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*Perspectives in History*

Vol. 30, 2014-2015

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# Letter from the President

It has been an honor to serve as president of the Alpha Beta Phi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. As such, it is my pleasure to introduce the thirtieth edition of *Perspectives in History*. I would like to start off by thanking those who have contributed articles and book reviews to this exceptional volume. Their hard work and dedication can be seen in their outstanding scholarship. Thank you to the faculty of the History and Geography Department for your continual encouragement (and aid) to the students to research, write, and submit to the journal. I would like to give a special thank you to the editor this year, Lincoln Meltebrink, for his unparalleled hard work. I would also like to thank Dr. Teters and Sheryn Labate for assisting him. This volume of *Perspectives in History* examines the experiences of diverse groups of people and minorities, offering engaging and stimulating works for the reader.

Alpha Beta Phi, Phi Alpha Theta has had another impactful and successful year. A big thank you to Dr. Wilcox for becoming our faculty advisor when Dr. Reynolds went on sabbatical, and for his work and support that enabled another successful year. I would like to thank Professor Bonnie May for continually being the glue that holds our chapter together. I would also like to thank Dr. Landon, the chair of the History and Geography Department, and the faculty for their never ending support and collaboration. Additionally, Jan Rachford and Lou Stuntz deserve our appreciation for their administrative assistance which makes our daily operations possible. I would also like to thank our administration for their support; President Mearns, Provost Sue Ott Rowlands, and Dean Katherine Frank.

This year, our chapter continued its devotion to the study of history, encouraging research and publication, exchanging ideas and learning among members, other students, faculty, and the community. In addition to this journal, members of our chapter showcased their scholarship at the Phi Alpha Theta regional conference in which two members took home paper prizes. Alpha Beta Phi also participated in three field trips which transformed classroom/academic learning into a co-curricular experience. Members also engaged students and faculty during International Education Week with a quiz (prizes for winners) about international history.

This year, Alpha Beta Phi continued our dedication to community service and engagement. This dedication was demonstrated through our chapter's involvement with the Northern Kentucky Regional History Day, the Polar Bear Plunge for the Special Olympics, the Adopt a Family Program, the Relay for life, maintenance work at the James A. Ramage Civil War Museum, and fair trade sales. For her help with these fair trade sales, we would like to recognize Professor Connie Bruins. Also, with the help of Professor Bonnie May and in conjunction with the Veteran's Resource Station on campus, Alpha Beta Phi has been extremely committed to supporting our veterans. For example, members were involved in Fill the Boot, the VA Medical Center, the Joseph House, Cincinnati's 11th Annual USO Tribute, and the Drop Inn Center which aids Cincinnati's large population of homeless and mentally ill veterans. Our chapter's dedication to service earned both the Paul Meyers Community Service and Engagement Award and the Activities Programming Board Outstanding Program Award from Northern Kentucky University.

As we bid farewell to retiring faculty Dr. Ramage and Dr. Williams, we would like to thank both of them for their avid support of Phi Alpha Theta. Dr. Ramage chartered our chapter Alpha Beta Phi of Phi Alpha Theta and started a tradition that we enjoy today. Both professors will be missed but never forgotten.

Words cannot express the gratitude that is due to my fellow officers and members for their hard work enabling another successful year. A constant belief in academic research and scholarship, social and intellectual exchanges, and a dedication to serve have led to many achievements this year, including this journal. The articles and book reviews offer the reader high quality and unique perspectives in history.

**Katie McDonald**

*President of Alpha Beta Phi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, 2014-2015*

# Foreword

As a proud member of the Alpha Beta Phi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, it was an honor to be chosen as the editor for the thirtieth volume of our journal: *Perspectives in History*. The selection process was made difficult by the number of quality articles and book reviews that were submitted, but this was a good problem to have. I would like to thank all of the writers who took the time to submit their work for publication. Indeed, this journal is a celebration of your work. I would also like to thank Dr. Kristopher Teters and Sheryn Labate for their assistance during the review and editing process. Their time, effort, and advice helped to make this journal a success. I must also thank Dr. Robert Wilcox and Dr. William Landon for the support that they have given to our chapter of Phi Alpha Theta all year long. The work done by JoAnn Fincken and University Printing in order to produce this year's journal is appreciated as well.

This volume of *Perspectives in History* includes articles about diverse people and themes from around the world. The articles also reflect various types of history, including social, educational, political, and economic history. Katie Crawford-Lackey's article explores the experiences of Jewish immigrants in the United States during the early twentieth century. Jonathan Eizyk's article examines the risks faced by Sudanese refugees during their journey to Israel as well as after their arrival. Zack Lanham and Dr. Michael Washington discuss the development of Black Studies in the United States. Matt Wallin, winner of the World History Association Paper Prize, examines the symbiosis between the Civil Rights Movement in America and the Pan-African movement in Ghana. In the fifth article, Victoria Lalena discusses the role that Cincinnati played on the American home front during World War II. Two book reviews by Harrison Fender and Dr. Eric Jackson conclude this volume of *Perspectives in History*.

I have enjoyed reading and editing each of these articles and book reviews. I trust that they will interest and inspire you as well. Enjoy the thirtieth volume of *Perspectives in History*.

**Lincoln Meltebrink**

*Editor of Perspectives in History, 2014-2015*

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Immigration and Assimilation: The Jewish Quest for Identity in Early-Twentieth Century America

*Katie Cranford-Lackey*

The United States of America experienced a dramatic influx of immigrants in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Individuals from vastly different backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions flocked to the nation seeking opportunities for work. The United States was the embodiment of hope and freedom as well as political, religious, and personal autonomy. For many Jewish immigrants, the country provided refuge from the anti-Semitic laws of Europe. For oppressed foreigners, the United States promised “abundant opportunity for all without distinction to race or creed... America was a land of *freedom* and a land of *work*.”<sup>21</sup> The rhetoric of the American dream lured many across the Atlantic, but immigrants often faced a sobering reality. Relocation offered opportunity at a cost; it simultaneously caused a break with “Old World” traditions and Jewish piety. America, a predominantly Christian nation, was often unaccepting of foreign (specifically Jewish) traditions. Newly arrived Jews frequently unsubscribed from their faith in the process of assimilation. Fleeing the rampant anti-Semitism of their homeland, newcomers grappled with the customs of the U.S. and were forced to ask themselves what it meant to be Jewish in America. Assimilation often conflicted with “Old World” tradition and led to the “breaking of traditional bonds,” functioning as “a threat to religion.”<sup>22</sup> Once paramount in the “Old Country,” religion ceased to be a vital component in American society. Upon arrival in the United States, a Jewish immigrant was so “anxious to absorb the new that he broke with many of his old loyalties...more importantly...the new culture directly exerted a disintegrating effect upon the old.”<sup>23</sup> The de-emphasis of religion and tradition dually served as both a freeing experience for some and a form of isolation for others.

Several Jewish immigrants recorded their experience with immigration and assimilation. Authors such as Ludwig Lewisohn, Abraham Cahan, and Anzia Yezierska used fiction as an outlet to express the experience of adjusting to American culture and the effects this had on the Jewish community. Recording many of the trials faced by foreign Jews in the United States, the authors provided a unique perspective on coping with anti-Semitism. Through their protagonists, the writers gave a voice to the American Jewish community. The three novels explored persecution, loss of tradition, and search for identity. Similar themes were traced throughout each novel, yet Lewisohn, Cahan, and Yezierska made the message unique to their experiences. It is through their work that readers come to a deeper understanding of the authors and the immigrant Jewish experience in early-twentieth century America.

Ludwig Lewisohn's *The Island Within* echoed its author's anti-assimilation stance and encouraged American Jews to discover, accept, and take pride in their heritage. Abraham Cahan's *Yekl; A Tale of the New York Ghetto* illustrated the stark contrast between Eastern European immigrants and their interaction with Americanized Jews. His novel warned of the dangers of assimilation and its effect on the Jewish family unit and the community. Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* approached the conversation of assimilation with a more liberal stance. The writer valued the freedoms of America and recognized the wealth of opportunities women were granted in the "New World" verses the old. While not opposed to assimilation, Yezierska remained wary of straying too far from her roots. She concluded her novel by emphasizing the value of ancestral legacy, illustrating that one's roots illuminated a sense of self.

The authors' semi-autobiographical accounts of Jewish assimilation into American society revealed the staggering effects integration wrought upon the individual, the family unit, and the community. The three novels were a testament of the Jewish experience in America; each protagonist struggled with anti-Semitism, loss of tradition, and the search for identity. Using their characters, Lewisohn, Cahan, and Yezierska illustrated the many facets of Jewish identity and the complexity of reconciling Jewishness within pre-World War I American society.

Two notable waves of Jewish immigration occurred in the nineteenth century; the first beginning with Germanic migration in the mid-1800s. German Jewish relocation was spurred by the failure of the Napoleonic Wars and the economic instability that plagued Europe. Between 1815 and 1875, two million German-speaking immigrants migrated to the United States.<sup>4</sup> Jews in Germany could not participate in certain trades and were required to prove themselves part of a respectable profession in order to marry. The restrictive environment of Europe prompted many Jews to migrate across the Atlantic, specifically impoverished single men. Many families were unable to afford the cost of travel. Male kin were often the first to immigrate to America with the hopes of earning enough money to send for their loved ones.<sup>5</sup>

After the 1840s, the number of immigrants entering the United States grew rapidly as Jews became "the victims of revolutionary and post-revolutionary anti-Semitism, and often anti-Jewish violence."<sup>6</sup> Americans were not receptive to the large number of Semitic foreigners who were perceived as a "symbol of corruption" that would ultimately lead to the "decay of American values."<sup>7</sup> Non-Jewish German immigrants shared similar sentiments that Jews tainted the American experience. The Jewish immigrant was often portrayed as a "trickster and cheap-jack."<sup>8</sup> Due to the negative stereotype that accompanied Semitic immigrants, assimilation was vital in order to participate in society and to elevate themselves as respectable members of the community.

In order to immerse themselves in American society, Jewish bachelors often sought the courtship of Gentile women. These marriages frequently resulted in a loss of Jewish tradition, religion, and identity. It was common for the Jewish man to adopt his wife's Christian identity to further his acceptance into American culture and to provide opportunities for his children. The children of the marriage, raised in Christian tradition, thereby hoped to escape anti-Semitic prejudices. They either remained ignorant of, or chose not to affiliate with, their Jewish heritage. This allowed acceptance

into society but hindered self-understanding.

The Jewish faith community was endangered by American culture because it lacked a demographic cohesion, making it difficult to retain traditions. The lack of religious authority heightened the small semblance of religious structure Jews maintained after settling. Because of the lack of “structure, Jews in America were becoming more than nativized; they were becoming autotomized.”<sup>9</sup> The major challenge for German Jews was “preserv[ing] their historic group identity against the matrix of a wider Americanization.”<sup>10</sup>

The mass migration of East European Jews in the 1880s caused concern among newly settled German Jews. The assassination of Alexander II of Russia in 1881 resulted in pogroms, outbreaks of violence and vandalism perpetrated toward Jewish civilians. While anti-Tsarist revolutionaries were ultimately responsible for the assassination, Russians wrongly accused the Jewish population of involvement in the plot. Mayhem spread across the *Pale of Settlement*, the large Russian Jewish ghetto.<sup>11</sup> “Barefoot brigades,” violent mobs of the peasant class, pillaged, burned, and killed residents of the Jewish settlement.

A series of restrictive laws were passed limiting the rights of Semitic civilians. The German enactment of “May Laws” in 1882 forbade Jews to buy and sell land. Less than five years later, Jews were outlawed from taking part in medicine, law, and higher professional fields.<sup>12</sup> The new legislation reinforced the popular belief that “Jews were unworthy of these rights and had to earn them.”<sup>13</sup> Because of the new restrictive laws and the increasing violence against them, many Russian Jews immigrated to America. In spite of the Russian government’s unwillingness to issue exit visas for men of military age, women, and the elderly, over 170,000 East European Jews immigrated to America from 1881 to 1891.

Throughout the late 1800s, the “German-Jewish community in the United States consistently opposed the large-scale immigration of Russian Jews”.<sup>14</sup> In 1891 the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, based in New York City, declared that East European Jews were “unfit to assimilate with the population.”<sup>15</sup> The prevailing fear that East European Jews would negatively represent the American Jewish community spurred international dissonance. The negative reaction of nativized Jews to recently immigrated Eastern European Jews illustrated the importance of assimilation. To look, sound, and act un-American was dangerous because it not only posed a threat to the individual, but to the Jewish community at large. In an effort to refine and groom foreign Jews to appropriately represent the Jewish community in America, the *Jewish Messenger*, a nineteenth-century New York newspaper, proposed a solution. The paper suggested the dispatch of missionaries to the *Pale of Settlement* to “civilize the Russian Jews rather than have their backwardness ruin the American Jewish community.”<sup>16</sup>

The dissonance between the two Jewish ethnicities only intensified as “East European Jews...quickly evolved a pattern of Jewish life that scant resembled that of...German Jewish immigrants of the 1840’s and 1850’s.”<sup>17</sup> German Jews feared that they would be defined by the behavior of Eastern European Jews, potentially exacerbating American anti-Semitic attitudes. America’s disdain towards Semitic peoples deepened with the rise of immigration numbers. Many Gentiles regarded foreign Jews as

“‘degraded’ immigrants...responsible for crime, delinquency, drunkenness and pauperism.”<sup>18</sup>

Attempting to overcome prejudice, Jews worked difficult and low-paying jobs in order to create a home on foreign soil. Some rose out of poverty and attained wealth and success. To many Jewish immigrants, “money was not success; money was security...it built a home in a homeless world.”<sup>19</sup> Anti-Semitism often followed immigrants across the Atlantic, where Jews “had to achieve one hundred times what was normal in order to conquer a normal position.”<sup>20</sup> America offered certain freedoms to Jews, but prejudice remained a day-to-day challenge.

Ludwig Lewisohn’s *The Island Within* depicted the struggle to understand one’s identity, the importance of tradition, and the relationship between marriage and faith. The work was semi-autobiographical, revealing Lewisohn’s personal struggle with relationships. He was married three times and was allegedly involved in a homosexual affair. The instability of his personal life strongly influenced his writing.

