassination did the media accentuate his *Africanness* to emphasize the heinousness of the crime. It is thus crucial to remember that Africans cannot fully shed their “Black” label, since they share the same phenotype as African Americans. Even if racism is more positively dispersed towards Africans than African Americans, it is still *racism*. In America’s eyes, both Africans and African Americans are categorized as *Black* and are thus deemed inferior, despite ethnic dissimilarities. In fact, Sampson Orwell, the African male participant from St. Paul, believed there is no distinction in the way Africans and African Americans are treated:

“They don't know the distinction between us. When they see your skin, it doesn't matter whether you are African American or you came from Africa. I am not sure that they do know the difference, no. I don't know that the racial attitude would change if they know you are from Africa as opposed to if you were born here. I don't know that that makes any difference. I don't think so.”<sup>66</sup>

Finally, circulated racist media images of Africans and African Americans evidence that racism is non-exclusive of any one ethnicity and uncovers the falsehood of White citizenship—neither party can fully attain assimilation. No doubt, both Africans and African Americans have absorbed these negative media messages, which ignite their intraracial conflict and stratification. For instance, the media depicts African Americans, as impoverished, unmotivated, sexually

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<sup>64</sup> Herbert J. Gans, “Race as Class,” 21

<sup>65</sup> Jemima Pierre, “Black Immigrants,” 141.

<sup>66</sup> Sampson Orwell, (Interview Participant #4), interview by Christine E. Ohenewah, November 2013.

deviant, “thuggish,” and “ghetto.” Africans in contrast are painted as savages who are diseased, starved, and unable to govern themselves. The internalization of these messages sparks demeaning mutual perceptions between Africans and African Americans and solidifies their belief that the other ethnicity is inferior. Therefore, while racism may be applied differently towards Africans and African Americans, this differentiation frames each group in opposition to one another and augments mutual resentment.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I have argued that pressures of conforming to White American constructions of citizenship aggravate intraracial tensions between Africans and African Americans. White citizenship is a model embedded with ideals relying on norms of Whiteness and serves as a path to mobility that Africans must aspire to, due to their immigrant status. I however underscore two observations. First, while Africans may appear to more closely imbibe ideals of White citizenship by working hard, receiving an education, and contributing to society, this does not signify their obtainment of White assimilation. Second, as long as race remains a vital component in American assimilation processes, the achievement of White citizenship remains out of reach for racialized minorities—Blacks, especially. For instance, despite the knowledge that many African Americans struggle tirelessly to achieve the American Dream, their efforts are discounted, which renders them as “non-citizens.” This reflects America’s attempt to ensure that African Americans be kept in the bottom class. Through the myth of the “special” Black immigrant, American society rather classifies African immigrants as hardworking individuals who achieve high economic mobility, which denotes their ability to move past race and prevent it from defining their future outcome. This myth therefore reinforces

the narrative that if one group (Africans) is able to refuse their race and advance themselves, the other group (African Americans) must also do the same. Such a narrative overlooks the structural inequalities shaped by race and class and blames minority individuals for their disparities. This indefinitely stirs resentment within African Americans who have been long oppressed by the American system and further feel discounted by the sudden elevation of African immigrants who resemble their appearance.

In conjunction with ideals of patriotism, education, and socioeconomic status, the path to attaining White citizenship requires anti-Blackness, or the degradation of Black (specifically African American) culture. Newcomers who immigrate to America immediately realize that in order to move ahead in their new environment, they have to adapt an anti-Black mentality. African immigrants have done so by emphasizing their ethnicity—“We are not Black”—to maintain their ethnic distinction and superiority from African Americans. The differentiation in racial attitudes towards Africans and African Americans further complicates their path towards assimilation. While Africans are greeted with a “friendly,” patronizing racism, African Americans endure a hostile, threatening racism. This tactic manifests as the most insidious obstacle in the attainment of White citizenship, for its objective to divide Africans and African Americans deliberately augments their mutual tensions and uses Africans as tools to proliferate White supremacy.

In conclusion, the responses expressed by African and African American participants in the Twin Cities evidenced intraracial tensions that have been worsened by White American society; a society which communicates that White citizenship, or a concept of ideals stereotyped to Whiteness, serves as the main point of entry into American assimilation and acceptance. Africans admitted their disdain towards African Americans whom they felt lacked a diligent

work ethic and behaved “improperly.” In turn, African Americans felt that Africans threatened their opportunities for advancement and were chagrined by their air of superiority. The two ethnicities’ responses overall reveal that while they are racialized as Black, Africans and African Americans are two distinct groups whose possibilities for unification have been polarized by the imposition of White citizenship.



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# **Retracing Black Unity:**

## **An Overview of Pan-Africanism**

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### **CHAPTER 2**

## Introduction

*“No people....can ever attain to greatness who lose their identity. We shall forever cherish our identity of origin and race, as preferable in our estimation, to any other people.”<sup>67</sup>*

*~Martin R. Delany*

The previous chapter delineates intraracial tensions between Africans and African Americans in the Minnesota Twin Cities, linking the source of their conflict to the imposition of White citizenship, a model embedded with ideals stereotyped to norms of Whiteness. We recall that these core ideals encompass high socioeconomic status, anti-Blackness, and varied racial treatments towards each ethnicity. The extent to which Africans and African Americans can concede to the aforementioned ideals determines their place in a society that precludes them from being deemed full citizens. In a society that relegates “Black” to the bottom of its racial hierarchy, the attainment of White citizenship incites competition between Black ethnic minorities, dividing them in their struggle for social advancement and prosperity.

The above being stated, there once was an epoch of palpable African and African American alliance, when both Africans and African Americans called on one another to combat a common enemy across borders (for the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on African and African American relations specifically, in lieu of other African Diasporic groups).<sup>68</sup> Through Pan-Africanism, an ideology and movement that unites all peoples across the African Diaspora in a joint struggle for freedom, Africans and African Americans strove to regenerate

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<sup>67</sup> Vincent Harding, *The Other American Revolution*, (Atlanta: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1980), 55.

<sup>68</sup> Please refer back to pages five and six of the Introduction.

the recognition of their rich histories and identities. Such cooperation was crucial to dismantling the ills of slavery, colonialism, and White imperial hegemony, and a reactivation of this cooperation remains a pressing necessity in our contemporary global age. Though while Pan-Africanism may be a propitious tool in the struggle for Black unity, it is not void of its own set of obstacles and must still work to attenuate its flaws.

In this chapter I argue two claims. The first offers that Pan-Africanism as a movement may be the single most promising political and intellectual weapon in mitigating internal divisions within the 21<sup>st</sup>-century Black Diaspora and in ultimately reenergizing Black unity. However, my second claim holds that in order for Pan-Africanism to work as an effective tool, it must not only avoid committing what I term “interethnic neoliberalism,” or “ethnic colorblindness” for harmony’s sake, but it must further denounce temptations to assimilate into an unaccepting Eurocentric world order (by interethnic neoliberalism, I specifically mean engaging in and perpetuating the ignorance of the ethnic heterogeneity present within the Black Diaspora). It is time for Black individuals to acknowledge that our battle for legitimacy on White supremacy’s playing ground, whether on an international or domestic front, will always be met with inauthentic acknowledgement at best—crippling delegitimization and erasure at worst. Rather than directing efforts towards assimilation, we must direct those same efforts towards building Black autonomy.

While this chapter functions as an extensive overview of Pan-Africanism’s historicity and prime elements, I bear in mind the following questions: How may 21st-century Black Diasporans best utilize Pan-Africanism as a strategy to bolster Black unification? What objectives must Pan-Africanism adapt to stabilize Black solidarity and abate White supremacist oppression? Over the course of this chapter I first give a summary of Pan-Africanism and its origins before delving

into its surrounding discourses. I will specifically Pan-Africanism's varying definitions and critiques. I next explain Afrocentricity as a salient expression of Pan-African ideology and then move to discuss the issue of identity, which has generated historical dissonance between Africans and African Americans. Finally, I make the case for anti-assimilation, defending that members of the African Diaspora experience a common adversary that they must remember in their struggle for autonomy.

### **A Summary of Pan-African Origins**

Although history credits African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois as the father of Pan-Africanism, H. Sylvester Williams, a West Indian lawyer, first coined the term "Pan-Africanism" in 1900.<sup>69</sup> Scholars have however suggested that the concept of Pan-Africanism predates back to as early as the 15th century, when events such as the transatlantic slave trade and the rise of Western colonialism were at large.<sup>70</sup> What is unique about this timeline is that prior to the 15th century, the notion of race did not exist as a point of human categorization by which individuals would be excluded or oppressed. It was only after the 15th century, once America was discovered, that racial classification began to emerge.<sup>71</sup> The demand for slave labor necessitated the creation of a new form of human categorization that could be exploited. This demand further gave way to a new ideal of humanity that would be predicated on grounds of "rationality" and "civility," and thus held dire repercussions for Africans whose cultures, dissimilar to Western culture, would be discounted as "civil," "rational" beings, subject to

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<sup>69</sup> Leslie Lacy, *Cheer the Lonesome Traveler: The Life of W.E.B. Du Bois*, (New York: Dial Press, 1970).

<sup>70</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, "Pan Africanism: A Brief Intellectual History," *History Compass*, (2013): 663.

<sup>71</sup> Loren Goldner, "Race and the Enlightenment: From Anti-Semitism to White Supremacy, 1492-1676," *Race Traitor*, (1997): 32.

enslavement and domination.<sup>72</sup> The idea of *Blackness* was hence formed to reflect these new power dynamics. It only followed that Pan-Africanism materialized to defy the forces of slavery and colonialism and became a product of modernist thinking, a theory promoting a homogenous worldview through abstract reason.<sup>73</sup>

H. Sylvester Williams called the first Pan-African congress in 1900 to launch an intellectual exchange among African descendants and to devise a united front against Western colonial powers.<sup>74</sup> It was Du Bois, however, who would come to nurture Pan-Africanism into an actual movement. In 1919 he called another Pan-African congress in Paris with the goal of promoting a universal Black identity that would invoke solidarity among Black individuals throughout the globe. These themes, along with themes of self-governance, liberation from colonialism and neocolonialism, and unconditional recognition of African descendants as equal citizens, carried into subsequent Pan-African congresses. Those congresses were held in London in 1921 and 1923, New York in 1927, Manchester in 1945, Dar es Salaam in 1974, and Kampala in 1994.<sup>75</sup> Other major notable figures who encouraged the historical development of Pan-Africanism included Marcus Garvey, Aimé Césaire, George Padmore, Dorothy West, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah (whom I will discuss in chapter three), and Alain Locke among many others.

Pan-Africanism further derives its intellectual history from the influences of French Surrealism, the Black Arts and Black Power Movements, the Harlem Renaissance, and Negritude. Negritude, for example, challenged the denigration of Blacks as individuals without a

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<sup>72</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, "Pan Africanism" 664.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 665-666.

<sup>74</sup> Naiwu Osahon, "400 Years and Still a Slave: A Message to Black America," *Third World First*, (1990): 3.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, "Pan Africanism," 665.

historical past or culture. As scholar Michael Onyebuchi Eze states, “The idea of Pan African personality as represented in Negritude symbolizes a subjective rehabilitation of Black identity where Blackness becomes a source of pride and not aversion.”<sup>76</sup> In other words, if the Black person in any geographical part of the world faced oppression due to his/her color, Negritude provided a universal African identity that Blacks all over the world would be able to partake in. The Harlem Renaissance and Black Arts Movement were also influential in proliferating ideas of Black subjectivity and a reclamation of a historical past that would emerge from “authentic” African cultural values and histories.

