Entry on Pan-Africanism

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working toward prosperous black states in Africa and bringing an end to racial injustice. However, much of his message was geared toward peoples of African descent themselves. Du Bois demanded that blacks be responsible for their own uplift, and that the states of Ethiopia, Liberia, and Haiti provide positive examples of black self-determination.

The discourse that emerged from the Pan-African Conference continued in the years to come as persons of color around the world became increasingly aware of their shared struggles. Furthermore, the meeting served as a forerunner of a series of similar conferences, known as congresses, in the decades to follow, the last one being held in 1945.

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See also: Du Bois, William William Edward Burghardt; Haiti; Pan-Africanism

References


**PAN-AFRICANISM**

Pan-Africanism describes the idea of unity among people of African descent against oppression. This spirit of solidarity emerged during World War I when a group of black intellectuals and political leaders from the Caribbean, the Americas, and Africa met in London to discuss the future of blacks worldwide. While the list of Pan-Africanists is long, it includes key figures such as the African American W. E. B. Du Bois, the Jamaican Marcus Garvey, the Beninese Kojo Houenou-Tovalou, the Trinidadian George Padmore, and the Ghanaian Kwame N’krumah. These figures, and many others, contributed greatly to the ideological and political development of the Pan-Africanist movement.

Du Bois was the most outspoken defender of the idea of unity between blacks of the Diaspora and Africa. According to Du Bois, these blacks were united by the social heritage of slavery and their close connections with Africa. Du Bois envisioned Pan-African kinship to be not just a slogan of brotherhood and sisterhood between blacks but the expression of a true political and economic unity between blacks. In order to put his ideas into practice, Du Bois helped organize the Pan-African Congresses of 1919 (held in Paris) and of 1921 (held in London, Paris, and Brussels). These congresses allowed black leaders from Africa, America, and the Caribbean to meet in the West to discuss the predicament that colonization had created in their nations and propose ways in which they could achieve equality, democracy, and economic and political development. The most salient aspect of Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism was its description of the physical suffering, the loss of life, and the devastation of land that European imperialism brought about in Africa. Du Bois lamented how European colonialism opened the way from the Sahara to the Cape of Good Hope for marauding masses of Bantu warriors and for committing relentless aggression and conquest. In this sense, Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism was a strong denunciation of the impact of European colonization of Africa.

Garvey’s Pan-Africanism took a different turn than Du Bois’s did, because it centered not just on the idea of unity between the black Diaspora and Africa but
also on the belief that such unity would lead to a return of all people of African descent to Africa. Garvey’s motto—which later became a rallying slogan for black nationalists of the 1960s in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa—was one of the strongest expressions of cultural and political solidarity between blacks. The essence of Garvey’s Pan-Africanism was his theory of re-Africanization that urged blacks of the Diaspora to go back to Africa and use their skills to help develop it. Garvey interpreted this return as a reconnection with the continent that great kings and queens used to rule in ancient times.

In the 1920s, Garvey collaborated with an African political figure named Kojo Tovalou-Houenou, who was a firm backer of his Pan-Africanism. Tovalou-Houenou’s support of Garvey’s Pan-Africanism is visible when, in his address at Carnegie Hall, he endorsed not only Garvey’s immigration project in Liberia but also his plans to extend his influence across the African continent. Tovalou-Houenou was impressed by Garvey’s perception of Liberia as a black Zion that symbolized African liberty. In this sense, Tovalou-Houenou was one of the strongest validations Garvey received from a highly educated African intellectual of the 1920s.

Tovalou-Houenou’s views on Garvey contradict the unsubstantiated notion that Garvey was an imperialist or a colonialist. Like Garvey, Tovalou-Houenou recognized the importance of racial alliance in the development of nationhood and technological advancement in Africa. Although he was proud of the forms of cultural and industrial development that already existed in traditional Africa, Tovalou-Houenou admitted that Africans could take advantage of the intellectual, artistic, and scientific know-how of the black Diaspora. Referring to the delegations of UNIA members that Garvey had sent to Liberia in the 1920s, Tovalou-Houenou said: “You will bring to your brothers in Africa the arts and industries of the world... you will bring all the education and morality and all that you have learned... and there shall be a fusion and community of ideas and spirit in our great motherland, Africa.” Tovalou Houenou’s statement reflects a very practical concept of solidarity between blacks of the Diaspora and Africa. Instead of just mentioning such unity, he points out the need to concretize it in the Diaspora’s use of its manpower and intelligentsia to give actual support to Africa. Tovalou-Houenou envisions the union between blacks of the West and Africa as a blending between the people, ideas, and spirit that could uplift the conditions of blacks worldwide. Both Garvey and the UNIA admired this part of Tovalou-Houenou’s nationalism. In its edition of August 30, 1924, the *Negro World* praised Tovalou’s Pan-Africanism as a call for blacks from around the world to march back to their homeland and wrest it from its oppressors.