Emigrating from Germany in 1890, Lewisohn’s parents converted to Christianity upon their arrival in the United States. Despite his conversion, Lewisohn endured anti-Semitic abuse from college peers during his doctorate education at Columbia University. Despite his involvement in the Methodist Church, Lewisohn was discouraged from teaching English to college students because of his Semitic background. Unable to escape his Jewish roots, Lewisohn embraced Judaism and became an outspoken critic of American Jewish assimilation and deeply committed to rediscovering his Jewish lineage. The plot of his novel, *The Island Within*, revolved around the protagonist, Arthur Levy, and the rediscovery of his forgotten Jewish past. <sup>21</sup> Arthur attained fulfillment and happiness only when he embraced his Jewish ancestry at the conclusion of the book.

Lewisohn introduced the Levy family and four succeeding generations, focusing on a specific individual from each generation. Through his characters, the author illustrated the complexity of assimilation, while simultaneously observing tradition. The novel begins with Reb Mendel, his wife Braine, and their two children. The family grappled with relocation from their home in Russia to the ghetto of Vilna, Poland after an uprising in 1830. Despite Talmudic school education, Reb Mendel lacked enthusiasm for the customs of Judaism; there was “no glow in his study and no fervor in his prayers.”<sup>22</sup> Into adulthood, he recognized that certain repressive Jewish customs and traditions hindered not only his own potential, but that of the community as well.

Braine, a foil character to her husband, thrived only when embracing the religious traditions of her ancestors, and attempted to instill the religious customs of her past in her son, Efraim. Reaching adulthood, Efraim chose not to embrace the Jewish traditions of his forefathers, and instead, he sought a more secular lifestyle. He had “his earlocks clipped off, discarded his *caftan*, the long coat of the orthodox,” and changed the family name to Levy. Efraim moved his wife and children to Germany, where they discarded the traditional Yiddish language for the more socially accepted German tongue. The newly established Levy family continued to observe the Sabbath, yet the reader noted a “laxness and tinge of compromise” replacing the once rigorous religious observance.<sup>23</sup>

After relocating his family to Germany, Efraim continued to distance both himself



and his family from their Jewish roots, yet they were still subject to anti-Semitism. Efraim's tacit acceptance of his status as a perpetual outcast was intolerable to his son Jacob. Frustrated with the discrimination that was synonymous with his past, Jacob immigrated to the United States in order to secure a more tolerant future for himself and his posterity.

Jacob's immigration across the Atlantic did not necessarily protect him and his family from religious persecution. His children were presented with the new challenge of navigating the obscure world between Jew and Gentile. Jacob's daughter Hazel developed a pronounced "Jew inferiority complex...the only people whom she dared to despise were her own people."<sup>24</sup> Shunned from the Gentile community due to her Semitic roots, Hazel was resistant to associate with other Jews, leaving her isolated and longing for acceptance.

Openly identifying as a Jew in America, even as late as the early-to-mid-twentieth century, was dangerous. Physical safety and job security often depended on a Jew's anonymity. Recognizing her Jewishness to be disadvantageous, Hazel developed an abhorrence of her ancestry, faith, and ultimately self, leading to friction with her spouse. On the brink of divorce, Hazel reconciled with her Jewishness and reluctantly agreed to interact with the Jewish community. The disintegration of Hazel's marriage over faith was strongly reminiscent of Reb Mendel and Braine (Hazel's great-grandparents), and the dissonance that developed in the relationship due to varying levels of devotion to Judaism. Marriage and self-identity intertwined in Lewisohn's novel, the one dependent upon the other. When husband and wife were not unified and confident in their Jewishness, Lewisohn depicted the relationship in disarray.

Jacob's son Arthur stood in sharp contrast to his sister. He shared none of Hazel's revulsion to their Semitic background and was instead apathetic. Arthur identified his Jewishness as an irrational burden, but ultimately lacked understanding of both his people and his faith. Both Hazel and Arthur were unaware of the sacrifices their ancestors made to spare their children from anti-Semitism. The religious fervor once present in the family dwindled to a minimal understanding of the faith and culture. Aware that he was Jewish, Arthur only associated his ethnicity with negativity.

Mild anti-Semitism haunted Arthur, but Judaism played a minimal role in his daily life. His ancestry did not interfere with his marriage to a Protestant woman, until one of Arthur's distant relatives made contact with him. It was when Arthur invited his distant kin to his home that his wife truly comprehended Arthur's Jewishness. She began to identify Arthur's Semitic roots as "something infinitely alien and dangerous and rancor."<sup>25</sup>

Arthur's reunification with his faith occurred when he came into possession of an old family heirloom belonging to his great-grandmother, Braine. The heirloom, a chest containing marriage documents and family accounts of the crusades, symbolized the power of ancestral memory. The chest left the family's possession early in the novel, followed by succeeding generations of wayward Jews, detached from their roots. The heirloom symbolized the powerful role of memory in shaping identity and the redemptive experience of reunification with one's heritage.

Ludwig Lewisohn used fiction as a template to express the tribulation of living as a Jew in a foreign, predominately Christian, country. The characters of *The Island Within*

navigated through the challenge of reconciling their faith, traditions, and self-identity through the assimilation process. Lewisohn was empathetic to Jews seeking to assimilate. He warned, however, of the impossibility of full integration into the Gentile community. His novel served as a testament to immigrant Jews in the midst of rising xenophobia. While assimilation might be ideal, acceptance of self was most essential.

Perhaps more so than Ludwig Lewisohn, Jewish writer Abraham Cahan dedicated his work to exploring the effects assimilation wrought upon Jewish immigrants. Born in a *shtetl* in modern day Lithuania in 1860, Cahan immigrated to the United States in 1881 and became an editor and writer. He ran a successful Yiddish newspaper, the *Jewish Daily Forward*, from 1903 until 1946. Much of his work focused on Jewish life in the ghetto, inspired by his early childhood in the *shtetl*. Through his writing, Cahan expressed his “lingering love for the uniqueness of his people’s traditions.”<sup>26</sup> His prose was both eloquent and unique, due in part to his use of English and Yiddish phrasing. Abraham Cahan dedicated his personal and professional career to communicating the “real human emotions and dilemmas” that “transcend time, place, and religion.”<sup>27</sup>

Cahan’s *Yekl; A Tale of the New York Ghetto* juxtaposed Americanized Jews to newly arrived Eastern European “greenhorn” Jews. The influence of assimilation on self-identity was a reappearing theme throughout the novel. Yekl, a Russian Jew, immigrated to America and experienced a transformation of religious and ethnic self-categorization. The ambiguity surrounding the concept of “identity” was a central theme in Cahan’s work. According to Jewish scholars Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, group identity had two facets, which were seen “on the one hand as the product of a common genealogical origin and, on the other, as produced by a common geographical origin.”<sup>28</sup> Jewishness defies this logic as “it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these dialectical tensions with one another.”<sup>29</sup> Like many Jews in America, Cahan’s characters grappled with juxtaposing different factors of self-identification into a unified category. In order to establish what it meant to be Jewish, factors such as religion, race, and ethnicity had to be considered.

Cahan’s protagonist, Yekl, personified the conflicted Eastern European Jew, struggling to identify his “sense of self” amidst a foreign Christian population. *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, by Jewish historian Eric Goldstein, addressed the ambiguity of Jewish categorization in larger society. Goldstein noted that “the question of whether Jews ought to fashion themselves as a race or merely a religious denomination became one of the most hotly debated issues of early-twentieth century Jewish communal discourse.”<sup>30</sup> Aware of the obscure role the Jew played in American society, Cahan brought this theme to the forefront of his novel.

In the opening chapter, the author introduced Yekl, a newly arrived Jewish immigrant from Russia. Yekl left his wife and infant son to find work in a land of opportunity, eventually planning to send for his family. His optimistic belief that, in America, “a Jew [was] as good as a Gentile,” quickly proved false.<sup>31</sup> Yekl westernized his name to Jake, learned the English language, and only partook in American pastimes, such as baseball. He found work at a cloak shop and seamlessly transitioned into his new surroundings, breaking ties with Jewish co-workers who continued to observe religious and ethnic traditions.

Jake not only assimilated, he also rejected any affiliation with the Jewish community.

The notion of his once orthodox observance brought “a smile of patronizing commiseration for his former self.”<sup>332</sup> Once assimilated into American culture, Jake rarely thought about his family; his life in Russia “appeared to him a dream and his wife and child... fellow characters in a charming tale” which he was unable “to reconcile with the actualities of his American present.”<sup>333</sup> He squandered the money saved for his family’s fare to the United States at the local dance club, where he enjoyed the company of multiple women. More than autonomy, America seemed to offer temptations that contradicted Jewish religious observance. Wavering between maintaining cultural tradition or societal acceptance, Jake valued integration over retaining ethnic and religious identity. His intrinsic fear of being identified as abnormal led him to discard an essential part of himself; his Jewishness.

Jake sustained his profligate lifestyle for three years until he was able to finance his family’s relocation. His reunion with his wife and son was marred by Jake’s frustration at their foreign and un-American appearance. He was horrified to greet his wife, Gitl, “slovenly dressed in a brown jacket and skirt of grotesque cut...her hair was concealed under a voluminous wig of a pitch-black hue.”<sup>334</sup> Not only was Gitl disheveled, Jake compared “her resemblance to a squaw.”<sup>335</sup> During Cahan’s lifetime, the Native American presence in the United States was viewed as a hindrance to American progress. Native Americans resisted Manifest Destiny, the supposed divine right of Americans to spread across the continent. The author emphasized Gitl’s “un-Americanness” by comparing her to the savage Indian, perhaps the most “un-American” figure in national rhetoric.

Navigating racial discourse during the latter half of the nineteenth century and early-twentieth century was a difficult feat for many Jews. Gentile Americans often found it difficult to create a consistent categorization for Jews. As America struggled to understand how Jews correlated with the rest of society, a “wrenching dilemma for Jews was the struggle they faced over their own racial self-identification.”<sup>336</sup> Gitl was portrayed as darker skinned and likened to a Native American. Her portrayal as native-like communicated that Jews, like the Native Americans, were impeding American progress.

Upon greeting his wife, Jake was incapable of false affection and “averted his face, as if loath to rest his eyes on her.”<sup>337</sup> He regarded his wife and son with abhorrence and fear. Jake’s association with those from the “old country,” including his family, hindered his ability to assimilate. His family embodied that which he was trying to escape. Jake’s identity as a Jew had social connotations when understood in reference to an opposing identity. Cahan introduced Gitl as a foil character to denote the drastic change taking place in Jake’s character. Through the male and female protagonists, the author illustrated the dissonance that existed between westernized Jews and Eastern European Jews.

Gitl continued to observe her orthodox faith even after arriving in America. In contrast, Jake no longer desired the traditional Jewish lifestyle of religious observance, nor did he relish his role as husband, father, and provider for his family. Jake longed for the days before Gitl’s arrival, when he was free to entertain exotic and intriguing women. American girls offered excitement, adventure, and acceptance into society, the antithesis of Gitl’s character. Sensing she was slowly losing her husband, Gitl

watched helplessly as “her own Yekl and Jake the stranger...merge[d] themselves into one undivided being.”<sup>38</sup>

Appalled by his wife’s foreignness and strict adherence to tradition, Jake continued his courtship with other women. Gitl’s “unattractive appearance” made Jake “sick with shame and vexation.”<sup>39</sup> Unable to overcome his repulsion, Jake divorced his wife for a young woman he met at the dance hall. Jake impatiently remarried within an hour of his separation, hoping his new wife would prove the “embodiment of his future happiness.”<sup>40</sup> Jake reveled in Gitl’s grief at the separation, his insatiable hunger for acceptance created a deep hostility towards his former wife. Had Jake witnessed Gitl’s “paroxysm of anguish” at the divorce proceedings, “his heart would perhaps have swelled with a sense of triumph.”<sup>41</sup>

As Jake took his vows to his new wife, thoughts of Gitl festered. Despite his newly established marital commitment to his Gentile wife, Jake fantasized about returning to Gitl and fulfilling his role as head of the household. The happiness and fulfillment he sought from his divorce never materialized; instead Jake was left more confused. The further he drifted from religion, tradition, and his family, the less content he became. Cahan cautioned that while assimilation provided autonomy and acceptance, it came at a price. Through his integration with society, Jake lost his traditions, his family, and ultimately himself.

In his novel *Yekl; A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, Abraham Cahan remained dedicated to portraying the tragically accurate reality of Jewish life in America. Known for modifying the “convention of happy endings,” the author created characters to impart caution concerning the price of assimilation.<sup>42</sup> The unfortunate Yekl, like many of his nonfiction counterparts, learned the ultimate lesson that “Americanization [did] not merely involve gain but also loss.”<sup>43</sup>

Writers Ludwig Lewisohn and Abraham Cahan were wary of assimilation and its effects on the Jewish community. Writing in the same time period, novelist Anzia Yeziarska provided unique insight into the freedom afforded by autonomy, specifically to women. Yeziarska was born in a *shtetl* in Poland around 1880. The details of her early life are obscure. Her first novel, *Hungry Hearts*, described life in an Eastern European village, a possible reflection of her own experience. Yeziarska and her family immigrated to the United States in 1890 and adopted the surname Mayer. Yeziarska became known as Hattie Mayer until she readopted her traditional name later in life.

Too young for factory work, Yeziarska received a brief education at the local public school. Her mother and sisters worked long hours to support the family, while her father, “a Hebrew scholar and dreamer” was “always too much up in the air to come down to such sordid thoughts as bread and rent.”<sup>44</sup> When she was old enough, Yeziarska began working twelve-hour days in a button factory. The young Jewish immigrant turned to writing in order to escape the overbearing environment of the sweatshop and the gloominess of life on New York’s Lower East Side.