To finally encapsulate the role of Pan Africanism, it is an ideology that offers universal contemporaneity for Black Diasporans and their shared cultural and political experiences. Said another way, universal contemporaneity unites Black individuals in the present, while also combining their past and future social histories.<sup>77</sup> Apart from being an ideology, Pan-Africanism also has served as a movement of resistance towards colonialism’s dehumanizing effects.<sup>78</sup> In response to the racial injustices occurring in a turbulent 1960s era, Trinidadian American Civil Rights Leader Stokely Carmichael observed of the United States,

“...there is no ‘American dilemma’ because black people in this country form a colony, and it is not in the interest of the colonial power to liberate them. Black people are legal citizens of the United States with, for the most part, the same legal rights as other citizens. Yet they stand as colonial subjects in relation to the white society. Thus institutional racism has another name: colonialism.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 667.

<sup>77</sup> Gul’nara Abduvasitovna Bakieva, *Social Memory and Contemporaneity*, (Washington D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007), preface.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, “Pan Africanism,” 669.

<sup>79</sup> Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 5.

Hence, the alarming ramifications of colonialism in Africa as well as racial imperialism in the United States and Caribbean, hastened Pan-Africanism's transition from ideology to movement. Pan-Africanism's more revolutionary approach is distinctly visible in the mid-20th century when several African countries began to revolt against the clutches of White imperialism and colonialism in order to obtain sovereignty (i.e. Ghana in 1957, Sierra Leone in 1961, Zambia in 1964).<sup>80</sup> It is further evident in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and the 1970s Black liberation struggles in America.

### **Pan-African Discourse: What is Pan-Africanism?**

For decades, numerous scholars and intellectual leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have formulated varying comprehensive definitions of the Pan-African ideology. Regarding Pan-Africanism, scholar Olanwuche Esedebe eloquently states, "There is still no agreement on what it is all about. Explanations that some African scholars and politicians give often differ from those suggested by African descendants abroad. Sometimes... conflicting interpretations are offered."<sup>81</sup> To better conceptualize the differing perspectives surrounding Pan-Africanism, I will highlight three main categorical interpretations of the ideology: the intellectual interpretation, the revolutionary interpretation, and the capital/lowercase "P" interpretation.

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<sup>80</sup> Nagueyalti Warren, "Pan-African Cultural Movements: From Baraka to Karenga," *The Journal of Negro History*, (1990): 21.

<sup>81</sup> P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991*, (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1994), 30.

### Intellectual Interpretation

Pan-Africanism as a socio-cultural event symbolizes the larger intellectual discourse of Black experience. Through synchronizing these experiences into an ideological unity, it aims to subvert imposed colonial conditions.<sup>82</sup> Intellectual leader W.E.B. Du Bois, for instance, adopted a spiritual and intellectual position on Pan-Africanism by proposing a strong defense of the historical wealth, resources, and heritage of Blacks in Africa. He defined the ideology in terms of an intellectual understanding and collaboration among all of Africa's descendants so that Black individuals might achieve freedom.<sup>83</sup> A socio-cultural phenomenon, Pan-Africanism arose out of an industrial and spiritual emancipatory logic to promote African cultural values. Although Du Bois advocated a firm intellectual stance on Pan-Africanism, his perspective would later serve him in becoming a force in the evolution of Pan-Africanism as a dominant movement.

### Revolutionary Interpretation

Pan-Africanism when operative as a movement, actively protests against colonial historicity and its un-redemptive doctrine of the Black human experience.<sup>84</sup> Hence, moving away from the more "intellectual" take on Pan-Africanism, late Guyanese historian Walter Rodney took on a more revolutionary stance. For Rodney, Pan-Africanism was "a critical tool for analyzing revolutionary new forms for genuine African liberation."<sup>85</sup> He posited that Pan-Africanism must be defined in struggle and that its essence rested on the unity that was formed

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<sup>82</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, "Pan-Africanism and the Politics of History," *History Compass*, (2013): 678.

<sup>83</sup> Nagueyalti Warren, "Pan-African Cultural Movements" 16.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, "Pan Africanism and Politics," 678.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Hill, "Walter Rodney and the Restatement of Pan-Africanism in Theory and Practice," in Edward Alpers's *Walter Rodney: Revolutionary and Scholar, A Tribute*, (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies and African Studies Center, University of California, 1982), 85.



out of the common experience of exploitation and oppression among African slaves. However, this commonality could only be operative when Africans across the Diaspora worked against European domination. Social activist Marcus Garvey also held a strong cultural-nationalist position on Pan-Africanism.<sup>86</sup> Garvey, who expressed great contempt for imperialism and European values and influences, sought emigration for Blacks and appealed to the masses by avidly denouncing racism and believing in a future where all Blacks would return to their original haven of Africa. Urging for Black independence, Garvey stated,

“We must inspire a literature and promulgate a doctrine of our own, without any apologies to the powers that be. The right is ours and God’s. Let contrary sentiment and cross opinions go to the winds.”<sup>87</sup>

In effect, Garvey believed that Africans across the world should only promote one purpose: building the African nation, which would require seeking personal and political companionship with other Africans.<sup>88</sup> Guinea-Bissauan political leader Amílcar Cabral also echoed calls for a more revolutionary Pan-Africanism that operated beyond “cultural brotherhood.” For Cabral, a Pan-Africanism that merely resulted in friendly cooperation as the depth of relations between Africans and African Americans would be insufficient to the African liberation struggle worldwide.<sup>89</sup> Rather, *revolutionary camaraderie* would have to be the fundamental basis of a Pan-Africanism that was to be active in the national liberation of African nations and African peoples across the Diaspora.

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<sup>86</sup> Tunde Adeleke, “Black Americans and Africa: A Critique of the Pan-African and Identity Paradigms,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, (1998): 513.

<sup>87</sup> Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism*, (Dover: Majority Press, 1983), 9.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 104.

<sup>89</sup> Ronald Walters, *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 64.

### Capital/Lowercase “P” Interpretation

By situating Pan-Africanism within a dichotomy of prevalence and obscurity, Scholar George Shepperson is among intellectuals who hold an altogether different perspective of the ideology. For Shepperson, there are two kinds of Pan-Africanism: Pan-Africanism with a capital “P” and Pan-Africanism with a lowercase “p.” The former denotes an institutionalized movement encompassing the Pan-African congresses and their universal significance, while the latter, lowercase “p,” represents those non-recognizable, all-African movements that are merely defined by cultural elements.<sup>90</sup> Shepperson further emphasizes that Pan-Africanism with a lowercase “p” shares no relationship with Pan-Africanism with a capital “P.” Esedebe follows Shepperson’s view on Pan-Africanism by arguing that not every anti-colonial event in Africa or the African Diaspora comprises Pan-Africanism. According to Esedebe, these events cannot be qualified as expressions of Pan-Africanism, since they are restricted to particular communities that hold narrow interests and therefore hinder a “global intent.”<sup>91</sup>

While I believe the capital/lowercase “P” interpretation of Pan-Africanism is rather irrelevant, if not reductionary in the larger schema of Pan-African objectives, its intellectual and revolutionary interpretations offer more compelling arguments. The capital/lowercase “P” interpretation of Pan-Africanism borders on an elitist versus non-elitist binary that excludes the very events that were crucial to the formation of Pan-African conscious. Said another way, this interpretation delegitimizes localized socio-political formations that contribute to Pan-Africanist expansion. In contrast, the distinction between *intellectual* and *revolutionary* is an imperative distinction to make when considering Pan-Africanism’s effectiveness. I believe that the

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<sup>90</sup> George Shepperson, “Ethiopianism and African Nationalism,” *Phylon*, (1953): 346.

<sup>91</sup> P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea*, 5-6.

intellectual stance on Pan-Africanism constrains itself to a theoretical “bubble,” if you will, that like the capital/lowercase “P” interpretation, also moves into elitist territory. I therefore argue that the revolutionary perspective carries the most weight in terms of inclusivity and actual practice. In order for Pan-Africanism to achieve far-reaching impacts, I contend it must assume the structure of a movement rather than an intellectual ideology in order to reach larger Black masses. In the next section I discuss some of Pan-Africanism’s major critiques.

### **Critiques of Pan-Africanism**

Although vast scholarship portrays Pan-Africanism through a relatively positivist lens, there exist other bodies of scholarship that underscore loopholes within the unifying ideology. For instance, does Pan-Africanism hold any relevance today? One of Pan-Africanism’s major critiques posits that it is anachronistic, or too outdated for contemporary issues facing Africa.<sup>92</sup> The following statement captures such a critique: “An idyllic historical movement, permanently “frozen” in the moment of “refusal” or “revolt” to colonial historicity is said to be irrelevant today.”<sup>93</sup> Since racial overtones defined a Pan-Africanism of the past, then a contemporary post-Civil Rights era that has become more racially inclusive would dictate that Pan-Africanism must also adapt racial inclusivity. In other words, Pan-Africanism must accommodate all people whose scholarship and aspirations are concerned with the geopolitical world of Africa, irrespective of race.<sup>94</sup> This new idea of Pan-Africanism is grounded in universal humanism and considers the diversity of the human experience along with cultural differences. It is not merely

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<sup>92</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, “Pan Africanism and Politics,” 682.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, “Pan Africanism,” 670.

constrained to “Whites versus Blacks” or a sole defiance of Western doctrines, but rather acts as an authoritative voice to defend the livelihood of *all* oppressed peoples throughout the world.