Pan-Africanism would not have had a strong meaning without the contributions that the Ghanaian Kwame N’krumah and his close friend George Padmore made in its development. After completing his studies at Lincoln University, between 1939 and 1942, and at the University of Pennsylvania, in 1942 and 1943, N’krumah returned to Ghana to become the secretary general of the West African Secretariat, an organization that was founded at the fifth Pan-African Congress to fight for the independence of European colonies in West Africa. In *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (1961), N’krumah...
developed his thesis that the freedom of Ghana would not mean anything unless it was linked with the total liberation of the entire continent of Africa. Earlier, he had said that the independence of West Africa required the speedy liberation of all dependent territories in Africa from colonialism, imperialism, and racialism.

N’Krumah’s Pan-Africanism expands the concept of African independence and self-determination, which was at the core of Padmore’s philosophy. In Pan-Africanism and Communism (1956), Padmore described what he viewed as a growing political consciousness among Africans that what happens in one part of Africa has effects on Africans living in different parts of the world. Padmore firmly believed that this awareness would lead to the creation of a United States of Africa. Padmore’s concept of a “United States of Africa” rejuvenated a key ideology of Pan-African resistance that had parallels in Garvey’s “Africa for the Africans” slogan. Padmore had great influence on N’Krumah, especially during the 1960s when N’Krumah thought to convince the leaders of the independent African states to unite with Ghana to form a United States of Africa. N’Krumah’s dream has not been realized yet, but it continues to inspire millions of people of African descent worldwide toward the liberation of their nations.

Pan-Africanism has a long history in which many black intellectuals from both Africa and the black Diaspora contributed to defend Africa and its descendants worldwide against oppression. The central ideology of the movement is the unbreakable bond between people of African descent. These ties should be given concrete meaning so that the noble development goals of Pan-Africanism can transform the lives of blacks worldwide. Many believe that the ideals of Pan-Africanism will remain alive as long as people of African descent continue to be denied the justice and equality they have been fighting for throughout the history of the modern world.

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See also: Baraka, Amiri; Diaspora; Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt; Garvey, Marcus; Liberia; N’Krumah, Kwame; Négritude

References


**Paraguay**

Paraguay, a country of south-central South America, has a history of African peoples, spanning from its involvement in slavery to its views on racial mixing as an independent nation, and how its contemporary African population operates in the nation’s contemporary life and politics. Despite the very modest presence of African descendants living in Paraguay today, their profound contributions to the country’s history should not be ignored. African slaves first came to Paraguay during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries via trade routes through Brazil, Uruguay, and the port city of Buenos Aires. In the early seventeenth century, some of the earliest African slaves to enter the region accompanied Jesuit missionaries to isolated frontier settlements. Small numbers of slaves were imported primarily because Paraguay lacked large plantations and rich mines, such as the one in nearby Potosí. This insured that African slaves would not be needed in great numbers to augment the region’s labor supply. The consistent demographic decline of Guaraní due to epidemic diseases did not compel the Spanish to import slaves on a large scale. Still, the African slaves that did arrive lived near indigenous reducciones, or settlements organized by the Spanish to concentrate native groups, and helped build farms, churches, and roads during the entire colonial period. This proximity assured that Europeans, Africans, and indigenous peoples would be in regular contact with each other in spite of the Jesuits’ best efforts to keep Europeans and Africans isolated from the Guaraní.

By the eighteenth century, hundreds more slaves were brought in to cultivate yerba mate, a tea grown primarily in southern South America. This crop eventually became Paraguay’s most lucrative export, and the Jesuits were particularly adept at running productive estates. With the blessing of royal authorities, some Afro-Paraguayan settlements, like Emboscada, Areguá, and Guarambaré, were founded. Emboscada, in particular, was given the unfortunate role of serving as a buffer colony for the white populations against raids from hostile indigenous groups. This would not be the last time that African peoples would be compelled to sacrifice their lives in this way. Many slaves bought as domestic servants lived primarily within or near Asunción or Villa Rica. Compared with the working conditions of slaves who worked in the rural areas of the country, these urban slaves lived much more independently and were by far treated better. They were also able to form stronger family linkages within their own communities and experienced modest natural growth. In the mid-1780s, according to colonial census records, both freedmen and slave descendants of the first Africans totaled almost 15 percent of the population.

African peoples, also called *pardos* by most Paraguayans at the time, declined in number after 1811, when Paraguay achieved its independence from Spain. At first, this was due in large measure to the process of *mestizaje*, or race mixture. An