Craving more than married life and motherhood, Yeziarska sought further education by attending night school to prepare for college. Working days and attending school at night, the young writer, “against her father’s wishes, withheld her wages...to pay for a year at the New York City Normal College.”<sup>45</sup> Yeziarska valued the opportunity for advancement afforded to women in America. Her appreciation for autonomy and

self-improvement clashed with the expectations of her family, and the seventeen-year-old chose to leave home “in 1899, when a decent Jewish girl didn’t leave their family except to marry.”<sup>246</sup>

Yeziarska turned to writing as an outlet to share her troubles. The author created characters who faced obstacles similar to her own. Her novel, *Bread Givers*, introduced heroine Sara Smolinsky, a young Polish immigrant struggling to escape New York’s Lower East Side. Sara, like Yeziarska, tolerated the religious traditions of her parents during her early years. Into adulthood, Sara recognized the absurdity of her father’s lifestyle and refused to enable his irresponsible behavior. The young Polish immigrant set out on her own to pursue her aspiration to attain a college education.

Living with her parents and three older sisters in New York, the capital of Jewish America, Sara’s life was “a constant battle against bugs, dirt, and poverty.”<sup>247</sup> The author described a religious and aloof Reb Smolinsky; his study of the Torah trumped any realistic need to provide food or shelter for his family. As the only male in the family, Reb Smolinsky, knew it was his duty to devote himself to the study of the Torah, as the prayers “of his daughters didn’t count because God didn’t listen to women.”<sup>248</sup> With the head of the household preoccupied, the Smolinsky women bore the responsibility of earning a wage.

In his self-righteousness, Reb Smolinsky was blinded to the sacrifice made by his wife and daughters. Smolinsky condescendingly dismissed their efforts, claiming “women had no brains for the study of God’s Torah, but they could be the servants of men.”<sup>249</sup> Reb Smolinsky’s religious zeal served as a burden to Sara, her mother, and sisters, as he did not contribute financially to the family. He did, however, require “not only the best room...for study and prayers, but also the best eating in the house.”<sup>250</sup> Sara’s father did not earn a wage, yet he had ultimate authority on how the family’s money was spent.

Sara’s mother claimed her husband was “the light of the world...a man innocent as a child and harmless as an angel.”<sup>251</sup> Enduring her father’s harsh criticism and indolent lifestyle, Sara became overwhelmed by the indignity of her situation. Unable to “respect a man who live[d] on the blood of his wife and children,” Sara left home to start a life of her own.<sup>252</sup>

Yeziarska depicted the repressive nature of religious tradition and its negative impact on immigrant families in America. The author’s realistic and semi-autobiographical account illuminated the plight of the Jewish woman indentured to her husband. Yeziarska crafted strong, fearless female characters who were forced to take on the harsh realities of life in a New York slum. If the father chose to devote his time to spirituality, the burden of the financial responsibility was left with his wife and children.

With her father preoccupied with study of the Torah, Sara accepted work in a factory over pursuing higher education in order to assist her impoverished parents. Oblivious to his daughter’s sacrifice, Reb Smolinsky taught his daughters that a woman’s highest aspiration should be to serve her father and husband. Faced with the dilemma of financially providing for her parents or pursuing her own happiness, Sara chose her independence. Powerless to control her destiny, Sara was driven away from her family by their overzealous commitment to tradition.

After Sara’s emancipation, she struggled to negotiate her place in society. As a

young, single Jewish woman, Sara encountered many impediments in her journey to escape the “dirt and congestions of the tenement...and break out of the ghetto.”<sup>53</sup> Earning less than enough to survive, Sara worked as an ironer during the day and attended school at night. Perpetually cold and hungry, the determined young woman was tempted to forgo her ambition for a college education when she fell in love with businessman Max Goldstein. Her love interest encouraged her to quit school, claiming that money made “the wheels go round.”<sup>54</sup> Sara was tempted to trade her grueling routine for the lavish lifestyle Goldstein promised. However, having sacrificed much for her education, Sara was unwilling to compromise her dreams and declined his marriage proposal. Accustomed to wealth, Goldstein valued possessions over knowledge, “to him, a wife would only be another piece of property.”<sup>55</sup> Valuing her independence, Sara rejected affluence in exchange for autonomy.

Always at odds with her father, Sara sought his comfort after she ended her tryst. Sara felt “such a great need for him and his wiser-than-the-world kind of wisdom,” that she visited her father after years of estrangement.<sup>56</sup> Upon relaying her troubles, Sara was berated by Reb Smolinsky for refusing Goldstein’s proposal. Her father reminded her that “a woman’s highest happiness [was] to be a man’s wife.”<sup>57</sup> Accustomed to her father’s antiquated view of gender roles, Sara accepted his stubbornness and inability to change. Looking to her father for solace and finding criticism, Sara knew he “could never understand. He was the Old World. [She] was the New.”<sup>58</sup>

Anzia Yeziarska allowed the reader a glimpse into her soul as she poured her tribulations onto the page. The author rebelled against orthodox parents, suffered crippling poverty to afford a college education, and lost love in her quest for independence. She, and her robust female characters, once victims of “strong community sanctions and religious edicts” of the “Old Country”, experienced redemption through integration.<sup>59</sup> American liberalism provided an escape to Jewish women indentured to orthodox men. To attain autonomy, Jewish women often had to separate themselves from the traditions of the old world and readily accept a new cultural identity. Yeziarska did not deny the dangers of assimilation, but she suggested that independence and freedom from male oppression was worth the price.

Despite the liberties of a secular, Americanized lifestyle, Yeziarska acknowledged “that her roots would always lie in the old world.”<sup>60</sup> The author’s connection to her Jewish past was inescapable, as her family’s observance of orthodox traditions and Eastern European customs had a profound impact on her development. Yeziarska’s childhood experience remained relevant in the context of her maturation. In her pursuit to escape a Jewish ghetto of New York City, Anzia Yeziarska overcame patriarchy and poverty in her search for knowledge. Whether because of, or in spite of, her Semitic heritage, Anzia Yeziarska found her voice through her hardships and brought recognition to the plight of the immigrant Jewish community in America.

Through their novels, authors Ludwig Lewisohn, Abraham Cahan, and Anzia Yeziarska provided semi-autobiographical accounts of their immigrant and assimilation experiences in American culture. Struggling with questions of identity, each was conflicted with how they defined themselves in relation to the larger Jewish community. In a society that marginalized them as Jews, these individuals struggled to navigate their own perceptions of what it meant to be Jewish in America.

Ludwig Lewisohn's *The Island Within* denoted the importance of the past in understanding identity and purpose. Self-fulfilment was directly linked to ancestral memory; without the traditions and culture of their forefathers, Lewisohn's characters became apathetic to their Semitic roots. The author emphasized the value of the family unit and marital stability in passing on Jewish tradition. The most outspoken of the authors on the matter of assimilation, Lewisohn endured anti-Semitism from his colleagues despite his adolescent conversion to Christianity. His novel was a cautionary tale. Jewishness was much more than a religious identification, it was racial and cultural, an inescapable truth that should be embraced.

Ludwig Lewisohn's *The Island Within* ended with redemption for the protagonist. In contrast, Abraham Cahan concluded *Yekl; A Tale of the New York Ghetto*, with an ambiguous ending. Jake did not experience an epiphany; instead he continued to elude the essential Jewishness within himself. Cahan's novel emphasized the early-twentieth century societal expectations that immigrants must conform. For some Jews, the decision to separate from tradition was simple because America offered temptations not accessible in the "Old World." For others, integrating foreign customs and traditions into American society proved difficult, if not impossible. Cahan created foil characters to emphasize the division between assimilated Jews and newly immigrated Jews. The author challenged the reader to consider the advantages and disadvantages inherent in assimilation, prompting the question of whether disassociation with part of one's identity was worth the price of acceptance.

Writers Lewisohn and Cahan, both outspoken against societal conformity, identified religious tradition as a primary component in the search for Jewish identity. Anzia Yezierska's *Bread Givers* is less concerned with assimilation and more focused on the effect the "Old World" held on immigrant Jews. The author depicted a family of female characters living under the tyranny of patriarchal oppression and antiquated orthodox traditions. Writing from experience, the author illustrated the stifling effect religious law had on immigrant women. America offered autonomy and the opportunity for education; an option not available to Jewish women in the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe. With time and maturity, Yezierska reconciled her newfound independence with her Eastern European roots. Her novel concluded that while assimilation offered opportunity, heritage was key to self-understanding. It was the anchor that kept the soul from endless wander.

Lewisohn, Cahan, and Yezierska explored the many facets of Jewish immigration and assimilation in American society in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. They vividly described the aspects of assimilation most relevant to their personal experiences. Lewisohn examined the role of the family unit in evaluating self-identity, concluding that familial ties were imperative to self-conceptualization. Cahan wrote about the dichotomy between newly arrived and already assimilated Jews and the process of reconciling the changing nature of the Jewish community. Yezierska focused on the more freeing aspects of assimilation and the advantages Jewish women often found in the "New World." Using their characters, Ludwig Lewisohn, Abraham Cahan, and Anzia Yezierska revealed their personal struggles with assimilation and the realization that their Jewish identity was not just a religious belief, but also a personal, cultural, and communal identity.

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## **Reluctant Assistance: Israel's Complex History and Relationship in Dealing with Sudanese and Eritrean Asylum Seekers Arriving from a War-Torn Africa**

*Jonathan Eizyk*

Located between the Mediterranean Sea on one side and a host of hostile nations on its other borders, Israel has nevertheless traditionally served as the primary bastion of relative stability and democracy in the region. Its history as a nation has been a short, yet tumultuous one; spanning little more than 65 years, and encompassing half a dozen wars and countless terror attacks. Its primary goal as a nation, therefore, has always been its continual survival and the survival of its relatively small population of approximately 8 million people; locked in an area of land encompassing only a mere 20,770 square kilometers.<sup>1</sup>

Set up as a Jewish nation only a few years after the end of the Second World War, the State of Israel acted largely as a stopping ground for much of the world's Jewish refugees. Most of these refugees originated as a direct result of the mass destruction of Europe following the Second World War; survivors of a brutal six-year long struggle, as well as a vicious holocaust which claimed the lives of over 6 million Jews. Years later, following the creation of the State of Israel, and after a number of successive wars in which Israel was forced into conflict against its Arab neighbors, the State of Israel saw the added inclusion of Jews escaping from nearby Muslim countries; places such as Iran, Iraq, and the Levant; as well as from a host of countries located in North Africa and the Arabian Gulf. Decades later, after the end of the Cold War, Israel saw the further inclusion of Jews arriving from Russia and the surrounding Slavic territories, as well as impoverished Jewish populations arriving from Ethiopia. It was under these circumstances then, that the modern demographics of Israel began to take on their current form; composing a current population of many different cultures, peoples, backgrounds and even languages.

Adding to this small and relatively compressed melting-pot has always been a number of non-Jewish nationals; of which, include a population of roughly 1.6 million non-Jewish Arabs (of both Muslim and Christian background), and which account for roughly 20% of the total population.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, over the past few decades Israel has seen the growing arrival of a number other foreign nationals; legally immigrating from Thailand and the Philippines, and which come for the purpose of finding work as cheap and temporary labor in the agricultural sector, or as caretakers for the elderly. In short, it can be assessed that Israel is no stranger to refugees, and it can even be said that the country was built largely for, and largely by refugees. In

fact, over the course of its relatively short history, approximately three million Jews (or roughly 50% of the total current Jewish population) have come into the country as refugees, between the years of 1948 and 2000.<sup>3</sup>

Serving as a lone example of democracy in the region, the country of Israel, though traditionally open to legal immigrants and foreign workers, is not completely immune from the entry of immigrants trying to enter the country by less than legal means. Indeed, it can be seen that over the last decade, Israel has increasingly been subject to the entry of immigrants entering illegally and in ever increasing numbers, the majority of which are comprised of African nationals from desperate and war-torn areas such as Southern and Western Sudan (Darfur), and Eritrea. Unlike Israel's traditional immigrant base however, these immigrants have faced numerous hardships and hurdles, especially in the process of trying to be registered as refugees. This paper seeks to expose the issue of these African asylum seekers; the reasons for their immigration and their hardships in doing so, the socio-political factors involved, and Israel's (often controversial) response to these issues at hand.

To thoroughly begin to understand Israel's current situation with the African asylum seekers that manage to enter illegally into the country, one must first get an understanding as to who these immigrants are, and why it is that they are choosing to flee their native lands. Of the approximate 55,000 current asylum seekers residing in Israel (as of October, 2013), roughly 36,000, or approximately 67% are of Eritrean nationality. The remaining 18,000 immigrants are subsequently broken down, with the majority (some 13,000 individuals) originating from Sudan, and a further 5,000 originating from other parts of Central and Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> Those arriving from Sudan can furthermore be classified into three distinct groups: refugees arriving from Northern and Central Sudan, refugees arriving from the Darfur region (Western Sudan), and refugees arriving from what is currently considered South Sudan.

In regards to the African asylum seekers currently originating from Eritrea, the reasons for leaving their country are varied, but include the search for better employment opportunities, escaping general regional violence, and also migrating from areas which have been affected by strong natural disasters such as prolonged drought. Eritrea, according to a report published in 2014 by the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society, has "...one of the most repressive regimes in the world: some religions are illegal, military service can be endless in abusive conditions, including female soldiers having to submit to whatever demands are made of them by their male officers, including sexual favors. Those who express any objection to government practices risk incarceration, torture, and death."<sup>5</sup> These issues, therefore, have largely been seen as the primary push factors that have worked to force Eritrean nationals into leaving their country, in order to seek new and more stable areas of settlement.

Standing in slightly more grim contrast to the experiences faced by the Eritrean migrants, is the situation faced by Sudanese asylum seekers fleeing into Israel. When examining the experiences of these Sudanese nationals and their reasons for leaving their native homelands, the overall push factors faced by these peoples, while in many ways similar to their Eritrean counterparts (ways such as the search for work opportunities and better living conditions), are more driven as a result of a series of horrific and recent man-made disasters. These disasters include, but are by no means limited to a

prolonged regional civil war, wide-spread acts of rape and sexual exploitation throughout the country, and even mass genocide.