Scholar Tajudeen Abdul Raheem states,

“If Pan-Africanism is to have any future it must connect itself with the various struggles of today: the deepening of the democratization processes, workers, the poor peasants...and other mass struggles and also the global anti-imperialist and popular struggles.”<sup>95</sup>

The next major criticism of Pan-Africanism charges that its history lacks authenticity, as it is not self-determined. Rather, Pan-Africanism was invented at the gaze of the colonizer. Since African colonial states were more heterogeneous rather than homogenous, they bore differentiated religious, cultural, and socio-political systems. The concept of a national identity thus had to be forged from outside state borders, since a congruent national memory or historiography did not exist. Given this reality, any idea of nationalism was subject to bearing the elements of a colonial statecraft, since the history from which it emerged was politicized to begin with. Furthermore, the absence of a congruent national memory inspired the emergence of cult personalities, or prominent elite figures who symbolized national memory.<sup>96</sup> However, the danger with the formation of cult personalities was that they produced a false consciousness for national integration. In some extreme cases, cult personalities became dictators, rendering Pan-Africanism powerless in the face of internal domination. This aside, history provides a source of legitimacy and authoritative national will. Where a congruent national history was non-existent

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<sup>95</sup> Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, “Introduction: Reclaiming Africa for Africans – Pan-Africanism,” in Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem’s *Pan-Africanism: Politics, Economy, and Social Change in the Twenty-First Century: 1900-1994*, (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 22.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, “Pan Africanism and Politics,” 681.

for African colonial states, it had to be invented where necessary by way of myths and legends, which induced a romanticized and inaccurate account of the African Diasporic past.<sup>97</sup>

A last major critique exposes Pan-Africanism's internal contradictions. Even though Pan-Africanism grew to be a dominant ideology and movement, leading African American figures viewed Africa as a site of "heathenish darkness and barbarity."<sup>98</sup> They espoused colonialism as a necessary evil for exorcising Africa's "primitive" and "barbaric" cultural practices. These views only resurrected the same racist and paternalistic impulses endemic to colonialism. Moreover, they stood in stark contrast to the values of Pan-Africanism, which regarded Africans as equals in the eyes of the world and sought to generate Black unity through shared histories and identities. However, a call for African cultural rehabilitation served as a pretext for cultural inferiority and hence necessarily required "civilization."<sup>99</sup>

In examining the above criticisms, I primarily take issue with the claim of Pan-Africanism's anachronistical function. No doubt, this first critique is right to question the relevance of Pan-Africanism in our contemporary era, as the output and pertinence of any ideology must always be subject to reinspection. Nonetheless, the first critique asserts a naive conclusion by suggesting that anti-Black racism is a phenomenon belonging to the past. Such a critique undermines the Pan-African ideologue, for it dismisses the grave implications of racialization that not only inspired the proliferation of Pan-Africanism, but still carry on into today's age. I further disagree with the notion of expanding Pan-Africanism to involve the universal struggles of other races. In his work, *Pan-Africanism and Its Detractors: A Response to*

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<sup>97</sup> Tunde Adeleke, "Black Americans and Africa," 510.

<sup>98</sup> P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea*, 9.

<sup>99</sup> Michael Onyebuchi Eze, "Pan Africanism and Politics," 683.

*Harvard's Race-Effacing Universalists*, scholar Opoku Agyeman asserts that the universalist argument on Pan-Africanism is inherently racist in nature, for its contenders appropriate African culture and sever the African continent from its history.<sup>100</sup> I agree. I argue that Pan-Africanism must remain centered on Black resistance, since its primary aim is to uplift the image and history of the *Black* human across the world. As Marcus Garvey would defend,

“I believe that white men should be white, yellow men should be yellow, and black men should be black in the great panorama of races, until each and every race by its own initiative lifts itself up to the common standard of humanity, as to compel the respect and appreciation of all, and so make it possible for each one to stretch out the hand of welcome without being able to be prejudiced against the other because of any inferior and unfortunate condition.”<sup>101</sup>

Of course, this is not to say that other struggles, racial and otherwise, are not critical. This is to say that inherent in the idea of “multicultural” is the reduction of “race” as a point of legitimacy; race as a source of the recurrent dehumanization processes that especially fall unto Black individuals. This is also to say that Black individuals must prioritize ourselves, for we cannot afford to promote a colorblind agenda when White supremacy still thrives on anti-Blackness.

Scholar Michael Dawson asserts,

“What does remain constant across evolving notions of nationalism is the belief that race represents both the fundamental reality and the fundamental analytical category for understanding the plight of blacks in the Americas—that race remains the fundamental axis around which blacks need to be mobilized for liberation.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Opoku Agyeman, *Pan-Africanism and Its Detractors: A Response to Harvard's Race-Effacing Universalists*, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 77.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Dawson, *Black Visions*, 21.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

Dawson's assertion also holds true on a global level. We must therefore understand that the Black Diasporic struggle is far from nearing its end, and already given its internal division, must then work to remain united.

## **Afrocentricity**

Throughout this chapter I have introduced the central tenets of Pan-Africanism through the discussion of its origins, discourse, and critiques. In doing so, I now move deeper to discuss Pan-Africanism's intellectual arm: Afrocentricity. Earlier on in this chapter I briefly discussed movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and the Black Arts Movements that were influential in informing the intellectual history of Pan-African ideology. Afrocentricity, which is considered the social expression of Pan-African ideology, assists in materializing Pan-Africanism's "collective conscious." It developed as a response to the challenges produced by a mainstream, Eurocentric historiography and aimed to reconstruct African histories and experiences by debunking their prevailing misrepresentations. Furthermore, Afrocentricity seeks to enhance unity and cultural awareness among Blacks in order to inculcate them with knowledge and appreciation for their historical identity.<sup>103</sup> In the paragraphs below, I cover two of Afrocentricity's main dimensions. The first is the Pan-African character, which not only underscores historical and cultural similarities between Africans and African Americans, but also encourages the revival of their unity. The second dimension, the identity claim, holds that Africans and African Americans in the Diaspora are one people who share cultural and even

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<sup>103</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, (Chicago: African American Images, 2003), 96.

ethnic attributes.<sup>104</sup> This section serves to emphasize the profundity of the shared connection between Africans and African Americans and highlights the importance of their unity for the furtherance of Pan-African conscious.

### *The Pan-African Character Paradigm*

The Pan-African character dimension of Afrocentricity portrays Pan-Africanism as a movement shaped by deep mutual awareness between Africans and African Americans.<sup>105</sup> It posits that Africans and African Americans face similar adversities and have always been drawn together by common interests. Furthermore, the idea of shared identity among Black Diasporans aims towards mutual uplift and advancement, and the defense of these mutual interests are at the center of Pan-Africanism. Not only this, but mental decolonization and a radical conscious asserting the reinterpretation of Black Diasporic history is central to Afrocentricity's Pan-African paradigm, as they articulate a history more in line with the Black African experience. The understanding that Black Diasporans share historical experiences and therefore must come together in the onslaught of adversity is historically grounded. From the very beginning of slavery, enslaved Africans nurtured the feeling of uniting in solidarity with their brethren at home and overseas in order to ensure their survival. Thus, the emphasis on an African connection as a mechanism of spawning Black collective conscious, was considered crucial to group survival in the wake of directed hostility.<sup>106</sup> Through this conscious, Black Diasporans were enabled to combat the Eurocentric intellectual biases of their time, which involved the

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<sup>104</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 126.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Tunde Adeleke, "Black Americans and Africa," 511.



negation and defamation of the Black Diasporic past, heritage, and contribution. Given this knowledge, it is clear that the Pan-African character paradigm constitutes one of Afrocentricity's most vital functions, not only in reforming Black unity, but in also battling against the oppressive regime of White supremacy.

### *The Identity Claim Paradigm*

The claim of African identity is the second critical dimension to Afrocentricity. This dimension insists upon defining African Americans as fundamentally African and rejects any identity that strays from this. Despite centuries of enslavement and separation between these ethnicities, Black Diasporans still retain indispensable features of their African cultural identity.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, the Black Diasporic population is defined as African—racially, ethnically, and culturally—and such an identity paradigm is invoked to promote the ideals of Black freedom and uplift. Possessing awareness of an African identity and culture aids Blacks with a defensive weapon against oppressive and widespread Eurocentric systems. Given this African conscious, African Americans must strive to exhibit Africanness in their daily lives by way of clothing, culture, lifestyles, and modes of thought.<sup>108</sup>

While Afrocentricity's identity paradigm reinforces a unified African identity— one historically, culturally, and ethnically based—it overlooks the complexity of the African Diasporic make-up. Afrocentric Pan-Africanism relies on the premise that Black Diasporans

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<sup>107</sup> Tunde Adeleke, "Black Americans and Africa," 525.

<sup>108</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity*, 10.

share a harmonious relationship comprised of an unbroken history, culture, and identity.<sup>109</sup> In his highly influential book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois aptly asserts,

“One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings: two warring ideals in one dark body - The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.”<sup>110</sup>

Du Bois’s words highlight the reality of African Americans who are tormented by the constant demands of battling a dual identity: one African and one American. Afrocentrists argue that despite centuries of enslavement and acculturation in the New World, African Americans were supposed to have emerged from slavery and Americanization with their African identities untainted.<sup>111</sup> Such a fixed claim moves away from reconciling the actuality of two different cultures, for regardless of the extent to which African Americans have retained African cultural elements, they remain products of the American experience. In the subsequent section I delve further into Pan-Africanism’s identity complex by examining the historical dissonance between Africans and African Americans.

### **The Identity Problematique: Historical Dissonance between Africans and African Americans**

Previously, I touched on identity as one of Pan-Africanism’s more complex elements. In their efforts to establish a Pan-African identity, leading Afrocentrists have tended to ignore such

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<sup>109</sup> Tunde Adeleke, “Black Americans and Africa,” 510.

<sup>110</sup> William E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 3.

<sup>111</sup> Tunde Adeleke, “Black Americans and Africa,” 526.

complexities, inducing a problematic, if not superficial guise of Black unity.<sup>112</sup> To simplify identity into a neat, traditional construction is to commit what I term, “interethnic neoliberalism,” or ethnic colorblindness. Although I firmly believe in advancing Black unification through affirming a shared history and culture, it is dangerous to assume this type of homogeneity without acknowledging interethnic differences. We must bear in mind that just as African Americans cannot solely be relegated to an African identity, *continental* Africa is composed of various *countries* and therefore competing and contrasting nationalisms. Although rooted in a continental origin, imposing a sole African identity oversimplifies the African Diaspora and mutes the array of rich differences among Black individuals.

In chapter one I argued that White citizenship, a model embedded with ideals ascribed to norms of Whiteness, ignites intraracial conflict among present day Africans and African Americans in the United States. However, closer investigation also reveals a historic dissonance between these two ethnicities. Where an occupancy of the same geographic space frustrates tensions among contemporary Africans and African Americans competing for assimilation in a nation defined by race and idealized models of White citizenship, separate geographic acculturation processes widened the gap of understanding and commonality between Africans and African Americans of the past. No doubt, this misunderstanding among Africans and African Americans was strategically sowed by Western colonial governances to ensure that a meaningful Pan-Africanism would not be possible.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ronald Walters, *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora*, 109.

Leading African American Pan-Africanists of the 19th century had once sought to mobilize Pan-African conscious and develop a new nationality and identity through united endeavors between them and their African allies. They believed that Black liberation in America could not be separated from the liberation of Africans throughout the world.<sup>114</sup> With the passing of time, however, the frustrations of racism in the New World and the dawning realization that Blacks could not successfully attain recognition as Americans began to prompt the yearning of emigration back to Africa. While not all American Black nationalists necessarily agreed to the idea of making Africa the destination of a free Black state (some believed the location should be in the Western hemisphere), they embraced the idea of a separate state as a means to ending continuous Black oppression.<sup>115</sup> Although they promoted Pan-African ideals and conveyed a desire to identify with Africans, their intentions to redevelop the African continent would eventually expose their cultural estrangement from Africa.<sup>116</sup> From very early on, African Americans had always viewed Africa as a basis for articulating identity and inspiring a struggle for freedom and survival. However, their envisioning of cultural identity was unquestionably Eurocentric, as African Americans intended to shape Africa according to European values, practices and epistemes. Beneath the veneer of Pan-Africanism thus existed a deep and growing cultural chasm between Africans and African Americans.

Paul Cuffee, a Quaker of mixed Black and Indian heritage, was one of the earliest pioneers to draw a connection between African Americans and Africans. He believed that

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<sup>114</sup> Michael Dawson, *Black Visions*, 120.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 517.