Since the year 1956, which saw the creation of Sudan as an independent country from England (its former colonizer), the country has barely seen more than a decade of peace. Years of growing political and social instability finally came to a head in the early 1980's, breaking out in a long-lasting civil war that ended only with the recent signing of a peace agreement in 2005. This drawn-out civil war has led to the combined deaths of over two million people in Western and Southern Sudan, and has prompted as a result, a large scale displacement of many Sudanese civilians from their traditional areas of residence. The situation has gotten so bad in recent times, that many of these migrants have subsequently gone so far as to flee Sudan altogether; opting instead to leave everything behind and flee into neighboring countries; countries, such as Egypt, Ethiopia, and most recently, Israel.<sup>6</sup>

According to a report published by an NGO known as the Southern Sudanese Voice for Freedom (published in 2009), Sudanese refugees "...first started arriving in large numbers in Egypt in the 1990s because of the North-South civil war. They continued to come in response to Sudan's overall instability and violence, raging in the western region of Darfur, which since 2003 has produced a genocide killing 300,000 people and displacing up to 2.5 million."<sup>7</sup> Following these actions, and beginning in January 2004, Egypt and Sudan have consequently worked to sign a bilateral "Four Freedoms Agreement", which effectively granted citizens from both countries the freedom of residence, freedom of movement, freedom to acquire property, and freedom to work in either country. However, while this series of events may look good on paper, in practice, it has had very little tangible success. The failure of this treaty seems to reside largely with the Egyptians, who, overall, have repeatedly failed to uphold their part of the deal; opting instead to largely ignore the basis of the treaty and treating incoming Sudanese refugees with suspicion, disdain, and increased hostility.

Following the passing of this Egyptian brokered treaty, many Sudanese asylum seekers initially traveled north; heading straight to Cairo, where they settled and registered with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) in order to openly apply for refugee status. However, even with the attainment of a formal status as refugees, aid was remarkably slow in coming from the heavily reluctant Egyptian government. Many Sudanese refugees complained of a lack of monetary assistance, lack of adequate housing, and lack of employment opportunities. Frustration eventually turned to protest, and in 2005, Egypt saw the beginnings of the first organized protests and sit-ins by these refugees. These demonstrations would last a total of three months, at the end of which, Egypt began a brutal crackdown on any and all dissidents. By the end of the crackdowns by Egyptian police, 28 refugees and asylum seekers would be dead, and hundreds more detained and imprisoned.<sup>8</sup> This, then, has been a second issue exposed as to the reasons in which refugees and asylum seekers began looking towards Israel as a new safe haven. Only Israel, with its stable and Democratic government, seemed to be able to assure them a life of relative stability, free from the hardships and persecution they had previously faced.

The decision by Sudanese and Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers to head to Israel was not an easy one, as Israel is located roughly 400 miles north of Cairo, and

more than 1500 miles north of Sudan and Eritrea. It would therefore be a long and arduous journey for any immigrant thinking of reaching Israel. It would also be a journey largely characterized by danger; whether from the brutal desert environment that these asylum seekers were prepared to cross, the dangers of being kidnapped and held for ransom by hostile Bedouin tribes, or even the dangers of being caught and sent back to their native lands. Worse yet, was the possibility of completing the arduous journey, only to be shot at and killed by the Egyptian border guards stationed on the Egyptian-Israeli border, just a few precious yards away from freedom.

Since the year 2005, when growing numbers of African refugees and asylum seekers began crossing into Israel from Egypt, it is estimated that approximately 4,000 of these refugees unfortunately did not survive the journey. The number one reason found for the cause of deaths among these asylum seekers is due to kidnapping, exploitation, and a combination of sexual and physical abuse at the hands of the many hostile Bedouin tribes residing in Northern Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. According to a recent report published by the Hotline for Migrant Workers, "...the number of torture survivors among the newcomers to Israel has grown during 2012. Currently, based on the NGOs statistics, about 5,000 to 7,000 torture survivors currently reside in Israel."<sup>9</sup> The report further found that of these torture victims, the majority were Eritrean; 60% of the survivors were women; more than half of the women reported being raped or sexually assaulted by their captors, and the average time that these asylum seekers were being held was approximately 140 days. Furthermore, testimonies of over 1,300 survivors recorded between 2010 and 2012 revealed that "41% paid between \$4,000 and \$40,000 in ransom fees; 37% witnessed injury or death of other asylum seekers while in the Sinai; 58.9% suffered from severe food deprivation; 53.2% suffered from denial of access to water, and a further 6% faced extremely cruel torture by means of being electrocuted, branding with metal hooks, or hung by their legs for prolonged periods of time."<sup>10</sup>

Even with those fortunate enough to avoid capture and torture by the Bedouin tribes, the dangers were not over. Once at the border of Israel, the asylum seekers would face further difficulties in actually crossing the border. "Before entering Israel, refugees risk being shot by the Egyptian Army, which has been ordered to shoot on sight. Later, for those who succeed entering Israel, refugees too risk being shot, mistreated and detained by the Israeli Army. In violation of basic international law rules, many refugees are, instead, pushed back into Egypt, where they face detention or deportation back to Sudan"<sup>11</sup>

Israel's stance in dealing with these growing numbers of African asylum seekers attempting to enter the country has been a mixed and often controversial one. At first, Israel appeared to be understanding and even sympathetic to these immigrants. Before 2005, when the number of African immigrants inside the country was still relatively low, both government and public opinion were in mutual support of granting them aid and full refugee status. Originally, "When an asylum seeker was recognized as a refugee, the State of Israel generally granted him temporary residence for a period of one year, extending it from time to time."<sup>12</sup> It was during these early years that newly arrived asylum seekers were even granted with work permits. Some, more fortunate, would even be granted the additional opportunity to reside in one of Israel's

many small agricultural communities – known as kibbutzim. This early period of leniency, however, would not last long. After 2005, with the ever increasing numbers of refugees pouring into the country, a schism began to grow between people in the Israeli government and society as a whole as to what should be done.

The concept of refugees is one which strikes at the very heart of Israeli society. It can be said, quite honestly, that because of their long and tumultuous history, Jews – perhaps more than any other people – can relate to the trials and tribulations that come as a result of being refugees. Having built their nation largely as a result of being asylum seekers refugees for the last two millennia, Israel now found itself torn on the issue of dealing with these asylum seekers and refugees constantly arriving from Africa. Two main problems, however, began to arise and stand in the way of Israel in continuing to grant these asylum seekers with continued aid and support. These two problems can be summed up as follows: Firstly, Eritrea and Sudan currently share no formal diplomatic relations with Israel. Secondly, the issue of African refugees forces Israel to examine its own treatment of the Palestinian refugee crisis, and the broader issue of disputed land.

To begin to understand the shaky history of relations between Israel, Sudan, and Eritrea, one must first understand that demographically, both Eritrea and Sudan are countries with predominantly Muslim populations. It was largely in part because of this fact, that following the Six-Days War (in which Israel was brought into direct conflict against its Arab neighbors) both Eritrea and Sudan formally declared war on Israel and have been on hostile terms ever since. As a result, Israel has been forced to view relations with these countries as part of the greater ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict. Additionally, because these countries are on hostile terms with each other, the citizens of these countries are legally barred by their governments from visiting or entering the other countries. Any citizen caught trying to leave Sudan or Eritrea for Israel, for example, is branded a traitor to his own country, and as a result, are subsequently subjected to punishment of either imprisonment, torture, or even death. Israel, for its part, has also begun to treat anyone suspected of originating from these North African countries rather harshly.<sup>13</sup> As early as 2006, “...the ‘Prevention of Infiltration Law’ from 1954 was increasingly applied in asylum cases. Originally intended to prevent unauthorized arrivals from Israel’s neighboring states, this law opened up for up to five to seven years of imprisonment for so-called infiltrators, a category that now had come to encompass asylum seekers and recognized refugees entering from Egypt.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, because the Sudanese and Eritrean asylum seekers entered Israel via Egypt, they could now legally be detained as infiltrators and held incommunicado in detention centers or army bases located near the border, where they would be forced to stay. It was in this way, that Israel was then able to effectively avoid in dealing with the refugees under the terms it had previously agreed on with its signing of the 1951 Refugee Convention.<sup>15</sup>

Israeli society as a whole has also come to shift sides on the growing refugee problem. After 2006, and in response to their ever-growing numbers, African immigrants, both from Sudan as well as Eritrea, were increasingly seen as security risks, and therefore potentially harmful to the State and its citizens. Starting in March, 2008, the Israeli government “implemented a new policy that severely limited the abilities of

asylum seekers to seek employment and access aid services: the Hadera–Gadera provision. Israeli authorities insisted that, in order to be released from detention, asylum seekers would have to sign a document that would disqualify them from living and working central Israel, which is also the commercial and urban heartland of the country and includes Tel Aviv and surroundings. The area was defined as south of Hadera and north of Gadera.<sup>16</sup> Starting with this law, any company found hiring illegal immigrants could be heavily fined, and its owners held legally accountable under the law. As a result, lower level jobs in which Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers were heavily dependent upon were becoming increasingly hard to find. These harsh laws were initially meant to serve as a deterrent to any refugee looking to cross into Israel for the sake of work opportunities, but had the adverse effect of resulting in increased levels of unemployment and crime rates among these illegal immigrants. Although data recently published by the Knesset Research and Information Center has shown that “the rate of criminal files opened for African nationals in Israel is relatively lower than the rate of criminal files opened among the general Israeli population”, the perception amongst increasingly larger sections of Israeli society is that these immigrants are highly prone to crime and illegal activities.<sup>17</sup>

As well as through laws and policies, the Israeli government has recently taken strides in trying to curtail illegal immigration by stepping up efforts in building up the border between Israel and Egypt. Whereas before, mile-long sections of Israel’s border with Egypt were only intermittently patrolled by the military or secured only with series of chain-link fences, recent efforts have been under taken in building up and expanding a series of walls and high-tech fences to increase the general security in the area. This need to bolster the border has also come as a direct result of the recent instability experienced throughout Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula, after the fall of the Mubarak regime. Personally addressing the subject in 2010, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the Jerusalem Post that “we do not intend to arrest refugees from war. We allow them to enter and will continue to do so. But we must stop the mass entry of illegal infiltrators who are looking for work, due to the very harsh repercussions that this wave will have on the character and future of the State of Israel.”<sup>18</sup>

Other controversial methods employed by the Israeli government have revolved around the issue of non-refoulement; a principle of international law which forbids the return of victims of persecution to their persecutors. Israel has recently gotten into trouble with breaking this international law through the Israeli Army’s recent and controversial methods of “hot return”, and refusal to allow entrance to refugees already on the border. “Hot return” is a term given to the Army’s current practice of illegally deporting refugees within 24 hours of crossing the border. Often times, this practice entails preventing illegal African immigrants from entering the country, and forcing them back onto Egyptian soil, and as a result, back into direct danger. This practice, therefore, stands in clear violation of the non-refoulement treaty. Furthermore, these practices have also been branded and criticized as inhumane, as they effectively infringe on asylum seekers’ rights in not allowing them enough time to request protection.<sup>19</sup> According to UNHCR, as of 2009, “... around 250 individuals have been returned to Egypt under the hot returns procedure. Still, it appears that this policy has never been

widely applied, although it remains alive in high-level government discussion.”<sup>20</sup>

With all of these problems still far from concluded, however, recent regional events have seemingly compelled the issue to turn largely in Israel’s favor. Firstly, it now appears that the rate at which African immigrants have illegally entered into Israel has recently dropped sharply. The reasons given for this new trend have been assessed as being primarily related to the current state of turmoil in Egypt. It is believed that Egypt’s recent political and social upheaval has worked as a strong deterrent force for African refugees formerly looking to cross into Israel. With Egypt no longer in control over large parts of the Sinai Peninsula, hostile Bedouin bands are now more dangerous than ever. It is this fact, perhaps more than any other, which has largely worked in the greater picture to deter additional African refugees and asylum seekers from risking the journey.

The second major event which was able to be worked into Israel’s favor came with the formal independence of South Sudan, which occurred on July 9, 2011. In fact, “With the independence of South Sudan in July 2011, Israel was among the first countries to recognize the new state, a decision which made possible the return of South Sudanese asylum seekers in Israel.”<sup>21</sup> As a result, Israel was now freely able to lobby for the extradition of South Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers from its territories, and was able to do this on the grounds that the Sudanese asylum seekers now had their own country to which they could return to with little fear of persecution. The truth of the matter, however, was quite different. Even with its independence now attained, South Sudan was still a country embroiled in violence and security issues, not to mention a country with a ravaged and poor economy. The motion to return these refugees and asylum seekers to Southern Sudan, therefore, has been openly criticized by members both in the Israeli government, as well as and society as a whole.<sup>22</sup> This did not, however, stop the government in from following through with its project of extradition. Since early 2012, it has been reported that Israel has taken steps to begin deporting these Sudanese nationals. On January 31, 2012, a government organization known as the Population, Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA) published a report entitled “A Call for the People of South Sudan,” in which it was stated, that “Now that South Sudan has become an independent state, it is time for you to return to your homeland. . . . the State of Israel is committed to helping those who wish to return voluntarily in the near future.”<sup>23</sup> These “voluntary returnees” would, upon contacting the government for their own deportation, each receive a lump sum of 1,000 Euros. By contrast, those choosing not to “volunteer” in leaving Israel by March 31, 2012, would face the threat of arrest and mandatory deportation.

Compliance was no longer an option, as after the passing of this government-set deadline for voluntary deportation on March 31, 2012, scores of immigrants were subsequently located, arrested, and made ready to be deported. According to a report published in 2013 by the Forced Migration Review (FRM), “Families were split up, with women and children detained at Saharonim and Ketsiot and men at Givon, a high-risk prison center with a detention section for asylum seekers. It was not clear if family members would be put on the same flight out of the country”.<sup>24</sup>

In the end, a majority of African immigrants and asylum seekers living in Israel had been forcibly returned to their country of origin. These deportations, beginning



in July, 2013, constituted a highly criticized move by the Israeli government, and called into question the matter of Israeli human rights abuses. The Israeli government, denying any wrongdoing, has subsequently and effectively shrugged off the matter. As for those immigrants returned, one can only hope that the situation in Sudan improves so that they can carry out their lives in relative peace and stability.

Israel, though a country both set up largely by, and for refugees, has failed to uphold its moral standards. In order to insure its future right and identity as a primarily Jewish State, Israel has done the unthinkable; casting out those most in need of its assistance. As a result of this whole situation, Israel has taken a hit in its reputation among the international community; and for its part, Israel, understandably, has been forced to reassess its standing as an open and democratic state; a status which is increasingly being criticized on the world stage.

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# PERSPECTIVES

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## **The Relevance of Black Studies to American Education: Understanding Activism as an Educational Priority**

*Zack Lanham and Dr. Michael Washington*

### INTRODUCTION

If Black Studies is to be relevant as a discipline in the future of higher education, radical changes in our thinking about schooling and about the freedom of ideas must take place. This new way of thinking must not only be radical but must justify the possibility of the equitable inclusion of blacks in institutions of higher education. Moreover, the implementation of these ideas must make possible relevant educational experiences that equip people of all races with the requisite knowledge and skills to improve the deleterious conditions confronting black families and communities as well as other poor and working class people. To achieve this would require a very different vision about the function of education in the United States. A reconceptualization about schooling and freedom may appear to be the aspirations of only marginalized groups. In fact, it is an idea deeply rooted in the American experience. It was precisely the changes in thinking about schooling and about the freedom of ideas that provided the ideological justification for the American Revolution. According to historian Joel Spring:

The changes in thinking about schooling and freedom of ideas were part of the ideological justification of the American Revolution that appeared in pamphlets and newspapers distributed in England and the colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Spring goes on to assert that the secular school system that emerged in the United States was made possible by arguments that occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries claiming that freedom of ideas is essential to social development and that education and learning can be instrumental and useful in improving the conditions of society. Advocates of this view defended freedom of thought and speech on the basis that "...without freedom there can be no growth in human wisdom and invention and, consequently, no progress in economic development."<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, these are the very arguments currently put forth by the contemporary proponents of Black Studies. Like the founding fathers of the nation, the ideas asserted by Black Studies' advocates are predicated on the premise that "all men were created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." In the same way that the fathers of our country found it necessary to engage in political activism to secure their

freedoms, advocates of Black Studies must embrace effective activism as a vital idea toward the achievement of an inclusive and relevant education on university campuses across the nation.

It is without question that effective activism on the part of slaveholders resulted in their freedom to construct a nation that excluded African Americans and others from having access to a quality education. Ironically, it was effective activism and self-agency, oftentimes carried out by Founding Fathers, that resulted in the development of a critical consciousness that challenged racism during the revolutionary decades. For instance, in 1775 Thomas Paine published a pamphlet entitled *African Slavery in America*, in which he associated slavery with “murder, robbery, lewdness and barbarity.” Both Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush were outspoken in their arguments against slavery. In addition, in 1785 John Jay and Alexander Hamilton went a step further when they co-founded the New York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves.<sup>3</sup>

These were not the only strategies employed by the Founders to undo or bring an end to the racism of their times. Indeed, it was the self-agency of no other than George Washington, the preeminent Founding Father, that established a blueprint for his nation’s future; a nation characterized by the idea of equitable inclusion of African Americans. Washington’s consciousness of the harmful effects of the slave system caused him to formulate a secret emancipation plan in 1794 and a final one in his will in 1799 five months before his death. The emancipation plan in his will broke from the tradition of other masters and mistresses who would often free only their favorite slaves. Rather than dither over making fine metaphors he simply wrote, “...that all slaves which I hold in my *own right*, shall receive their freedom.” Washington’s plan went much further than merely emancipating the 123 African Americans that made up his personal enslaved workforce. He insisted that the people he emancipated had a right to live on American soil and not be exiled as was the custom of the day when enslaved negroes were set free. He stipulated that the old and the infirm be cared for until death by members of his very own family, including heirs. In the case of his personal servant whom he referred to as “my Mulatto man William,” Washington allowed “an annuity of thirty dollars during his natural life, which shall be independent of the victuals and cloaths he has been accustomed to receive...” In an extraordinary clause directed toward enslaved children whose parents were either dead or unable to care for them, Washington stipulated that they “be taught to read & right; and to be brought up to some useful occupation...” Washington did not believe that the enslaved people were inherently inferior rather that their condition was the result of enslavement and that with education and the opportunity to find work they could prosper as free people. Hence, acting out of a sense of justice Washington not only made possible the freedom of those who had been enslaved on his plantation, but his vision was for them to remain in the United States as benefactors of policies not unlike our current safety net and compensation initiatives such as social health insurance programs, Affirmative Action, and Reparations.<sup>4</sup>

In many ways Washington’s idea of freedom for his emancipated negroes was not substantively different from the vision commonly held by today’s African Americans who seek a racially equitable society. Whether fortunate or unfortunate the historical

reality is that Washington's idea of black inclusion was not intended to be enacted while he was alive. The fact that he was compelled to wait until after his death to implement his convictions with respect to racial equity, speaks to the level of resistance he anticipated from the status quo. Upon his death on December 14, 1799, forethought from the first President of the United States and Father of the Country caused his enslaved negroes to be emancipated; these actions passed on to future generations the burning torch of social responsibility, engagement, and effective activism. Any education lacking in the development of these essential ideas is irrelevant to the collective well-being of black people, hence the nation. In that one of the primary functions of Black Studies as an academic discipline is to make possible the equitable inclusion of black people into institutions of higher education and ultimately the broader society, the purpose of this essay is to discuss the importance of activism in making Black Studies relevant to the American Educational experience.

### **SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF BLACK STUDIES**

In 1821 the English Classical School was founded in Boston as an academy to provide secondary and practical education to white children. Because of parental activism the school was later renamed and became the first high school in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Black students in Boston could not attend. They would be compelled to attend segregated schools. From the 1820s until the historic landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board Education of Topeka* in 1954, the segregated, inferior education received by blacks in public education throughout the United States was enforced by law. The resistance to *Brown* in the 1950s and 1960s by reluctant school boards caused a continuation of educational segregation in the North and South. This massive resistance to educational inclusion was met by a movement of activists galvanized to end Jim Crow Segregation and to gain access to quality education for black students. In what many historians refer to as the Modern Civil Rights Movement the powerful manifestations of social activism took the form of boycotts and nonviolent demonstrations. The impact of this activism on public policy was astounding. Although two ineffective civil rights bills were passed in 1957 and 1960, in 1964, due in large part to the effectiveness of grass roots activism, the most important civil rights legislation in the history of the United States was passed into law. Under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 the power of federal regulations was extended in the areas of voting rights, public accommodation, employment and education under eleven different titles. Titles IV and VI of the legislation addressed school segregation and provided authority for implementing the *Brown* decision. The most important section was Title VI which required mandatory withholding of federal funds to institutions that did not comply with its mandates.<sup>6</sup>

The effectiveness of black activism in impacting civil rights and educational policy inspired other marginalized groups including Native Americans, Latinos, women and parents of children requiring special education. Native American activists organized such an effective struggle for self-determination during the 1960s that it influenced the presidential elections of 1968 causing Nixon to proclaim, "the right of self-determination of the Indian people will be respected and their participation in planning their own destiny will be encouraged." The activists' demands led to the passage of

the *Indian Education Act* of 1972 which provided financial assistance to local schools to meet the “special” educational needs of Native American students. By 1975 the demands by Native American activists led to the *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act*, arguably the most important piece of legislation supporting the self-determination of Native Peoples. It gave tribes the power to contract with the federal government to run their own education and health programs. Its principles were expanded in 1988 with the passage of the *Tribally Controlled Schools Act* that provided for outright grants to tribes to support the operation of their own schools. With the passage of the *Native American Language Act* of 1990 the federal government is committed to “preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American Languages.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, while the existence of legislation in and of itself does not necessarily assure equitable inclusion, it does provide a greater degree of educational access than previously existed. It was effective activism on the part Native Americans that resulted in the enactment of legislation that increased their access to a relevant education.

Community leaders within the Latin American world also found activism to be a critical factor in gaining greater educational access. Even before the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Mexican American activists in Texas challenged the right to segregate children of Mexican descent. In 1946 the court ruled in *Delgado V. Bastrop Independent School District* that segregating Mexican children was illegal and discriminatory. Because of sustained activism, in 1970 Mexican Americans were officially recognized by the federal courts as an identifiable dominated group in the public schools in a Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund case, *Cisneros V. Corpus Christi Independent School District*. In addition, Mexican American activists joined Puerto Rican activists in the struggle to preserve the Spanish language by use of the public schools. A result of their activism was the passage of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 which promised that the public schools would preserve their cultures and languages.<sup>8</sup>

Racial and ethnic groups were not the only ones to benefit from their activism with respect to gaining greater access to educational opportunities- this was also the case for women and parents with mentally challenged children. The sustained activism among women who battled for equal rights from 1848 to the 1970s forced a response from the federal government. In 1972 Congress passed the Higher Education Act of 1972 which provided for sexual equality in both employment and educational programs. Similarly, the activism on behalf of disabled and retarded children resulted in winning a court case as important to the disabilities’ rights movement as the *Brown* decision was to civil rights. In *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, the court enjoined the state from excluding mentally retarded children from a public education and required that every mentally retarded child be allowed access to an education.<sup>9</sup>

It was within this social context that Black Studies emerged as an educational demand from black students on predominantly white campuses. Because the campuses themselves were hot beds of activism, the demand for Black Studies was influenced by other thrusts of the student movement including Civil Rights, Free Speech, Anti-Vietnam War, and the Black Power Movements. Hence, on the campus of San Francisco State College in the fall of 1966 when black students demanded the first Department

of Black Studies,<sup>10</sup> student activism was the norm. For groups concerned with increasing their access to educational opportunities, activism was a legitimate vehicle for issuing demands. It was in this climate that Black Studies emerged as an educational project that sought to foster the development of consciousness and effective activism and thus offer a significant contribution to American Education.

## **THE INTELLECTUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE**

### *Phase One*

By Black Studies, we mean the multidisciplinary analysis of the lives and thought of people of African ancestry on the African continent and throughout the world.<sup>11</sup> As a scholarly inquiry, the intellectual and institutional development of Black Studies began long before the demands in the 1960s for Black Studies Departments. According to scholar Robert L. Harris Jr., the scholarly inquiry began in the 1890s as the first of four stages of black intellectual and institutional development. Lasting until World War II, the first stage was characterized by the emergence of numerous organizations that sought to document, record, and analyze the history, culture, and status of black people. These organizations sponsored lectures on numerous topics and various aspects of Black culture, as well as contemporary issues facing the African American community. Notable groups of this sort include “The Negro Development and Exposition Company of the United States” which was incorporated in 1903 by Virginia attorney, Giles B. Jackson who set out to procure and exhibit examples of “everything” blacks had done.<sup>12</sup> Still other groups include the American Negro Historical Society in Philadelphia and the American Negro Academy in Washington, D.C. which were both started in 1897. Another one was the New York’s Negro Society for Historical Research, organized in 1911. Inspired by the inspiration of W.E. B. Du Bois to examine various categories of Negro life in ten-year cycles, from 1898-1914, the Atlanta University Studies produced sixteen monographs consisting of more than 2,100 pages of research. In 1915 Carter G. Woodson formed the Association for the Study of Afro-American (formerly Negro) Life and History (ASALH) which exist today as the oldest of the three pre-eminent professional organizations of Black Studies.<sup>13</sup> Most black scholars agree that the ASALH remains the premier organization in promoting historical consciousness and in generating greater understanding of African heritage in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

### *Phase Two*

The second stage of the institutional development of Black Studies began with the publication of a two-volume study by Swedish scholar Gunnar Myrdal titled, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. Gunnar’s work made a significant impact on scholarship about black people during the post war years. It especially influenced white academics who sought environmental rather than biogenetic explanations for the inferior status of the American Negro. In other words they believed that blacks were not created inferior but were conditioned to be inferior over time. Moreover, they believed that the end of racial oppression would not immediately produce racial equality because of the accumulated pathological behavior of blacks.

This scholarship, in some respects, was a set-back for black progress because of the “deficient” qualities it ascribed to black people.<sup>15</sup>

### *Phase Three*

Regarding the next phase of development, Professor Harris asserts that the civil rights revolution, the Black Power drive, and the Black consciousness movement, initiated the third stage of the intellectual and institutional development of Black Studies i.e., the period of legitimation and institutionalization. Existing between the mid-1960s and the mid 1980s it was during this stage that black student activists demanded the employment of black professors and the establishment of Black Studies departments and programs.<sup>16</sup> In pursuit of a relevant education for black people, Black Studies activists based their demands on academic and social concerns. On the academic level, they were concerned with the inadequate and injurious nature of the traditional white curriculum that omitted and/or distorted the lives and culture of people of African descent. The social concerns centered around the questions of low enrollment or the exclusion of black students, treatment on campus, social problems in the black community, and the transformation of black students into vulgar careerist with no sense of social commitment.<sup>17</sup>

What emerged as a legitimate curriculum was a multidisciplinary discipline with seven basic core areas including Black History, Black Religion, Black Social Organization, Black Politics, Black Economics, Black Creative Production (Black Art, Literature, Music, Dance, and other Performing Arts), and Black Psychology. These seven fields represent core courses in most Black Studies programs and departments and serve as excellent areas of focus for survey courses in the discipline.<sup>18</sup> According to Black Studies scholars Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young, the core curriculum for a model Black studies program includes an introductory course, which constitutes the first level of studies. The second and third levels involve basic literature reviews, survey courses, current research, and emerging issues. The fourth level should be senior seminars involving synthesizing the insights of previous research. These scholars contend that the primary areas of focus for the curricula are social/behavioral, historical, and cultural studies.<sup>19</sup> It has been the wide-spread acceptance of this curricular approach by institutions of higher education that has made the Black Studies curriculum legitimate.

The legitimation of the curriculum influenced the development of professional organizations that emerged within specific disciplines like Black Psychology. For instance, the Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi) was organized in 1968 when African American psychologists attended the predominantly white American Psychological Association Conference and reacted to what they felt were non-supportive, if not racist, positions regarding ethnic minority concerns.<sup>20</sup> Tired of being ignored and fed up with research, policies, and programs that were discriminatory toward African Americans, a group of African American Psychologists met during the 1968 APA meeting in San Francisco and generated a list of four demands. These demands were:

- 1 - The APA must integrate its own workforce with more African Americans.