Blacks, regardless of their geographic whereabouts, could not establish meaningful advancement unless and until Africa was developed.<sup>117</sup> He thus called for African Americans to join in cooperation with United States and British governments for the growth and modernization of Africa. Leading Black nationalists, such as Martin R. Delany, Alexander Crummell, and Henry Turner were also of this mind frame. They believed in expatriation to Africa and were determined to unite with Africans to create a Black nationality, while identifying Euro-Americans as threats to Black cultural, emotional, and physical survival.<sup>118</sup> Many Black nationalists thus grew increasingly suspicious of alliances with those who fell outside the American Black community and were careful to unite with other nonwhite social movements or consign to other ideologies, for fear that they were tools of White oppressors. They further viewed people of African descent as spiritual allies.<sup>119</sup> Although in time, Black nationalists would contradict their initial agenda. In place of cooperation with Africans, African American leaders embraced European platforms and policies as a means for African salvation—*slavery* included. Lott Cary, like Cuffee, Delany, Crummell, and Turner had once insisted that African Americans bore a responsibility to contribute to Africa's development. Cary, who once declared himself an "African" stated,

"In this country [the United States], however meritorious my conduct and respectable my character, I cannot receive the credit due either. I wish to go to a country where I shall be estimated by my merits, not by my complexion; and I feel bound to labor for my suffering race."<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Henry N. Sherwood, "Paul Cuffee," *The Journal of Negro History*, (1923): 8.

<sup>118</sup> Tunde Adeleke, "Black Americans and Africa," 518.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Dawson, *Black Visions*, 21.

<sup>120</sup> Miles Mark Fisher, "Lott Cary, The Colonizing Missionary," *The Journal of Negro History*, (1922): 389.

Cary's statement affirms an unmistakable Pan-African conscious. However, he just as soon relapsed into a state of "historical amnesia" when in his farewell sermon in January of 1821 at the First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, he asserted,

"I long to preach to the poor Africans the way of life and salvation. I don't know what may befall me, whether I may find a grave in the ocean, or among the savage men, or among the savage wild beasts on the coast of Africa."<sup>121</sup>

This time, Cary's message conveys the prevailing racist perceptions of Africa held by European colonizers. His mentality subscribed to the mission of rescuing the Black savage from "darkness and barbarism."<sup>122</sup> In fact, no price was too high for Africans to pay in return for the advantages of European civilization, even if it meant reimplementing colonization and slavery—deemed "a divine gift from God"—in Africa.<sup>123</sup> In all, the above accounts provide evidence of the dissonance that ensued between Africans and African Americans of the past. By immersing themselves in an imperial and colonial logic, African Americans reversed their aims of Black Diasporic unity and therefore discarded a Pan-African conscious. While this can mainly be attributed to the gulf in acculturation experiences between Africans and African Americans, it signifies a greater issue of the obstacles to assimilation for Blacks.

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<sup>121</sup> Miles Mark Fisher, "Lott Cary," 391.

<sup>122</sup> Michael Dawson, *Black Visions*, 7.

<sup>123</sup> Martin Delany, "Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent (1854)," in Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky's *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African-American Protest*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 230.

## **Conclusion: An Argument for Anti-Assimilation**

Throughout this chapter I have contended that in order for Pan-Africanism to be effective, it must not only be revived as a movement, but also avoid the danger of interethnic neoliberalism, or “ethnic colorblindness,” which involves engaging in the ignorance of the ethnic heterogeneity present within the African Diaspora. I more importantly believe that in order for Pan-Africanism to thrive, Black Diasporans must engage in a concerted effort to abandon the desire of assimilating into Eurocentrist culture. In the same vein that an American Black nationalism would espouse autonomous social, cultural, economic, and political separation from White America, I argue that the act of anti-assimilation requires a reconceptualization of our Black ethnic identities in relation to one another and in relation to White oppressive systems.<sup>124</sup> Here, I mean the act of self-love of the Black individual as a means of resistance against White supremacist domination. Here, I also mean the active recognition of an original African identity; one that does not overshadow the complexity of interwoven cultures wrought by acculturation into varying geographic locales, but serves as the uniting fabric among Blacks in the Diaspora. As Dawson states,

“Self-knowledge necessitates not only a rejection of whites, but also the love of self and a return to one’s roots.”<sup>125</sup>

By choosing to love ourselves, and to unite in solidarity to overcome our common collective struggles (i.e. the calamitous aftermaths of racism, imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism), we as Black individuals choose to anti-assimilate. We recall that the very

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<sup>124</sup> Michael Dawson, *Black Visions*, 21.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 107.

process of assimilation into a White supremacist global order rests on the solidification of anti-Blackness. From this, emanates internal stratification among Black peoples. The logic then follows that when Blacks choose to remain divided, we are in fact *assimilating* into Eurocentrist culture and upholding the dynasty of White superiority and paternalism.

I further clarify that by choosing to anti-assimilate, I do not mean disengaging from day-to-day practices of a Western society, as not only is this impractical, but Black survival (in a White Eurocentric society) necessitates certain modes of societal participation. This is not what I mean. I am rather proposing a mechanism of mental decolonization at the core and a deep understanding of the cruciality in upholding Black unity. I believe these are elements fundamental to an active Pan-African conscious that defies assimilation into Eurocentrist culture.

In choosing to prioritize Pan-African unity and to anti-assimilate, Black Diasporans must especially work to acknowledge our ethnic differences. The misguided intentions of leading Pan-Africanists of the 19th century demonstrates a lack of reflection on how cultural experiences shape our thought processes, practices, and beliefs. When Blacks commit interethnic neoliberalism, we not only fail to resolve and accept our differences, but we sabotage the advancement and efforts of Black unification. A Black Diasporic unity that is blind towards our heterogeneity is hollow and will not last. It walks the same trajectory of a post-racial belief system that dismisses the significance of color and racialization, all the while widening the racial gap. Just as race must be acknowledged, so must ethnicity. However with this being given, Blacks, while comprised of a conglomerate of cultures and ethnicities, must still recognize that our commonality rests in the African blood that runs through each of our veins. We are different, yes. It is crucial for us to bear this in mind. Despite this, we cannot afford to let our differences nullify our unity as *Blacks*, lest we fall into the hands of White imperialist subjugation. We



remember that in remaining stratified, Blacks assimilate into Eurocentrist culture, which thwarts Pan-African revival.

Finally, in order to anti-assimilate, Black Diasporans must remember that we share a common adversary: White supremacist domination. No matter how intently we may strive to seek assimilation into a Eurocentrist world order, we will never be accorded proper legitimacy, as White oppression needs to sustain itself on anti-Blackness. Global White imperialism does not truly regard Black nations as rational actors, nor does it deem Black individuals who reside in Western nations as full citizens. We must however remember, “a nation that colonizes... a civilization which justifies colonization... is already a sick civilization, a civilization that is morally diseased.”<sup>126</sup> Knowing this, Blacks must therefore seek validation from within and choose to love and unite ourselves. Blacks must anti-assimilate.

In converging his theories on “linked fate” and the “Black utility heuristic,” Michael Dawson holds that Black individuals possess a strong racial group identity and view their successes in connection to the successes of their larger race as a whole.<sup>127</sup> In other words, a victory for one is a victory for all. While Dawson situates his observations within an American context, this same mode of thought must apply to the global African Diaspora. The fate of the Black Diasporic race depends on the strides made by the few individuals who seek the betterment of our livelihood. However, this betterment must rather involve our *collective* efforts to renounce White imperial exploitation. Walter Rodney observes that,

“...the operation of the imperialist system bears major responsibility

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<sup>126</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 39.

<sup>127</sup> Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 24.

for African economic retardation by draining African wealth and by making it impossible to develop more rapidly the resources of the continent. Secondly, one has to deal with those who manipulate the system and those who are either agents or unwitting accomplices of the said system. The capitalists of Western Europe were the ones who actively extended their exploitation from inside Europe to cover the whole of Africa.”<sup>128</sup>

Hence, it is ever apparent that Western capitalism and exploitation have exponentially drained Africa’s resources—including its flesh—which has culminated in the global suppression of Blacks everywhere. Therefore, we must not confer the decision of our humanity into the hands of an entity that has historically based our value on our skin hue; an entity that is determined to forestall our collective actualization. Rather than expending our energies towards assimilation, we must pool this same energy into strengthening the sociopolitical and economic might of our own geographic communities and working interconnectedly across the Diaspora to resist oppressive forces that harm us. The revival of Pan-Africanism as a movement and in our conscious serves as our mechanism to achieve this. We must use it.

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<sup>128</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (London: Bogle-L’Ouverture Publications, 1972), 46-47.

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# **Liberalism:**

## **An Obstacle to Black Unification**

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### **CHAPTER 3**

## Introduction

*“Colonialism is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence.”<sup>129</sup>*

*~Frantz Fanon*

Although chapter one highlights the digression of relations between Africans and African Americans in the new millennium, chapter two reveals that this current rift has not always been potent, for we can look to the Pan-African Movement as a historical site of collaboration between the two ethnicities; a site where Black solidarity emerged transnationally to resist White imperial domination. Now, we recall the argument that the termination of colonialism over a half-century ago no longer necessitates a call for present day Pan-African conscious. I believe this argument stands false. Colonialism left behind a successor that bears a new name and seemingly benign appearance that, now more than ever, demands the vigor of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Pan-Africanism. This successor is liberalism.

In the same vein that White citizenship, a model embedded with ideals stereotyped to norms of Whiteness, serves as a divisive agent in African and African American unity, in this chapter I argue that mid-20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism adopted this same role in the wake of Pan-African upsurge. Said another way, just as White citizenship assumes a gate-keeping position in the assent to American assimilation, liberalism follows suit by serving as a means of induction into Western global favor. Each invite stratification and dismantling among any potential *threats* to the empire of White imperialism, both in U.S. internal affairs and in international politics. Given, then, White citizenship’s influence over relations between Africans and African

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<sup>129</sup> Niels S.C. Hahn, “Neoliberal Imperialism and Pan-African Resistance,” *Journal of World-Systems Research*, (2008): 21.

Americans and liberalism's impact on the Pan-African Movement, any manifestation of Black unification can be understood to be a threat.

International discourse has long rendered liberalism as an ideology of optimism, aiming to attain specific objectives: the proliferation of democracy, support for human rights, capitalist expansion, international cooperation, and pacifism. Liberal ideology affirms that the establishment of correct political systems and domestic groups is likely to encourage states to engage in international cooperation. Although presumably righteous in its efforts to reinforce international harmony, I contend that liberalism augments cultural hegemony and homogenization. The rhetoric behind liberalism presents itself as being modern and progressive when it in fact diverts attention away from the true powers and ideologies behind the liberal project. Liberalism is therefore rather a mode of Western imperialism assuming the guise of world peace to ensure self-interests and "ideal" paradigms, while increasing the global jurisdiction of dominant nation-states. Scholar Patrick Morgan asserts,

"It is not that international politics must eventually embrace and inculcate these particular norms, but that, as an elaborate social activity, international politics needs elements of community including a structure of norms. Liberalists are busy pushing their preferred norms with this in mind."

Said another way, states must seek cooperation rather than sovereignty and autonomy and be flexible towards embracing normalized values. We must however question the "acceptance of norms" as a feature of liberalism. In analyzing the mission to spread liberalism to other non-democratic countries, we must interrogate *which* actors are promoting preferred norms and practices for the international community and *at whose expense* these norms are being enforced.

My chapter responds to the following questions: How is mid-20<sup>th</sup> century liberalism in tandem with White citizenship? Does liberalism embody a global manifestation of White

citizenship? In what ways does liberalism impede the progress of Black unification? Finally, how does liberalism bear resemblance to colonialism? In chapter one we recall that White citizenship predicates itself on norms based in Whiteness, (i.e. hard work, education, high socioeconomic status). Similarly, liberalism comprises of democratic, capitalist, and human rights values. Both systems determine the acceptance of a minority group or nation-state, given that they follow the aforementioned paradigms. Using Ghana as a case study to delve into Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African leadership, I argue that liberalism is an ideology rooted in colonialism and serves as a global index of White citizenship. Its disruption of transatlantic Black unification efforts further relies on three elements: primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power.

In the course of this chapter, I delineate my argument by first tracing the damaging outcomes colonialism induced within Ghana's infrastructure. I subsequently discuss the role that late Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah played in buttressing the Pan-African Movement and how Pan-African efforts were curbed by liberal agendas within international politics. Finally, I explain the similarities that modern liberal ideology shares with White citizenship and the ways it recapitulates colonial iniquities. If we consider that liberalism resembles colonialism, which ignited calamities within Ghana's infrastructure, it would then hold that liberal ideology is non-ideal for *all* nation-states and operates to homogenize the rest of the international community according to Western tradition. Pan-Africanism's Black unification agenda would thus stand in opposition to an empire of Western governance that has been solidified by colonial conquest. Remembering that anti-Blackness works to sustain White supremacy by degrading Black culture, we must then recognize that anti-Blackness and White citizenship function globally through liberalism. We must further recognize that liberalism is an ideology fueled with self-interests that enhance the authority of the West at the expense of nations who refuse Western models. Ghana's

Pan-African Movement, which represented historic collaboration between Africans and African Americans, challenged such paradigms and thus became a target for Western powers.

### **Scholarly Debate**

Attached to various meanings and agendas, liberalism on the one hand is perceived as a progressively humanitarian endeavor whose mission is to bestow peace and democracy unto states in extreme turmoil. On the other hand, liberalism is viewed as a homogenizing scheme, seeking to maintain the global power and self-interests of Western entities. The subsequent sections serve to outline these two opposing assessments and provide a comprehensive understanding of the way liberal ideology is situated within international discourse.

#### *Proponents of Liberalism*

Proponents of liberalism argue that liberalism is fundamentally optimistic, calling for positive interaction among international actors and chances for a peaceful world.<sup>130</sup> In a liberal framework, international politics is an evolving atmosphere characterized by interdependence, cooperation, peace, and security. Under acceptable models of liberal political systems and domestic groups, states are more capable of achieving international cooperation. Proponents also view capitalism as an additional benefit of liberalism, due to its ability to cultivate wealth and higher living standards. The production and accumulation of wealth are thus more rapid and

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<sup>130</sup> Patrick Morgan, "Liberalism," in Alan Collins's *Contemporary Security Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

efficient if private actors run economic activities in accordance with the “dictates” of markets.<sup>131</sup> Promoting a capitalist or “free trade” society further circumvents the possibility of war, thereby reducing the influence of elites who have historically been devoted to military conquests and national glory.<sup>132</sup> Proponents also defend that liberalism is marked by a strong support for democracy, which is crucial to the legitimacy of governmental systems. Western nations have historically upheld this belief by advocating democracy as a means to restore peace within a region. In this vein, scholars contend that sovereignty is not simply a right to national autonomy; it is the responsibility of a government to treat its society with decency. Failure to do so may result in international intervention. Said another way, liberalism refuses to endorse violence as a coercive method unless the political order in question denies all opportunity for peaceful, democratic transition.<sup>133</sup>

Proponents of liberalism finally observe that liberal ideology supports rights and opportunities for women, religious freedoms, and civil rights, among many others. They argue that within liberal ideology, the preservation of human rights is one of its most salient characteristics, as it is derived from states’ long-held concerns about how their prominent religious and ethnic groups are treated by neighboring states. Diplomatic pressures, military interventions, and peace agreements further agitate such concerns.<sup>134</sup> Where human rights are involved, liberalism further encourages self-determination over separatism, claiming that states

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Etel L. Solingen, *Regional Orders at Century’s Dawn: Global and Domestic Influences on Grand Strategy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>133</sup> Boyd A. Martin, “Liberalism,” *The Western Political Quarterly*, (1948).

<sup>134</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).



should de-emphasize sovereignty and autonomy. Because most countries are multiethnic, endorsing separatism would invite chaotic dissolutions by fracturing the unity of international states.

In examining the arguments in favor of liberalism, it is clear that proponents view this ideology as a means of fostering international cohesion. States are generally non-strict about their autonomy and center sovereignty on their government's obligation to treat its society with decency. A nation's inability to do this, however, may result in international intervention. Liberalism further commits itself to propagating capitalist and democratic values on a global scale, and in addition to defending human rights, the notion of self-determination is also one of its essential components. The above claims well portray liberalism as a wholly optimistic approach that holds the interests of states at heart and offers a resolution for enhancing world peace. I however contend that liberalism's attempts to reduce state autonomy, expand capitalism and democracy, and augment international cooperation, convey a fundamental hypocrisy. Proponents of liberalism fail to deeply examine *who* the values of capitalism and democracy are modeled after, *who* benefits from promoting such norms, and *which* entities bear their repercussions. This nod towards world homogenization therefore reveals a colonial remnant within modern-day liberalism that reinforces global White supremacy.

### Opponents of Liberalism

In contrast to its proponents, opponents of liberalism defend that the ideology merely reflects Western dominance. In its more forceful version, liberalism is an updated expression of Western imperialism; a rationalization of hegemonic efforts to spread Western values, so that the global environment remains palatable for the West. As scholar Alison Ayers asserts, "In

particular, the regime of ‘democratisation’ and the curtailing of democratic freedom constitute a principal means through which imperial rule is articulated.”<sup>135</sup> Said another way, Western governments are consistently eager to see the overturn of numerous political systems along with a drastic alteration of their social and economic structures. Ayers further refutes the notion of self-determination that liberalism’s proponents support. For Ayers, self-determination is a concept based in non-autonomy and signifies the freedom to “embrace rules, norms, and principles of the emerging liberal global order.”

Opponents of liberalism further observe that Western ideas of democracy do not well align with other cultural milieus, as the emergence of liberal democracy is a product of Western primacy.<sup>136</sup> In this vein, liberalism possesses an inherent favoritism towards the Western colonial state. Baudrillard argues that the emphasis on capitalism, for instance, acts as a Western lens through which peripheral societies are perceived, therefore obstructing the cycles of symbolic exchange that mark other Third-World states.<sup>137</sup> Robinson and Tormey likewise posit that when liberalism assumes a mission of “global justice,” aiming to instill Western cultural norms and values, it imposes a “global-local” conception that reproduces colonial epistemology.<sup>138</sup> This enables a Western reasoning that demonizes non-liberal societies as failed states that are corrupt, lacking, and insufficiently stable.

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<sup>135</sup> Alison J. Ayers, “Imperial Liberties: Democratisation and Governance in the ‘New’ Imperial Order,” *Political Studies*, (2009).

<sup>136</sup> Jorg Faust, “Liberal Democracy as Universal Value,” *The Current Column*, (2013).

<sup>137</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975).

<sup>138</sup> Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey, “Resisting ‘Global Justice’: Disrupting the Colonial ‘Emancipatory’ Logic of the West,” *Third World Quarterly*, (2009).

To recap, opponents of liberalism contend that the ideology reflects Western hegemonic modes of influence. For opponents, the notion of self-determination is based in the freedom to accept rules, norms, and values that align with those of Western global powers. Liberalism as a mission of global justice further alienates states by “otherizing” them and thereby emulating colonial epistemologies and practices. I believe that while opponents of liberalism thoroughly unearth liberalism’s Western origins and name the harms it launches on other states, they do not adequately locate the factors that continue to sustain liberal longevity.

In sum, the two aforementioned positions on liberalism provide a helpful overview on the strengths as well as pitfalls of liberal ideology. I however believe that scholars who take a more critical standpoint on liberalism do a better job of considering its negative reverberations, which contradict aims of world peace and international cooperation. While it is arguable that liberalism, like any ideology, may contain fallacies, there is a marked distinction between “international cooperation” and “international cooperation with Western nation-states.” I thus concur with opponents who suggest that liberalism promotes colonial epistemologies and practices that distort the functions of perceived “weaker” entities rather than honoring their self-governance and interests. I however take this body of thought further by identifying the particular elements on which liberalism thrives, which I believe to be primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. Identifying these elements will help contextualize the way liberalism, like White citizenship (a concept of ideals ascribed to Whiteness), has served to dislodge Black unification efforts. They will further maintain my claim that liberalism is rooted in a colonial enterprise that maintains global White supremacy. In the sections below, I provide a timeline for the demise of the Pan-African Movement by first discussing the detriments of British colonization on Ghanaian infrastructure.

## **The Negative Outcomes of Colonialism on Ghana's Infrastructure**

History reveals that British colonization unequivocally issued disastrous repercussions within Ghana, the West African nation formerly known as the “Gold Coast.” Under colonial rule, Ghana was afflicted with adverse barriers, including economic instability, a weakened sense of nationalism, and neocolonial subjugation. In the subsequent paragraphs, I delineate the ways these repercussions sent Ghana's infrastructure into a state of disarray, eventually birthing Pan-African revolt. So far I have argued that in the international sphere, liberal ideology is a renewed form of colonialism that obstructs Black unification and relies on primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. Using Ghana as a case study, the following sections detail prevalent commonalities between liberalism, White citizenship, and colonialism, ultimately naming liberalism as a source of the Pan-African Movement's dissolution.

### *Economic Instability: the Result of Colonial Exploitation*

Prior to its colonization, Ghana was a flourishing region until colonial rule provoked economic decline and political instability within its infrastructure.<sup>139</sup> British colonizers rationalized that Ghanaian inhabitants were unfit to govern themselves and espoused the notion that “backwards” nations required the guidance of the dominant world order. Colonial authorities hence established vicious oppressive and exploitative systems by maintaining that their presence in Ghana would bolster economic development and prepare Ghana for eventual

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<sup>139</sup> Robert M. Price, “Neo-Colonialism and Ghana's Economic Decline: A Critical Assessment,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, (1984): 164.

independence.<sup>140</sup> However, British siege of the Gold Coast only maximized political control and economic profits for British colonial authorities. Systematic corruption thus emerged due to the imposition of a Western institutional system that bore deeply conflicting values and norms with that of Ghanaian society.<sup>141</sup> Even after independence, Ghana was economically fragile as a result of colonial exploitation and had no choice but to remain largely dependent on the assistance of Western nations.<sup>142</sup>

### Weakened Nationalism

British colonization further brought about the reduction of Ghanaian nationalism. Colonial rule over Ghana shaped and conditioned Ghanaian nationalism in a way such that within a span of fifty years, four of the country's regions were successively colonized. Five variants of nationalism thus emerged: the Colony (coastal region), the Ashanti (central region), the Northern Territories (northern region), the Trans-Volta Togoland (eastern region), and Nkrumah's dual Pan-African struggle (we will revisit Nkrumah later on).<sup>143</sup> The above nationalisms can more succinctly be classified into two categories: the holistic nationalists, which involved Nkrumah's struggle, and the sub-nationalists, which encompassed the four remaining Ghanaian regions. Here, I underscore that colonial inhibition of Ghanaian nationalism is no different from White citizenship's stratification of Africans and African Americans in the United States.