- 2 - The APA should work to gain the admittance of more African Americans in psychology graduate schools.
- 3 - Racist content found in APA journals should be eliminated.
- 4 - The APA should establish programs so that concerns specific to each minority group can be addressed.

Upon recognizing the futility of effecting change within the APA, African American Psychologists formed their own organization in 1968 whose four basic thrusts have not changed over time. The first thrust was to provide training and support to African American Psychology students through scholarships, research activities, publications, and forums. A second thrust has been to engage in strong advocacy against racist and discriminatory practices within the discipline of psychology and to emphasize the need for culturally competent practices, treatment, and services. A third thrust of the ABPsi has been to address social, psychological, and health problems found among people of African descent through training, education, and programs at local, state, and national levels. The fourth thrust has been to promote an awareness of the problems and concerns facing African people throughout the diaspora.<sup>21</sup> This professional association that emerged in the field of Black Psychology is an example of the activism in other disciplines including Black Sociology, Black Politics, etc. Indeed, two of the three pre-eminent professional associations in the discipline of Black Studies, the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA), 1969 and National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), 1975 emerged out of similar histories of activism and self-advocacy.<sup>22</sup>

With regard to organizational structure, departmental status has been the preferred structure in the quest for institutional stability and permanence. However, the program under the direction of a coordinator is also very common. The three major structural types of programs are autonomous programs, inter-departmental programs and joint-appointment programs. Having control of faculty hires is important to both departments and programs. These various types of programs take advantage of faculty resources by cross-listing courses. The cross-listing of courses is most effective when there is a strong core Black Studies faculty within the department or program.<sup>23</sup>

The effectiveness of black student activism in bringing Black Studies departments and programs into existence occurred so abruptly that few scholars were prepared to teach Black Studies courses. As black student organizations changed their names from such names as Negro Student Associations to Black Student Unions, many black students expected their Black Studies' curricular to make a similar shift from the traditional Eurocentric dissemination of knowledge. Far too often on campuses across the country Black Studies' students had no choice except to take courses from professors in "mainstream" disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, etc., who would integrate aspects of the Black experience into their syllabi and research. So that while these courses did not necessarily reflect the image or interest of black people, they nevertheless, covered previously neglected information about black history, culture and life, albeit from the theoretical and methodological frameworks of "established" disciplines. This would later become known as the "Integrationist Paradigm" of Black Studies. In the field of sociology this approach is exemplified by the outstanding

scholarship of William Julius Wilson.<sup>24</sup>

With the 1980 publication of *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, Molefi Asante introduced Afrocentricity as an indispensable paradigm of the Black Studies project. According to Asante, “Afrocentricity...means literally placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior.” He further argues that Afrocentricity is a theoretical framework or methodology which stress African agency, i.e., the treatment of African people as active subjects of history rather than objects or passive victims. The Afrocentric vision of the world demands that Black Studies be rooted in African culture and in the worldview which evolves from and informs that culture. According to Maulana Karenga, Afrocentricity, as an intellectual conception, is based on four assumptions. The first assumption is that African culture is worthy of study and it is critical to the understanding of society and the human experience. Secondly, that African-centeredness as a methodological orientation is the best way to study and understand African people because it’s based on an African, rather than a foreign perspective. Thirdly, Afrocentric theory argues that an African-centered perspective is not simply a body of data but also a way of approaching and interpreting data. And finally, Afrocentric theory is based on the assumption that if an African-centered approach is incorrect or of little value, then so is the discipline of Black Studies which is based on an equally important assumption that the African experience is both a valid and valuable subject of study.<sup>25</sup>

Skeptics of Afrocentricity often refer to it as “Afrocentrism” which, according to Karenga, appears more often in ideological discourse between Afrocentric scholars and critics.<sup>26</sup> For instance, Manning Marable and Leith Mullings argue that “Transformationism” is a third ideological discourse or paradigm of Black Studies because it represents collective efforts of black people to neither integrate nor self-segregate but to transform the existing power relationships and the racist institutions of the state, the economy, and society. The transformationist perspective is based on the assumption that racism exists at the ideological level and has become an integral factor in the construction of the U.S political economy and the social class hierarchy of the country. Thus dismantling institutional racism will require building a powerful protest movement to demand the fundamental restructuring of the basic institutions and patterns of ownership in society.<sup>27</sup>

By the mid 1980s the “Integrationist,” “Afrocentric,” and “Transformationist” perspectives were generally acknowledged as the basic paradigms of the discipline. Regardless of the intellectual and/or ideological thrust of Black Studies units, they all faced similar concerns with regard to the implementation of their institutional function. For instance, Aldridge and Young argue that Black Studies units must function as the center of support networks, and provide role models and mentors for black Students.<sup>28</sup> Black Studies units also function to integrate the faculty, which assist in making university environments more pluralistic. On this point Darlene Clark Hine observed, “it is sad but true that without Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Women Studies, or Native American Studies, few colleges and universities could boast of having an integrated or pluralistic faculty.”<sup>29</sup> James B. Stewart identified another function of Black Studies which is that of establishing a beachhead in higher education. By this he means building a permanent base within the institutions. But Stewart admits to the

continuing challenges to making this happen by critics who challenge the legitimacy of Black Studies and by the weak attachment of many black scholars to the Black Studies movement “even when the research of such scholars examines the black experience.”<sup>30</sup>

This weak attachment identified by Stewart impacts every aspect of the institutional function of Black Studies units. For example, the sustained high attrition rates among black students are indicators of the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the Black Studies role models and networks in mentoring black students. It should be no surprise to find that Black Studies faculty themselves function as institutional gatekeepers that may grant or deny the black community access to higher education. Lacking in accountable relationships with authentic community organizations, Black Studies faculty may far too often function to undermine the mission of the Black Studies Movement and weaken the capacity of the Black community to encourage change. The absence of commitment and accountability has contributed to a significant decline in Black Studies units. In an essay published in 2004, Johnnetta B. Cole noted:

There has been a definitive decline in the number of Black studies programs and departments. Today, according to the National Council for Black Studies, there are approximately 375 programs and departments of Black Studies, compared with 800 in the early 1970s.<sup>31</sup>

As Black Studies units continue to decline across the United States, the social conditions within the Black community remain in desperate need of corrective intervention. For instance, the few black students who enroll in college are faced with the highest attrition rates among all groups. Moreover, it’s not uncommon for drop-out rates in schools attended by black students to be as high as 49-51 per cent. Far too many black youth remain trapped in the “gangsta” culture pipeline to prison.

#### *Phase Four*

By the late 1980s these were some of the critical issues facing Black Studies. If the third phase of development could be characterized as a period of Legitimation and Institutionalization then the fourth phase should be viewed as a period of reexamination. For sure, the discipline must be broadened and deepened. Black Studies faculty must be both generalists familiar with a broad range of knowledge and specialists who advance the frontiers of specific areas of knowledge. Questions of pedagogy must be addressed. Students should be encouraged to engage in more cooperative experiences.

Another thing that should be reexamined is the efficacy of the current paradigms in engaging students in the effective activism required to sustain Black studies as a relevant discipline. The activism that brought Black Studies into existence resulted in bringing to the social sciences a different perspective, as Johnnetta Cole put it, “a perspective of the oppressed, the view of those without power, the view from the cotton patch.”<sup>32</sup> Hence, the value of activism is critical to the development of knowledge itself. A new paradigm of Black Studies must empower students with the theoretical knowledge, practical skills and the courage to act within their own environments to hold institutional gatekeepers accountable to the Black Studies Movement. This should strengthen the growth of the discipline and assist in raising student consciousness and

in creating an environment where activism is normative behavior. The relevance then of Black Studies to American education is that its sustained existence is a testament to the importance of the pedagogy of activism in the pursuit of an inclusive society.

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# PERSPECTIVES

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## **Intellectual Crosscurrents of the Black Atlantic: Pan Africanism and Civil Rights in the Time of the Cold War**

*Matthew Wallin*

### **INTRODUCTION**

There can be no doubt that the 1950's and 1960's ushered in an unprecedented period of black activism across the Atlantic World. In the U.S., this was known as the civil rights movement, and in Africa as decolonization. While too often treated as separate events, these movements were bound together by a shared drive for Pan-Africanism. Crucial to this process were the intellectual currents which flowed back and forth across the Atlantic as the two movements for black freedom came to be increasingly aware of and identify with one another's struggles. In the early 20th Century, the currents of black intellectualism flowed from the Americas to Africa. However, the period of decolonization in the 1950's and 1960's shifted the movement of the Pan-African intellectual exchange so that it increasingly flowed from the African continent to the Americas. During this period, Africa increasingly influenced global black activism, especially the state of Ghana, led by Kwame Nkrumah.

Although the weight of the intellectual exchange was flowing from Africa to the Americas, it is crucial to recognize that important currents still flowed from the Americas to Africa during this period. To examine these shifting intellectual currents and their legacy, this paper will ask a number of questions. What was the nature of the exchange across the Atlantic? How did the flow of these ideas influence African and American movements for liberation? Finally, what impact did the global context of Cold War politics and ideologies have on the nature of Atlantic Black activism? While a number of recent studies have examined the growing influence of African ideas and developments on African-American intellectuals and activists, this paper, drawing on popular media sources such as the Ghanaian *Daily Graphic* newspaper, will argue that African leaders and populations were nonetheless informed by the black American quest for justice and that this was seen as an important component of the Pan-African dream, albeit one tempered by Cold War political realities.

### **SETTING THE STAGE**

In the wake of the Second World War, the balance of world power was shifting rapidly. With the myth of European cultural and intellectual superiority smoldering alongside a war torn European landscape, the era of European Empire began to draw its final breaths. After two World Wars, Europe's power, resources, and influence

were a mere shadow of what they had once been. African American scholar and activist, W.E.B. DuBois, described this fall from grace as “the collapse of Europe,” and remarked bitterly that “the cost of these wars and crises in property and human life is almost beyond belief; the cost in the destruction of youth and of faith in the world and mankind is incalculable.”<sup>1</sup> The power vacuum present due to a “collapsed Europe” was soon filled by two emerging superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, each competing for influence in an increasingly polarized world. With Europe no longer commanding the global stage, the superpowers soon began to court colonial Africa, competing against one another for the continent’s wealth of resources and political influence. Consequently, African nationalists had finally been dealt a hand of cards that they could play and win.

During WWII, the United States had championed the Atlantic Charter alongside a hesitant Britain, declaring to the world that both countries “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and [that] they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”<sup>2</sup> It became clear that America would have to stand by the Charter’s declaration that it supported “self-determination for all peoples” when Vice-President Richard Nixon’s 1957 report to Eisenhower confirmed the necessity of maintaining a positive relationship with the African continent as a key component of the U.S. cold war effort.<sup>3</sup> The political atmosphere formed by the cold war competition of the superpowers for resources and the expansion of their respective political ideologies set the stage for the determined Pan-African revolutionary, Kwame Nkrumah, to rise to power and gain independence for the British Gold Coast colony. Nkrumah soon fashioned the newly independent state of Ghana into a vehicle for the attainment of his Pan-African aspirations, and as a symbol for his fellow Africans who had not yet escaped the colonial clutches of dying European empires.

Although Nkrumah’s focus primarily concerned Pan-African continental affairs, Ghana soon came to be a symbol for a much larger audience than he had initially envisioned. Rather than Ghana becoming an emblem for African unity alone, it quickly became a transatlantic focal point for those dedicated to fighting global white oppression. In the United States specifically, Nkrumah and Ghana became icons of inspiration for members of the African diaspora in their fight for social integration and black pride. Prominent U.S. civil rights leaders, especially Martin Luther King Jr., were quick to draw inspiration from the fledgling state in their own battle for freedom. That Nkrumah was aware of the young country’s global role can be illustrated by his proclamation to the people of Ghana in 1963, “Let us remember that the eyes of the world are upon us in whatever we do.”<sup>4</sup>

The existing historical literature analyzing the transatlantic currents between the American civil rights movement and the African independence movement is primarily focused on the American reaction to events on the African continent. Chief among these works is Kevin K. Gaines’ *African Americans in Ghana: Black Expatriates in the Civil Rights Era*, which concentrates on African Americans who journeyed to Ghana and analyzes the effect that their reaction had on their civil rights activism. Martin Staniland’s *American Intellectuals and African Nationalists, 1955-1970* analyzes the reaction of various groups of American intellectuals to the events of Africa during the peak

of the freedom movements on both sides of the Atlantic. Staniland's book features an extremely thorough chapter that documents the varying and changing perspectives of the black American community on the process of decolonization and how it relates to the civil rights movement. Another important work is Philip E. Muehlenbeck's *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*. Muehlenbeck asserts that John F. Kennedy viewed maintaining positive relationships with the third world as a vital component to winning the Cold War, and sought to establish that relationship by winning the heart of the African continent. One argument proposed in this work is that the Cold War dynamics involved in courting Africa led Kennedy to push for advancements in civil rights in the US so as to establish American credibility as the leader of the free world. While these works are useful for analyzing how the events in Africa affected the civil rights movement in America, they fail to examine in detail African perspectives on the struggle in the Americas.