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<sup>140</sup> Abayomi Azikiwe, "Africa Still Struggles Against Imperialism," 1.

<sup>141</sup> Victor Le Vine, "Corruption in Ghana," *Transition*, (1975): 50.

<sup>142</sup> Megan Behrent, "Ama Ata Aidoo: Independence and Disillusionment in Postcolonial Ghana," 2.

<sup>143</sup> Kwame Nimako, "Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism: How Black America Awakened Nkrumah and Nkrumah Awakened Black America," *The Black Scholar*, (2010): 59.

Holistic nationalists aimed to advance the colonized state. They viewed British colonial rule as a point of opposition and held strong beliefs in equal opportunity and social transformation. They additionally promoted Pan-Africanism and solidarity between colonized and oppressed peoples, irrespective of one's class and ethnic background. Holistic nationalists also viewed mass politicization and education as foundations for political mobilization.<sup>144</sup> In contrast, sub-nationalists viewed holistic nationalists—rather than British colonial rule—as objects of opposition and espoused the system of British colonization. They believed strongly in social stratification and reform and fought against Pan-African ideals. They further viewed preexisting Ghanaian relations as a reason for political mobilization and sought to eradicate unity between the colonized and the oppressed.<sup>145</sup>

The existence of these varying nationalisms gave rise to the diffusion of Ghana's sociopolitical cohesion and authority. By the 1950s, the likelihood that any of the organized political forces—colonial authorities, holistic nationalists, and sub-nationalists—could implement its own political goals remained very low.<sup>146</sup> For example, the rule of British colonial authorities depended on their control of Ghana's societal instruments—the civil service, police service, judiciary, and armed forces. The power of holistic nationalists rested on their ability to galvanize the masses into action, so that Ghana would be ungovernable by colonial authorities. Finally, sub-nationalist preeminence relied on an alliance with native rulers and non-cooperation with holistic nationalists.<sup>147</sup> In particular, the opposition between Ghanaian nationalists and sub-nationalists illustrates the division essential to the preservation of colonial rule. As long as the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

Ghanaian nation-state remained stratified, this would forestall its nationalism and continue to enable British colonial domination.

### Neocolonialism

Although Ghana achieved independence on March 6, 1957, this did not secure its actual autonomy from centuries-long exploitation under colonial powers.<sup>148</sup> Neocolonialism became yet another obstacle that Ghana had to overcome in its struggle to obtain freedom and sovereignty.

Nkrumah defines neocolonialism as follows:

“The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and its political policy is directed from outside. (Nkrumah).”<sup>149</sup>

To better understand neocolonialism, we must observe three of its key components:

neocolonialism as a consequence of an underdeveloped nation’s status within the world trade system or in the periphery of the world system; neocolonialism as a means of military force to endow countries with imperial ambitions the capacity to subjugate or overthrow less powerful governments; neocolonialism as a form of bribery used on local populations—particularly politicians, soldiers, and public servants who serve as agents for imperial powers.<sup>150</sup>

The implications of neocolonialism’s first component, a nation’s peripheral status in the world system, meant that Ghana would be limited in its capacity to produce adequate resources for the development of its physical and social infrastructure.<sup>151</sup> In other words, powerful nations

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<sup>148</sup> Norman E. Hodges, “Neo-colonialism: The New Rape of Africa,” *The Black Scholar*, (1972): 12.

<sup>149</sup> Abayomi Azikiwe, “Africa Still Struggles Against Imperialism,” 2-3.

<sup>150</sup> Kwame Nimako, “Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism,” 55.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

would be able to place trade sanctions on more vulnerable nations and use “development aid” as a means to coerce them into dependency. This thus inhibited Ghana’s ability to lend assistance to other countries in need. As a result of being deemed a weaker state, the implications of neocolonialism’s second component meant that powerful countries could threaten to reverse the acquisition of Ghana’s independence and invade its territory. It further meant that Ghana’s aims to self-improve and achieve collective freedom would be hindered.<sup>152</sup> However, where direct intervention was not an option, the third implication of neocolonialism involved the strategic bribery of local populations. This meant that politicians, soldiers, and public servants would be paid to operate as agents for imperial powers, which became a very effective mode of subverting the Pan-African Movement in Ghana.<sup>153</sup> Neocolonialism, a direct remnant of colonialism, overall demonstrates a hegemonic objective to not only keep countries like Ghana dependent on the outside assistance of imperial forces, but to also reduce the individual autonomy of weaker nation-states. I argue that this objective is congruent with liberal ideology, which as we recall, advocates self-determination over separatism and sovereignty. In the same vein that British colonization was never meant to erode Ghana’s underdevelopment or boost its self-reliance, liberalism seeks to espouse a global environment that solidifies Western norms and primacy.

### **Kwame Nkrumah’s Resistance**

*“The right of a people to decide their own destiny, to make their way in freedom, is not to be measured by the yardstick of color or degree of social development. It is an inalienable right of peoples, which they are powerless to exercise when forces, stronger than they themselves, by whatever means, for whatever reasons, take this right away from them. If there is to be a criterion of a people’s preparedness for Self-Government, then I say it is their readiness to*

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.



*assume the responsibilities of ruling themselves... never in the history of the world has an alien ruler granted self-rule to a people on a silver platter.”*<sup>154</sup>

*~Kwame Nkrumah*

Every society is comprised of two classes: a class that rules and a class that is ruled. Though once in a while, an individual rises who challenges the injustices imposed by the rule of the elite class, and in the case of Ghanaian colonization, that individual was Kwame Nkrumah. This next section covers Kwame Nkrumah’s leadership by detailing his mission to attain Ghanaian independence and expand Pan-African unity in the face of colonial rule. We must however bear in mind that Nkrumah’s eventual demise conveys just how unyielding the grip of colonialism was, and informs us of its false intent to encourage Ghanaian autonomy and development. As I later explain, colonialism’s discouragement of state autonomy also emerges within liberal ideology. We continue to bear in mind that liberalism reflects White citizenship on a global scale and serves as the gatekeeper of Western approval towards other nation-states; given that these states follow democratic, capitalist, and humanitarian values that refrain from threatening Western empire.

### Background

One of Ghana’s most celebrated leaders, Kwame Nkrumah was born in the western region of the Gold Coast (later named Ghana) on September 21, 1909, growing up under the established British colonial system.<sup>155</sup> After attending primary and secondary school and

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>155</sup> Abayomi Azikiwe, “Africa & the Struggle Against Imperialism: 40 Years: after Kwame Nkrumah,” 1.

receiving teacher training, Nkrumah traveled to America to pursue his education at Lincoln University, a historically Black college in the state of Pennsylvania.<sup>156</sup> He obtained degrees in Education, Sociology, Philosophy, Political Science, and Theology, and it was Nkrumah's experiences at Lincoln that helped shape his outlook on African nationalism.<sup>157</sup> Leading figures of nationalist and leftist movements, such as the African Students Association and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, particularly drew Nkrumah. Some of these figures included Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, and C.L.R. James, to note a few.<sup>158</sup> In 1945 Nkrumah traveled to England, where he soon began working alongside George Padmore, a former member of the Communist International. Both Nkrumah and Padmore worked towards organizing the Fifth Pan-African Congress, which would be held in Manchester later that year. This African Diasporic collaboration resulted in the formation of, *A Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World*, a document drafted by Nkrumah, Padmore, and Du Bois, which was approved by more than 200 delegates.<sup>159</sup> The declaration would serve as a key tool in calling on intellectuals and professional classes of colonized nations to awaken to their responsibilities.

### Struggle for Independence

After spending 12 years overseas, Nkrumah returned to Ghana in December of 1947, on the invitation of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). He was appointed as the secretary

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<sup>156</sup> Jesse Benjamin, "Decolonizing Nationalism: Reading Nkrumah and Nyerere's Pan-African Epistemology," *Journal of Emerging Knowledge on Emerging Markets*, (2011): 234-235.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>158</sup> Abayomi Azikiwe, "Africa & the Struggle Against Imperialism: 40 Years: after Kwame Nkrumah," 2.

<sup>159</sup> Abayomi Azikiwe, "Africa & the Struggle Against Imperialism: 40 Years: after Kwame Nkrumah," 2.

of the UGCC and transformed the organization into a mass nationalist movement.<sup>160</sup> Three years after his induction, Nkrumah was arrested by colonial authorities and sentenced to a year of prison for mobilizing a general strike demanding independence. Soon after his release from prison, he headed Ghana's transitional government, which would later lead the country to full independence on March 6, 1957.<sup>161</sup> Nkrumah believed that Ghana's independence would be meaningless if it did not involve the full unity and liberation of Africa, though he faced a dual struggle. On the one hand, he had to face internal Ghanaian/African political and cultural dynamics to disseminate his message of African unity. Yet in order to do this, he first needed to succeed in Ghana. On the other hand, Nkrumah had to transfer his message of African unity in a manner that would delegitimize British colonial rule.<sup>162</sup> Nkrumah thus employed three symbols to solidify his message of African awakening. These symbols encompassed the Red Rooster or Cock, which signified Ghana/Africa's wake-up call to reclaim power; the Black Star, which signified Ghanaian arising, independence, and social and economic progress; and the kente cloth, which signified a national dress code.<sup>163</sup> Nkrumah's struggle for independence was thus part of the broader Pan-African Movement and did not end with Ghana's political independence. He sought to redefine Africa by proposing new cultural and political reconfigurations within the continent in addition to demanding an *African* representation of Africa.<sup>164</sup> This endeavor ultimately made it possible to extend solidarity towards subjects trapped under colonial control.

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<sup>160</sup> Kwame Nimako, "Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism," 54.

<sup>161</sup> Megan Behrent, "Ama Ata Aidoo: Independence and Disillusionment in Postcolonial Ghana," 1.

<sup>162</sup> Jesse Benjamin, "Decolonizing Nationalism," 240.

<sup>163</sup> Kwame Nimako, "Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism," 60-61, 67.

<sup>164</sup> Jesse Benjamin, "Decolonizing Nationalism," 241.

### *Collapse of the Nkrumah Regime*

As Nkrumah's prevalence on the world stage grew larger, his Pan-African convictions grew stronger, and his loud calls for unity began to be heard and acknowledged by leaders and the African masses, in addition to rest of the globe—Western powers included.<sup>165</sup> Because of Nkrumah's mission to expand African unity across the continent and the Diaspora, imperialists targeted Ghana and other progressive African states in order to stifle and reverse African movements that promoted revolutionary pan-Africanism. Through the collective efforts of the United States and CIA, Nkrumah was overthrown in a bloody military coup in February of 1966, which was executed in the name of restoring freedom and democracy.<sup>166</sup> What is interesting to observe is the timing of Nkrumah's arrival to Ghana along with his eventual overthrow and exile. Nkrumah's arrival coincided with the decline of the United Kingdom as a colonial power and the rise of the U.S. as a new hegemonic power. Yet after restoring Ghana's political independence, Nkrumah was eventually overthrown through an armed revolt instigated *by* the U.S. *and* the approval of Britain.<sup>167</sup> This U.S. and British collaboration signified the West's intentions to suppress Ghanaian autonomy and demolish the gains of anti-colonial struggles. Such an understanding once more elucidates the duplicity of Western powers who falsely claimed to strengthen the advancement and independence of "severely misguided" nations.

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<sup>165</sup> Evan White, "Kwame Nkrumah: Cold War Modernity, Pan-African Ideology, and the Geopolitics of Development," *Geopolitics*, (2003): 113.

<sup>166</sup> Norman E. Hodges, "Neo-colonialism," 17.

<sup>167</sup> Insight, "The Struggle Against Imperialism in the Context of Nkrumaist Development Paradigm," 1.

## **The Efforts of Malcolm X and Other Pan-Africanists on the International Stage**

Apart from Nkrumah's Pan-African mission, Pan-African leaders elsewhere had been implementing huge strides to spread the concerns of African peoples globally. Influential Civil Rights leader Malcolm X had long been advocating for the humanity of Blacks in the United States and remained uncompromising in his approach. Unlike other Civil Rights leaders, Malcolm X rejected the strategy of nonviolence and declared that Blacks in the United States should defend and progress themselves "by any means necessary." As a member of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X embarked on a pilgrimage to several African nations in 1964, some of which included Ghana, Egypt, and Nigeria.<sup>168</sup> Later in 1964, Malcolm X returned to the United States to form the Organization for Afro-American Unity (OAAU), modeled after the Pan-African Organization for African Unity (OAU) that had been formed the previous year. While attending the OAU's Second Annual Summit in Cairo, Malcolm X made a direct appeal to African heads of state to garner their support and solidarity for the plight of African Americans in the United States. In an eight-page memorandum, he stated,

"Our problem is your problem. No matter how much independence Africans get here on the mother continent, unless you wear your national dress at all times when you visit America, you may be mistaken for one of us and suffer the same psychological and physical mutilation that is an everyday occurrence in our lives. Our problem is your problem. It is not a Negro problem, nor an American problem. This is a world problem, a problem for humanity. It is not a problem of civil rights but a problem of human rights."<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Abayomi Azikiwe, "Malcolm X and Global Black Struggle," Workers World, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.workers.org/articles/2014/02/19/malcolm-x-global-black-struggle/>.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

Malcolm X further took to the United Nations to address the racist brutalities that Blacks were facing and sought sanctions against the United States for committing crimes against humanity.<sup>170</sup>

In a final speech he gave at the Cornel Methodist Church in Rochester New York in February of 1965, Malcolm X reiterated the sentiments he expressed to the United Nations when he declared,

“So one of the first steps that we became involved in, those of us who got into the Organization of Afro- American Unity, was to come up with a program that would make our grievances international and make the world see that our problem was no longer a Negro problem or an American problem but a human problem. A problem for humanity. And a problem which should be attacked by all elements of humanity. A problem that was so complex that it was impossible for Uncle Sam to solve it himself and therefore we want to get into a body or conference with people who are in such positions that they can help us get some kind of adjustment for this situation before it gets so explosive that no one can handle it.”<sup>171</sup>

Malcolm X’s declaration to African leaders was further demonstrative of his own Pan-African ideology and, like Nkrumah, his desire to seek the liberation of Blacks in America and beyond. Despite his plea to the United Nations, he also recognized that within the United Nations, a “skin game” was being played, where a world order was being shaped along color-lines.<sup>172</sup> In other words, alliances were being formed among non-White nations and vice versa, which is indicative of the consequences produced by liberal hegemony. Malcolm X was therefore adamant about exposing the hypocrisies of colonial powers, who when faced with

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<sup>170</sup> Ronald Walters, *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 118.

<sup>171</sup> Malcolm X, “Not Just an American Problem, but a World Problem,” in Betty Shabazz and Bruce Perry’s *Malcolm X: The Last Speeches*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1989), 166.

<sup>172</sup> Malcolm X, “Excerpt from the Autobiography of Malcolm X,” *History Is a Weapon*, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/malcolmeduc.html>.

revolutionary backlash by the peoples of the African continent, “passed the ball” to the United States. As Malcolm X observes in his Rochester speech,

“So our State Department, grabbing the ball and in their new analysis, they realized that they had to use a new strategy if they were going to replace the colonial powers of Europe. What was their strategy? The friendly approach. Instead of coming over there with their teeth gritted, they started smiling at the Africans. “We’re your friends.” But in order to convince the African that he was their friend he had to start off pretending like they were our friend. You didn’t get the man to smile at you because you were bad, no. He was trying to impress your brother on the other side of the water. He smiled at you to make his smile consistent. He started using a friendly approach over there. A benevolent approach. A philanthropic approach. Call it benevolent colonialism. Philanthropic imperialism. Humanitarianism backed up by dollarism. Tokenism. This is the approach that they used. They didn’t go over there well meaning.”<sup>173</sup>

Because Western European powers like that of Belgium, France, and Great Britain could no longer withstand the spirit of independence and Pan-African unity that had befallen African peoples, they had to call on a new ally who was “in the clear,” so to speak, and who could subvert the tactics of Pan-African Leaders across the continent. This ally thus had to be the United States.<sup>174</sup>

Additional efforts to promote Pan-Africanism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century involved those of Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, and Julius Nyerere, to name a few. Envisioning a global movement that would form an African empire and unite the African race, young Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).<sup>175</sup> The

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<sup>173</sup> Malcolm X, “Not Just an American Problem, but a World Problem,” 160.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Minkah Makalani, “Pan-Africanism,” *Africana Age: African & African Diasporan Transformations in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, accessed February 4, 2015, <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-pan-africanism.html>

UNIA sought to promote race pride and “strengthen the imperialism of independent African states.” The organization quickly grew into one of the largest Pan-African associations in the history of Pan-African liberation struggles, and by 1920, had claimed over 1,000 divisions in 40 countries. With the help of his good friend C.L.R. James, leading Trinidadian Pan-Africanist George Padmore also founded the International African Service Bureau (IASB) in 1935.<sup>176</sup> In line with many of the African and Pan-African organizations of the time, the IASB vouched for the liberation of Africa from colonial strongholds and participation in intellectual engagements. Finally, Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere convened the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Dar es Salaam in 1974, which was the first Pan-African Congress to be held in Africa<sup>177</sup> In this meeting, Nyerere called to further the progress of opposition to racism, oppression, colonialism, and exploitation everywhere.” He ultimately declared that an end to colonialism was not an “end to the oppression of man” and that a worldwide movement for human equality would require continuous efforts to eradicate global oppressions.

### **Colonialism: The Predecessor of Liberalism and White Citizenship**

In the previous sections I used Ghana as a case study to explain colonialism’s disastrous impacts on the country’s infrastructure and Kwame Nkrumah’s unsuccessful campaign for African liberation. I now move to analyze the stark commonalities between liberalism and colonialism. At first glance, few might consider that liberalism is another colonial enterprise that seeks to reinforce Western preeminence and halt Black unification efforts. Liberalism after all, is

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.



thought to promote democracy and humanitarian rights to ensure a more peaceful world. It is also the very ideology that has helped undermine Western colonialism and now seeks to enhance development and living standards throughout the globe. Upon closer examination, however, Ghana's Pan-African struggle reveals that liberalism bears inextricable similarities to colonialism and is rather a politically constructed hegemonic endeavor whose aim is to redirect power and wealth to the world's elite groups. In this chapter I have argued that liberalism is an ideology based in colonialism and manifests as a global form of White citizenship by endorsing Western normalized values. The subsequent paragraph delves into how the two logics are connected.

Both liberalism and White citizenship share an inherent aim to homogenize; to instill normalized values that are deemed acceptable and emulative. Within a liberal paradigm that is interconnected with White citizenship, homogenization is rather classified as instilling democratic values to render states fit for international cooperation and to produce first-class citizens. Yet in a strict colonial context, this agenda is no different from civilizing. As a resistance mechanism against colonial pervasion, Black unification stands opposite of liberalism and White citizenship's solidification of Western imperialism and therefore becomes a target of destruction. To thus reduce the threat of radical Black Diasporic movements, liberalism is employed as a tool to legitimize military interventions as forces of morality. Hence, just as White citizenship (a model embedded with ideals stereotyped to Whiteness) incites friction among Africans and African Americans, liberalism instigated the eventual downfall of Nkrumah and other Pan-African leaders. This not only disassembled Pan-African efforts, but also stifled solidarity between Africans and African Americans that would carry for generations to come. By therefore implementing the divide and conquer tactic, both liberalism and White citizenship find their origins in colonialism.

Both logics further regard “backwards” nations (governments non-aligned with Western democratic values) as incapable of effectively governing themselves and warrant outside intervention and assistance. Liberalism and colonialism also de-emphasize state autonomy and sovereignty, for as we recall, liberal ideology underscores international cooperation over state separatism. Even though liberalism appears to promote the advancement of weaker states by advocating higher living standards, economic wealth, and decent treatment of a nation’s citizens, it strays from highlighting state autonomy for the sake of international cohesion. If state autonomy were a true objective, Western intervention in Ghana would not have occurred in response to Ghana’s Pan-African struggle, which was a clear point of contention for dominant powers. We can trace this same line of thought within colonialism. While colonial invaders repeatedly declared their presence in Ghana as a means for Ghanaian progression, neocolonialism exposes their true intentions to forestall Ghanaian independence. In actuality, colonial invaders evoked more devastation than they did national restoration.

### **Primitivism, Patronization, and the Manipulation of Power**

Earlier in this chapter I alluded to three elements that help sustain liberal ideology: primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. I now arrive at interrogating *how* these elements help magnify liberal influence within the international arena and subdue Black unification in the process. I first draw our focus towards primitivism. In his work, *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill states,

“Liberalism is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as

against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage.”<sup>178</sup>

Mill’s words demonstrate the embedded assumptions of primitivism not only within colonialism, but also within liberal ideology. Liberalism’s goal to extend democracy towards other nations simultaneously invokes two notions: the assumed superiority of the West and the inferiority of non-Western nations who fail to exhibit democratic practices. This dichotomy further divulges a tacit *racial* superiority within Western liberal thinking. As NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) leader Nnamdi Azikiwe stated in response to colonial injustices,

“Being Black people does not mean that we are impervious to justice and decency. Being White does not make colonial Governors paragons of perfection.”<sup>179</sup>

Following Western logic, so long as “weaker, Third-World” nations exist, liberalism’s normative practice of democracy will always be in demand.

Patronization, the next element liberalism relies on, is intertwined with the idea of primitivism. A way we may conceptualize this connection is by remembering that primitivism *leads* to patronization, or in other words, when a state is labeled “backwards,” it necessitates restructuring. To further clarify, primitivism is the notion of *perceiving* a state as uncivil, while patronization *acts* on this perception by means of external force to alter the values and systems of the state in question. As John Stuart Mill posits,

“They have to be taught self-government...protected against their own actions as well as against external injury...their improvement cannot come from themselves, but must be super-inducted from

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<sup>178</sup> Uday Chandra, “Liberalism and Its Other: The Politics of Primitivism in Colonial and Postcolonial Indian Law,” *Law and Society Review*, (2013):135.