### **PAN-AFRICANISM: A GIFT FROM THE NEW WORLD TO THE OLD**

The transatlantic connection of the Pan-African movement to the New World was present from the movement's genesis. In the early twentieth century the currents of black activism were flowing steadily from the Americas to Africa due to the ability of American and Caribbean-based black intellectuals to access key tools of power, such as printing, publishing, and the mobility to hold conferences to promote their ideas. Although Kwame Nkrumah perfected his notion of Pan-Africanism throughout his tenure as the head of state in Ghana, he learned the philosophy of the movement under the tutelage of global black activists in and from the Americas. Upon observing the growing movement of Pan-Africanism in 1961, the Indian historian K.M. Panikkar noted that:

Pan-Africanism is one of the gifts from the New World to the Old. The doctrine was developed by the descendants of slaves settled in the United States, and the French and British West Indies... only recently has Pan-Africanism taken root in Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, Panikkar's observation holds true; with the major founders of the movement including names such as W.E.B. Du Bois from the United States, George Padmore from Trinidad, and Marcus Garvey from Jamaica all hailing from across the Atlantic to the continent whose name they championed. It was during Nkrumah's US education in the late 1930's and early 1940's that he was first introduced to the writings of the Pan-African intellectuals mentioned above. As Nkrumah mentioned in his autobiography, Garvey especially captured his attention, claiming that "of all the literature that I studied, the book that did more than any other to fire my enthusiasm was *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*."<sup>6</sup> With historian Claudius Fergus defining Garveyism as "the legacy of the struggle against the globalized forces of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism," it is no surprise that the young Nkrumah was drawn to the literature of Garvey and other New World radicals.<sup>7</sup>

It wasn't until the 1945 Fifth Pan-African Congress in England that the flow of the Pan-African current began to shift across the Atlantic. It is interesting to note that



in the wake of WWII, Europe and cities like London, as the hubs of empire, served as the middle ground where black intellectuals from the Americas could meet African nationalists to denounce the evils of colonialism. Although the weight of the movement was steadily shifting toward the African continent, it must be recognized that for a brief moment the currents of Pan-African activism flowed through the European continent. Utilizing the favorable political atmosphere provided by a recently weakened post WWII Europe, the young African born Kwame Nkrumah began to understand the power the movement could have for his homeland. While he had been deeply influenced by radical American writers during his education in the West, his primary concern was not that of a global black struggle, but rather the liberation of the continent of Africa from colonial oppressors. Nkrumah commented that “Garvey’s ideology was concerned with black nationalism as opposed to African nationalism. It was this Fifth Pan-African Congress that provided the outlet for African Nationalism and brought about the awakening of African political consciousness. It became, in fact, a mass movement of Africa for the Africans.”<sup>8</sup> At the congress, both the famous Du Bois and the young Nkrumah issued declarations “asserting the right of the colonial peoples to be free,” urging the African people to organize in order to “achieve their political freedom.”<sup>9</sup> In 1947, Nkrumah answered the call to African activism on a more direct level by accepting the invitation to join the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and returning to his homeland. It was not long until Nkrumah had broken away from the moderate UGCC and formed the more radical Convention People’s Party (CPP) in June of 1949, united under Nkrumah’s demand for “Self-Government now!”<sup>10</sup> In 1951, just two years after the formation of the CPP, Nkrumah led the people of the Gold Coast to autonomous rule, and by 1957, the Gold Coast, renamed Ghana, had become the first independent Sub-Saharan state.

### **THE GHANAIAN INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION: THE BIRTH OF A GLOBAL ICON**

After the achievement of Ghanaian independence, Nkrumah did not abandon his Pan-African roots. Indeed, from the very beginning, he sought to portray the newly independent Ghana as the seed from which a united Africa could spring. One of the first actions taken to achieve this goal was to abandon the colonial name of the Gold Coast and adopt the name Ghana, after a large and powerful West African kingdom which came to an end around 1100 C.E.<sup>11</sup> Historian Ali Mazrui speculates that by associating the new country with a name carrying a wealth of history, the name could actively display the country’s “African personality.” The symbolic benefit of such an association was illustrated in Nkrumah’s commentary during Ghana’s independence celebrations in 1957, when he stated, “it is our earnest hope that the Ghana which is now being reborn will be, like the Ghana of old, a centre to which all the peoples of Africa may come and where all the cultures of Africa may meet.”<sup>12</sup> Nkrumah further sought to identify the country with the Pan-African movement in his independence speech by reminding his people that “we have won the battle and we again re-dedicate ourselves... Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa.”<sup>13</sup>

After the dawn of Ghanaian independence, it soon became apparent that the Pan-

African currents of transatlantic influence were swirling through Ghana. Although Nkrumah's primary focus was the freedom and unification of the African continent, the independence celebration of Ghana illustrated that Nkrumah identified with the struggles of non-white peoples all over the world, and in the United States in particular. Nkrumah's affinities with activists and intellectuals across the black world are made evident by the guests invited to attend the Ghanaian independence celebration. Present were prominent U.S. civil rights activists such as Adam Powell and Charles Diggs, who had both been the first African Americans from their respective states to be elected to Congress. Ralph Bunch, the first African American to receive the Nobel peace prize, was also present.<sup>14</sup> The iconic W.E.B. Du Bois had also received an invitation, but was unable to attend because the U.S. Federal government denied him a visa out of fear that his leftist views made him a "national security risk."<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the guest whose presence most dramatically represented the connection between the civil rights movement and the struggle against colonialism was the up and coming activist Martin Luther King Jr. of Montgomery, Alabama. King had received a personal invitation from Nkrumah himself, and attended the festivities thanks to the funding of his local church congregation.<sup>16</sup> The significance of King's presence at the independence ceremony is articulated by historian Kevin K. Gaines who noted that "by inviting King, Ghana's leaders declared their solidarity with African American leaders and their cause."<sup>17</sup>

Almost exactly a month following King's return from Ghana, he expressed his impressions of his visit to Ghana in a sermon to his church congregation in Montgomery, Alabama. Entitled "The Birth of a New Nation," the sermon illustrates clearly that the independence of Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana was a source of inspiration to the civil rights movement. King used the sermon as an opportunity to draw powerful parallels between the American movement and the African fight against colonialism. The sermon commenced with a detailed history of the newly independent Ghana and its contact with Europe, from the period of "legitimate trade with the Portuguese" to the end of "colonial domination and exploitation."<sup>18</sup> King was extremely complementary of Nkrumah and devoted special attention to the new head of state's rise to power. He stated that for the young leader, Pan-Africanism was the answer to "to the problem of how to free his people from colonialism."<sup>19</sup> The sermon lauded Nkrumah's use of non-violent tactics in achieving independence. King emphasized that Ghana "reminds us of the fact that a nation or a people can break loose from oppression without violence," and further reminded his audience that:

The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of a beloved community. The aftermath of nonviolence is redemption. The aftermath of nonviolence is reconciliation. The aftermath of violence are emptiness and bitterness. This is the thing I'm concerned about... And this is one thing Ghana teaches us: that you can break loose from evil through nonviolence, through a lack of bitterness. Nkrumah says in his book: 'When I came out of prison, I was not bitter toward Britain. I came out merely with the determination to free my people from the colonialism and imperialism that had been inflicted upon them by the British. But

I came out with no bitterness.' And because of that, this world will be a better place in which to live.<sup>20</sup>

The tone of the sermon implied an understanding of the young state's struggle against white oppression and the dream to be free of it. Perhaps the most powerful parallel King drew between the U.S. diaspora and Ghana was his description of the cries of joy he heard at the end of the ceremony, claiming "I could hear that old Negro spiritual once more crying out: 'Free at last, free at last, Great God Almighty, I'm free at last.'"<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that several years later this same reference would come to be the crowning point of King's famous "I have a dream speech," illustrating that King longed for the colored people of America to feel the same sense of joyful freedom that he had witnessed in Ghana in 1957.

This sermon is also significant in that it represents a larger shift in African American attitudes toward the continent of Africa. Prior to the independence of Ghana, evidence suggests that many African Americans desired to have little or no association with the continent of their ancestry. Martin Staniland, author of *American Intellectuals and African Nationalists*, has analyzed literature from a variety of African American publications and civil rights commentary throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century so as to track changes in African American perceptions of the African continent. Staniland argues that the black rejection of being associated with Africa before the period of decolonization was connected to a rejection of blackness in America. James Baldwin, the prominent African American writer, recalled that "At the time I was growing up, Negroes in this country were taught to be ashamed of Africa. They were taught it bluntly by being told, for example, that Africa had never contributed anything to civilization. Or one was taught the same lesson more obliquely, and even more effectively, by watching nearly naked, comic-opera cannibalistic savages in the movies."<sup>22</sup> Staniland further postulates that the rejection of Africa prior to the 1950's was further reinforced by white racists claiming that African Americans were "really Africans" and "therefore had no claim to full emancipation in America."<sup>23</sup> King's speech illustrates that the creation of the Ghanaian state was a tangible representation of black achievement that African Americans could point to on a map when confronted by oppressors. With the creation of Ghana, African Americans could be encouraged both in their ancestry and their mission for integration and equal civil rights.

### **GHANA: THE MECCA FOR PAN-AFRICANISM**

In the year following the groundbreaking independence of Ghana, Nkrumah set out to further establish the new state as a symbol of the black free world and the champion of Pan-Africanism. The All African People's Conference in 1958 represented a significant shift in the Pan-Africanism movement, as it was the first Pan-African conference to be held on African soil and in a newly independent state. More than three hundred nationalists from all over Africa, representing an estimated 200 million Africans from roughly 28 independent and dependent states attended the conference. Nkrumah was well aware that a united Africa could only come to fruition after the dawn of independence, and thus the purpose of the conference was to encourage nationalist leaders in their endeavors to "organize political independence movements"

and to strategize how to achieve “non-violent revolution in Africa.”<sup>24</sup> The conference was considered a huge success, and it legitimized Ghana’s status as the torchbearer of an African based call for unity.

Ghana’s growing reputation as an anti-colonial symbol and voice for African unity served as inspiration for many Africans who had yet to receive their independence. South Africa is a prime example of a state that drew moral support from the successes of its West African counterpart. Shortly after the All African People’s Conference, the prominent South African anti-Apartheid publication, *Talking Drums: Commentary on African Affairs*, stated that the conference in Ghana “conjured in the African mind a symbol of freedom.”<sup>25</sup> The conference inspired the up and coming Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba, served as the spark that kindled his nationalist flames, and marked the beginning of his Pan-African outlook.<sup>26</sup> Ghana further kindled the fire for the dependent peoples of Africa by providing institutional support through the Ghanaian Bureau of African Affairs (BAA). The BAA hosted educational programs on Pan-Africanism and served as a hostel for Africans traveling to Ghana seeking to learn about the movement. The BAA also offered a venue for those freedom fighters not able to make it to Ghana to receive encouragement in their colonial struggles.<sup>27</sup> By 1959, scholarly publications such as the American journal *Foreign Affairs* were praising Accra as “the Mecca of Pan-Africanism.”<sup>28</sup>

The comparison of Ghana to Mecca is also a fitting way to describe its relationship to the American civil rights movement. Many African-American intellectuals and civil rights leaders made the pilgrimage across the Atlantic to the famous Ghana during the period of Nkrumah’s rule. For many African Americans, this almost spiritual trip was a singular event and served as a point of reference to which they could identify with the Africans and their parallel struggle against white oppression. Nkrumah actively encouraged African-Americans to take this a step further by encouraging members of the African diaspora to move to Africa and participate in the construction of the Ghanaian state. For Nkrumah, this served two purposes; the first being that he desired to associate the diaspora from across the globe with his growing notion of the “African personality,” and second because he wished to pull in skilled individuals such as doctors and engineers to help build and educate the new nation.<sup>29</sup> Many intellectuals did take advantage of the offer, eager to escape to a place where black activism was actively encouraged. Perhaps the most significant example was that of W.E.B. Du Bois, who moved to Ghana and eventually claimed citizenship. His death in 1963 was widely mourned when the press informed the public that the “undaunted fighter for the emancipation of colonial and oppressed peoples” had died in his Ghanaian home.<sup>30</sup>

Some African Americans utilized Ghana as a temporary escape from political pressure in the United States as the tension of the civil rights movement continued to escalate. Malcolm X is a prime example of a civil rights activist who employed Ghana as a place to refocus and promote his aspirations for the civil rights movement. It is no secret that Malcolm X rejected non-violent methods for more aggressive forms of liberation in the United States. His philosophy for prompting desegregation fell more in line with Kenya than it ever did with Ghana, as exemplified by his call that “we need a Mau Mau in Mississippi.” He explained to the American public with a calculated tone that “Odinga Odinga is not passive. He’s not meek. He’s not humble.

He's not non-violent. But he's free."<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, although Malcolm X disagreed with Nkrumah's non-violent tactics for political activism, he was much more likely to openly identify with Ghana and the African struggle for freedom than King. Malcolm X was often quick to point out that colored people on both sides of the Atlantic were fighting the same enemy, and presented himself as a proponent for human rights, not just civil rights. He had no fear of Cold War name calling and would often expound on the symbiotic relationship found between the two movements. Frequently he would take the time to educate his audience on the global perspective of black activism, claiming that too many African Americans "know too little about... our relationship with the freedom struggle of the people of the world... As long as we think that we should get Mississippi straightened out before we worry about the Congo, you'll never get Mississippi straightened out."<sup>32</sup> Toward the end of his life, Malcolm X took a tour across Africa as a respite from the political strife of the United States, during which he visited Ghana. While in Ghana, he emphasized the same global struggle and stressed to the press that:

All of Africa unites in opposition to South Africa's apartheid, and to oppression in Portuguese territories. But you waste your time if you don't realize that Verwoerd and Salazar, and Britain and France, never could last if it were not for United States support. Until you expose the man in Washington, D.C., you haven't accomplished anything.<sup>33</sup>

The attention and opportunity for Malcolm X to speak about racial struggles in the United States while in Ghana is just one example of the country's hospitality toward African American activists, and in his autobiography, he mentioned the warm reception he had received in the country as an unofficial representative of African Americans, stating:

I can only wish that every American black man could have shared my ears, my eyes, and my emotions throughout the round of engagements which had been made for me in Ghana. And my point in saying this is not the reception that I personally received as an individual of whom they had heard, but it was the reception tendered to me as the symbol of the militant American black man, as I had the honor to be regarded.<sup>34</sup>

## **GHANA ON THE WORLD STAGE**

It is important to note that Ghana was more than just a rhetorical symbol, but also served as a physical representation of the Pan-African fight for continental independence. Ghana placed itself at the forefront of the struggle for independence, and often lent a hand to fellow African states, much to the chagrin of the U.S. National Security Council, which noted that Ghana had a "tendency to support extremist elements in neighboring African countries."<sup>35</sup> The Ghanaian press proudly proclaimed the country's pledge to provide "political, diplomatic and material aid" to Algerian freedom fighters in 1961, and openly condemned any support given to the French through NATO.<sup>36</sup> Militarily, Ghana was the first to actively respond to the Congo Crisis on July 13, 1960, and pledged "all possible aid including, if it is desired by the government of the Congo,

military assistance, either directly and alone or through and in concert with the UN.” By July 25, 1960, Ghanaian troops constituted the largest component of the UN forces in the Congo.<sup>37</sup>