<sup>179</sup> Jesse Benjamin, “Decolonizing Nationalism,” 252.

without...(by a government) which possesses force but seldom uses it: a parental despotism or aristocracy.”<sup>180</sup>

Once a state is deemed primitive, it must be rescued from itself and calls for the protection of foreign intervention. Liberalism justifies this course of action particularly when dealing with human rights and self-governance. If a state fails to treat its society with decency or exhibit universal values rooted in a Western liberal episteme, it must be rectified by external powers. The constant need to “protect” and “correct” thus indicates an element of patronization that liberalism uses to thrive.

I contend that the manipulation of power is a final element that sustains liberalism. In the previous section I asserted that while liberalism appears to promote state self-reliance, we must note its divergence from advocating individual sovereignty in favor of international cohesion. I believe we must question this feature of liberalism more closely. When we refer back to history, the sovereignty of Western nations has seldom been called into question. Why, then, should the sovereignty of other states be maligned? Opponents of liberalism would classify this rejection of sovereignty as a ploy for “making the global environment more palatable for the West,” by only preserving Western values and hegemony. Italian political scientist Gaetano Mosca would further remind us that power cannot be legitimized through mere possession of it; it must also be justified by a legal and moral basis. Liberalism’s minimization of state sovereignty serves as a manipulative strategy to distribute power in such a way that favors Western nations.<sup>181</sup> Western nations consequently benefit the most by setting the global precedent for normalized values and practices, thus fortifying their power and the dissemination of liberal ideology. In this way then,

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<sup>180</sup> Uday Chandra, “Liberalism and Its Other,” 138.

<sup>181</sup> Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), 70.

liberalism thrives on the manipulation of power. These elements largely convey that liberalism upholds global White supremacy.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter I have argued that liberalism is rooted in colonialism and globally manifests as White citizenship (a concept of ideals ascribed to Whiteness) by promoting Western cultural norms. Furthermore, liberalism, like White citizenship has unsettled Black unification by impeding Pan-African agendas through imposing primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. Proponents of liberalism hold that liberalism is fundamentally optimistic, calling for a peaceful world and cooperation among international actors, in addition to advocating human rights and the global proliferation of capitalist and democratic values. Opponents of liberalism, on the other hand, believe that liberalism merely reflects Western dominance and that in its more forceful version, is an updated expression of Western imperialism. They in other words believe that liberalism rationalizes the hegemonic effort to spread Western values, so that the global environment remains convenient for Western nations. While I understand each of the argumentative definitions on what liberalism *is*, I more so comply with opponents who contend that liberalism is a Western hegemonic ideology.

Using the British colonization of Ghana as a case study, I have identified specific commonalities between liberalism, White citizenship, and colonialism. Both liberalism and White citizenship share an immediate urge to homogenize by imposing normalized practices. However, Black unification stands in opposition to Western imperialism by defying Black exploitation and division. In so doing this, Black unification becomes a threat for the West to defuse. In the same manner that White citizenship spurs tensions between Africans and African

Americans and elicits division between the two ethnicities, liberalism caused the eventual downfall of Pan-African leaders, ultimately dismantling the Pan-African Movement and complicating future solidarity between Africans and African Americans. By implementing this division, both liberalism and White citizenship find their origins in colonialism. They further espouse the idea that nations regarded as “backwards,” or incapable of governing themselves, require protection and thus warrant outside intervention. Finally, both colonialism and liberalism diverge from promoting state sovereignty and autonomy. Uncovering these similarities prove useful for locating particular elements that sustain liberal ideology in addition to pinpointing how liberalism and White citizenship work to displace Black unification efforts. I have argued that these elements involve primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power.

Primitivism appears within liberal ideology when nations are believed unfit to self-govern, thus calling for help and protection. This element manifests through liberalism’s aim to extend democracy towards other nations; a gesture that invokes two notions: the assumed superiority of the West and the inferiority of non-Western nations who must beseech democracy to better practice self-governance. Patronization, an additional element liberalism relies on, intersects with primitivism. We may understand this connection by recognizing that primitivism *leads* to patronization—once a state is deemed “backwards,” it necessitates restructuring. The consistent impulse to rectify classified weaker nations is thus an indication of the patronization that liberalism uses to thrive. The last element liberalism relies on, the manipulation of power, is apparent when liberalism strays from promoting state sovereignty for purposes of international cohesion. The erosion of state sovereignty is a manipulative strategy to distribute power in such a way that favors Western nations. This power enables the West to set the global precedent for

acceptable norms and practices, thus fortifying the dissemination of liberal ideology. These elements overall reveal that liberalism encourages global White supremacy.

Earlier on in this chapter I asserted that if we consider liberalism's inextricable similarities to colonialism and colonialism's devastation of Ghana's infrastructure, it would then hold that liberal ideology is non-ideal for *all* nation-states and only serves to mold the rest of the international community according to Western tradition. Black unification, oppositional to liberalism's homogenizing tactic, thus threatens the empire of Western dominance. When considering the mission to spread liberalism to other non-democratic countries we must critically interrogate *which* actors are promoting preferred norms and values for the international community and at *whose* expense these norms are being enacted. Liberalism suppresses the agency of nations who would prefer to govern themselves without reference to an overarching doctrine of governance—as seen in the Pan-African Movement in Ghana. We must therefore keep in mind that while ostensibly innocuous, liberalism is an ideology fueled with self-interests that aim to progress Western hegemony and halt Black unification. The Pan-African Movement, a Black unification struggle, did not conform to Western imperialism, which therefore led to its collapse. Beyond this, liberalism like other imperial forces represents a warning signal to the ongoing struggle for Black unification. Without first attempting to heal internal divisions within the African Diaspora, Black unification efforts will ultimately remain insufficient and cannot manage to flourish, given its numerous preeminent threats. For when the entire world is against us, our only source of reliance will be our self-dependence and our self-love.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> “Us” denotes Blacks within the African Diaspora.

## **Conclusion: A New Vision for Black Solidarity**

*“If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.”<sup>183</sup>*

*~Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther Party*

The previous chapters have detailed the present and historical rifts that ensue among Africans and African Americans of the Diaspora. They further highlight dominant White supremacist structures like that of White citizenship (a model embedded with ideals stereotyped to norms of Whiteness) and liberalism, which worsen intraracial conflicts between the two ethnicities. As we recall in chapter one, I argued that a White American construction of citizenship exacerbates existing tensions between Africans and African in the United States. Drawing on ethnographic interviews, this chapter examined four specific components: imagined and idealized models of American citizenship, socioeconomic status, anti-Blackness, and the varied application of racism towards Africans and African Americans. Ultimately, responses expressed by African and African American participants I interviewed, evidenced intraracial tensions worsened by a predominantly White society; one which effectively divides African and African Americans in their united struggle to achieve assimilation.

My second chapter proceeded to offer a comprehensive overview of Pan-African ideology. In this chapter I argued that Pan-Africanism as a movement might be the single-most promising political and intellectual weapon in alleviating internal divisions among African Diasporans and in ultimately galvanizing Black unity. I further maintained that in order for Pan-

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<sup>183</sup> Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther Party, 1968.



Africanism to work as an effective instrument, it must not only avoid committing interethnic neoliberalism, or “ethnic colorblindness,” which disregards the conglomerate of existing ethnicities within the African Diaspora, but it must also denounce temptations of assimilation into a Eurocentric world order.

In my final chapter I used Ghana as a case study to delve into Kwame Nkrumah’s Pan-African leadership and argue that liberalism is an ideology rooted in colonialism and serves as a global index of White citizenship. Its disruption of transatlantic Black unification efforts further relies on three elements: primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. We must therefore bear in mind that while ostensibly innocuous, liberalism is an ideology fueled with Western self-interests that aim to advance an imperial agenda and halt Black Diasporic unification. The dissolution of the Pan-African Movement ultimately indicates this triumph.

In essence, I maintain that we need a new vision for Black unity; one that avoids the danger of what I term “interethnic neoliberalism,” or “ethnic colorblindness,” while also recognizing the power that lies in a shared “Black” skin color. All along, African Diasporic peoples have overlooked an important tool enforced on us by a White supremacist regime. This tool is the generic “Black” label, and while no doubt limited, this label nevertheless bonds us together. It is only a matter of whether we decide to be united in this shared skin color.

In my research I did not explore how intraracial conflicts between Africans and African Americans may permeate gender boundaries in a more nuanced fashion. Being a self-identified Black feminist, this is a drawback of my research that I strongly regret and will become a topic of exploration for my future academic pursuits. Just recently, I attended a panel on Black feminism where at the end of the discussion, I asked the Black women panelists to offer their thoughts on tensions among African Diasporic women. Initially, they appeared puzzled and

wondered what I meant by *tensions*. Some further claimed to have never encountered such tensions among Black women in particular, contending that the issue was rather one that was non-adherent to gender. I comply with this in part. Soon enough, however, the very tensions I had inquired about began to emerge between two of the panelists who were competing to have their points heard. This even escalated into a momentary heated exchange over who more so had to battle with a hyphenated identity and whose history was being validated. I find it vital to note that of the said panelists, one was a second-generation Jamaican and the other was African American.

The above anecdote only reinforces sentiments I have previously underscored: we cannot hope to embark on a mission for Black Diasporic solidarity without acknowledging our multiethnic differences and remaining honest about them. Engaging in interethnic neoliberalism only fuels the colonial logic that strives to keep us stratified. Said another way, when we choose to be unaware of our Black interethnic differences, we make room for preexisting divisions that are rooted in a White imperial agenda—which we cannot afford. Black Diasporans may not be the *same*, but this does not negate our Blackness in the world’s eyes. It is here, then, we must understand that unity is not the *absence* of difference, but rather the *incorporation* of it. After all, *difference* is the very element that renders unification admirable.

Admittedly, the quest for Black unification appears to be a long, strenuous voyage that at points feels impossible to obtain, given the myriad hegemonic forces in our midst. I yet take this moment to repeat what a wise woman once told me: *the unique aspect of time is that anything can change in a moment*. In this vein then, the possibility of Black unification can be obtainable. It can be obtainable if we understand the very root of our internal and external conflicts. It can be obtainable when we accept that we are different—not monolithic—and must love ourselves.

Finally, it can be obtainable when we recognize and accept the hue of our exteriors. Strength lies in numbers, and I once again offer that we must find solidarity through the very tool we are undervaluing, which, in literal terms, is our “Black” skin.

Indeed, Black Diasporans are Blood Diamonds. We are conflict diamonds. We have been scattered through space and time, history and lineage. We have been left to find each other and reunite in the crossfires of White hegemonic conquests. And yet despite the ills of White supremacy, our greatest tragedy will lie in our inability to recognize how invaluable we are. How immensely we radiate and burn. We would not be blood diamonds if the world did not strive to capture us and keep us imprisoned in the glass case of time, only to be made a spectacle and eventually bought and sold to the next owner—to separate and diminish our collective shine. We must thus remember that the most sought after object, even when groomed for destruction, is the most prized, for its illustrious beauty and threat are great enough to be contained. Black Diasporans are this.

*So yes, my people.*

*We are Blood Diamonds.*

*We are Blood Diamonds.*

*Let us then find each other once more.*

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