Nkrumah’s Ghana also presented itself as the champion for African cooperation on an international level, and often used the United Nations as a vehicle for African visibility on a global scale. During the Congo Crisis, Ghana tried desperately to shield the event from Cold War tensions and attempted to minimize the involvement of the superpowers in the region. Nkrumah hoped to do so by “claiming for the UN a virtual monopoly of all outside intervention in the Congo,” and more importantly by demanding that UN action in the Congo “predominately be an African affair composed mainly of African troops.”<sup>38</sup> Similar pressure was also placed on the UN to intervene in colonial settler states, such as Rhodesia and Algeria. In 1961, Ghana’s leading UN diplomat, Alex Quaison-Sackey, expressed concern before the UN that the events taking place in Rhodesia were resulting in “another South Africa.” Two years later the Ghanaians returned, asking for assistance in Rhodesia with an eighty-four page memorandum that outlined for the Security Council the atrocities committed by the settler government.<sup>39</sup> In regard to the Algerian conflict, Nkrumah went before the United Nations and provided moral support for the freedom fighting National Liberation Front by declaring to the world, “any person who thinks that France can win a military victory in Algeria, lives in a world of utter illusion, and time will prove me to be right.”<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, Nkrumah called on the United Nations to take action to stop the war and foster negotiation between the parties.<sup>41</sup> Although Ghanaian requests before the United Nations seemed to fall on deaf ears, their presence on the world stage influenced the world’s view of the young country. Both those who supported and those who opposed Ghana’s position in international politics had to recognize that Ghana’s policy placed the highest priority on Africa. As the Ghanaian *Daily Graphic* proclaimed, “It was in Africa that Ghana’s foreign policy really lay.”<sup>42</sup>

## **COLD WAR COMPLICATIONS: AN UNFORTUNATE COMPROMISE**

While Nkrumah was more than willing to utilize the tense dynamics of the Cold War to further his ambitions for a united Africa, he was unwilling to jeopardize the cause of the African continent to support those fighting against a similar white oppression across the Atlantic. Indeed, it is ironic that the same Cold War that allowed Ghana to be so visible on the global stage forced Nkrumah to stifle support for the U.S. civil rights movement. Notably, in the quest for Ghanaian industrialization, the Volta River dam project became a vital cog in the planned machinery for the industrializing nation.<sup>43</sup> In turn, Ghana attempted to increase its pro-western rhetoric in order to court United States funding for this massive project. Although Nkrumah held sympathies for the civil rights movement in America, he would not jeopardize the chance of U.S. funding for the Volta Project by calling out the same American political leaders who could authorize such support. For example, shortly after the events of Little Rock, the Ghanaian Minister of Finance Komla Gbedemah was on a trade mission to the US. During his visit, he was denied service after ordering a glass of orange juice at a Howard Johnsons restaurant in Delaware. Gbedemah was highly offended and expressed his dissatisfaction to New York reporters the next day; a

move that soon prompted a personal invitation to the White House for breakfast with Eisenhower.<sup>44</sup> Nkrumah, however, was extremely displeased with Gbedemah's actions for fear that it could jeopardize the potential for U.S. funding for the Volta River project. He soon contacted the U.S. state department and assured them that the incident had not damaged Ghana's relationship with the United States.<sup>45</sup> The fact that Nkrumah was willing to overlook American racism in order to woo the United States into funding the Volta project is a clear representation of Ghana's commitment to the advancement of Ghana and its pan-African dream over actively supporting black struggles in the U.S.

Similarly, King was hesitant to lend too much support to Nkrumah and Ghana in his speeches, unless the audience was primarily black, for fear of appearing to associate with communism. During the early 1960's, segregationists regularly attempted to equate King with communism in order to discredit the movement.<sup>46</sup> As stated previously, King obviously held Nkrumah in the highest of regards and had no qualms with corresponding with the Ghanaian head of state on a personal level. For example, in 1959, he sent a message to Nkrumah stating that since the independence celebrations, "I have watched you and the growth of your nation with great pride." He concluded the message by warmly adding, "I certainly hope that our paths will cross again in the not-too-distant future," and included with the message a copy of his book *Stride Toward Freedom*.<sup>47</sup> However, due to Ghana's socialist leanings, it was dangerous for King to publically connect his civil rights efforts with his fellow freedom fighters across the Atlantic. As Gaines so succinctly frames the strained circumstance:

King and Nkrumah shared a pragmatic view of Pan-Africanism. Both drew parallels between distinct and far-flung black movements in support of their respective local struggles for freedom. At the same time, each prioritized the needs of his movement in light of the immediate political challenges it faced.<sup>48</sup>

## **LOOKING WESTWARD FROM GHANA**

It is interesting to note that although Ghana's leadership under Kwame Nkrumah was primarily focused on achieving a united Africa, the public of Ghana was informed of the events of the American civil rights movement through the press. The state run newspaper, *The Daily Graphic*, featured a variety of fascinating articles that followed key events of the movement in America. One such example was an article series written by the Ghanaian Isaac Eshun titled "I Was There: An on the spot study of the Little Rock scene."<sup>49</sup> Eshun, who was in the United States via a U.S. State Department press exchange program, travelled to Little Rock, Arkansas during the school integration crisis and recollected his experiences and personal opinions of the event in a two part series upon his return to Ghana. He conducted several interviews with white and black leaders involved in the crisis, and wrote of the incident as an object lesson on the merits of the non-violent tactics that were undoubtedly familiar to the Ghanaian audience. Eshun reported:

The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. Experience in many places has proved that violence as a means of achieving racial justice is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his co-operation and understanding. It creates bitterness and breaks down the lines of communication. This is what has happened in Little Rock.<sup>50</sup>

The *Daily Graphic* also featured articles that examined the racial division within the United States, sporting titles such as “What is the Place of the Negro?” and “The U.S.: A Nation that Lives in Fear,” demonstrating the curiosity of the public to learn about the true racial situation of the self-proclaimed leader of the free world.<sup>51</sup> Although the main subject of these articles was the “colour bar” in the United States, it is important to note that the perspective of Ghana as the leader of the advancement of black peoples is almost always present. One article commented:

Laws are being passed to ensure that the Negroes are given their full rights, but there can be no real settlement or solution of what is called the Negro problem until racial prejudice is set aside. *In this connection Ghana is making a great contribution to the world by exposing the myth of Negro inferiority.*<sup>52</sup>

Some Ghanaians felt so moved by the struggles of their brothers across the Atlantic that while the iconic March on Washington occurred in the United States, a group of demonstrators marched on Ghana’s capital in Accra to show their support for the American civil rights movement. Once more, the *Daily Graphic* featured an article commenting on the events of the Washington march and included a picture of a section of Ghanaian demonstrators in Accra. Although the march on Accra was in support of the diaspora in America, once more African nationalism is present in the conversation, with demonstrators holding signs that read “Remember Lumumba” and “I Speak of Freedom.”<sup>53</sup> The amount of attention that Ghana paid to American racial affairs was thoroughly surprising to Malcolm X when he visited the country, and he commented in his autobiography that the Ghanaian press was filled with press stories that featured articles that read, “Malcolm X’s name is almost as familiar to Ghanaians as the Southern dogs, fire hoses, cattle prods, people sticks, and the ugly, hate contorted white faces,” and “Malcolm X is the first Afro-American leader of national standing to make an independent trip to Africa since Dr. Du Bois came to Ghana. This may be a new phase in our struggle!”<sup>54</sup> The articles mentioned above demonstrate that the people of Ghana were made aware of the American civil rights movement through the Ghanaian press, and they were inspired to a noteworthy extent in their own Pan-African aspirations.<sup>55</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

There can be no doubt that the “eyes of the world” were in fact upon Ghana in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. Nkrumah’s efforts to mold the country into a symbol for Pan-African aspirations, as well as a refuge for black expatriates from around the world, quickly channeled the currents of pan-Africanism through the newly independent



country. At the 1957 Ghanaian independence celebrations, it appeared as though the future would be bright, and there was the expectation that transatlantic solidarity would bolster the power of the global black freedom movement. Nkrumah's famous quote "seek ye first the political king and all else shall be added unto you" appeared to be reality. Although Nkrumah's main concern was African unity, Ghana's open invitation to black civil rights activists and intellectuals made it apparent that the people of Ghana shared affinities with the diaspora in the United States. Likewise, African Americans fighting for desegregation in the U.S. were inspired by Ghana's non-violent victory in achieving independence, and they were encouraged in their own struggles against white oppression.

However, the unfortunate and complicated dynamics of the Cold War politics and economics narrowed the channels through which the currents of activism could flow and soon caused a crisis of expectations in regard to transatlantic cooperation. The climax of this crisis was Nkrumah's willingness to sacrifice speaking against U.S. segregation on the altar of economics for fear of losing American financial aid for the Volta River Project. However, in spite of Cold War complications, the transatlantic link of the two black freedom movements inspired both the Ghanaian drive for Pan-Africanism and the American civil rights movement to move forward in a way that would have been impossible otherwise. The Ghanaian press coverage of the U.S. civil rights movement demonstrates that people of Ghana still actively identified with the struggle of the diaspora in the United States and saw the American struggle against white oppression as an extension of their own. By viewing Ghana's Pan-African influence from a global perspective, it becomes clear to see how the tidal currents of activism flowed back and forth across the Atlantic.

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# PERSPECTIVES

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## Cincinnati: A World War II Powerhouse

*Victoria Lalena*

Between 1939 and 1945 a second global war was fought. Involving a large majority of the world's nations, two opposing military alliances known as the Axis and the Allies formed. Millions of people were called to serve in military units and a state of "total war" was declared. The countries involved in the war put their entire economic, scientific, and industrial capabilities at the service of the war effort, including the United States. It was obvious that no one wanted a second full-scale global war, but when the Germans invaded its neighboring countries, the nations that joined together to form the Allies felt a need to put a stop to Adolf Hitler's uncontrollable reign. For the most part, the United States had remained neutral while supplying Britain with war materials through the Lend-Lease Act in 1941. On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese, which drove the United States into the war. Four days after the attack, Adolf Hitler declared war on the United States and President Franklin D. Roosevelt called on Congress for the immediate expansion of the armed forces. While American soldiers went overseas to fight a war that both the nation and soldiers were forced to join, those at home were doing all they could to help the war effort.

The industrial might of the United States was massive and overpowering; over the duration of the war, American industries produced "86,000 tanks; 296,000 aircraft; 15,000,000 rifles; 5,400 merchant ships; and 6,500 warships costing the lives of 300,000 civilians."<sup>1</sup> Overall, Americans were happy to help win the war despite the rationing of food and gasoline and the elimination of some of their favorite activities. Collectively, cities "organized civil defense programs, volunteer fire brigades, first-aid classes, and – although America was never bombed – amateur enemy aircraft spotters."<sup>2</sup> All of America had to quickly adapt to the changes the war brought on at the home front. Across the country, civilians made daily sacrifices that were instrumental in winning the war. Cincinnati was one of the cities that did so the best due to many efforts not only in industries, but in daily life as well. World War II changed the face of Cincinnati completely, creating new opportunities for some and, ultimately, changes for all.

Due to the government's high demand for wartime products, industries emerged and shifted the focuses of their production and "dozens of Cincinnati companies turned out new products to meet the wartime needs of the government and armed forces."<sup>3</sup> Companies that normally produced goods such as appliances, cars, clocks, and piping responded to the government's request. For example, the Crosley Corporation, located in the heart of Cincinnati, normally produced appliances. When the war came, Crosley began producing plane parts. New industries even opened up in order to help keep up with the demand for wartime products. Located about twelve miles north of downtown Cincinnati, the Wright Aeronautical Corporation was

constructed in 1941 to produce engines designed for aircraft.<sup>4</sup>

Mostly known for its high rank among the numerous metal working industries in the Hamilton County area, the Mosler Safe Company made important contributions to the nation's industrial war production program. For almost an entire century, Mosler produced vaults and safes for banks all over the world and continued to do so even during wartime. Besides meeting the demand for its regular line of products, the company was "turning out great quantities of subcontract work for Cincinnati machine tool plants and is machining a wide variety of armor plate for land and sea equipment."<sup>5</sup> The Queen City Steel Treating Company, located at Spring Grove Avenue and Meeker Street, also played a vital role in the war effort. During peacetime, this company "heat-treated metal parts through scientific processes, imparting to them the hardness, strength, and toughness required for best service"<sup>6</sup> and continued to do so throughout the course of the war. While most factories were changing their lines of production to fit the needs of the war, others continued to produce the same goods due to their importance in the war effort.

Whether it was the Cincinnati Gear Company continuing to make gears, Emery Industries still producing candles and chemicals, or the Cincinnati Milling Machine Company manufacturing machine tools, no one company had a greater impact than the Procter and Gamble Company. Procter and Gamble issued a pamphlet in 1943 stating that the ongoing war was being fought on three fronts: the production front, the home front, and the fighting front. With twenty-nine Procter and Gamble plants, the number of goods produced was tremendous. These plants produced regular everyday products, just at increased levels, which was unheard of to the average worker. Goods such as soap, edible oils, fatty acid oils, cotton cellulose, soybeans, and peanuts were mass produced to satisfy the needs of the military and government. Not only did they manufacture these goods, Procter and Gamble was also responsible for the numerous cooking goods that they produced for both at home and overseas.<sup>7</sup>

On the home front, "millions of men and women workers in factories and shipyards, in mines and railroads, and on the farms, meant mountains of clothes to be washed"<sup>8</sup> and with the mass production of soap by Procter and Gamble, this was possible. The soap that cleaned the clothes of the workers on the home front allowed for healthy workers in the factories to continue producing goods for the American soldiers overseas. The employees of all twenty-nine Procter and Gamble plants were on the job nearly one hundred percent of the time. According to their pamphlet, "victory is also a fulltime home front job."<sup>9</sup> Cincinnatians worked vigorously and were determined to give all that they could to help win the war from home. Nearly every aspect of the needs of a uniformed soldier was produced by Procter and Gamble, and over 1,500 men and women were in uniform because of this single company.<sup>10</sup> Procter and Gamble provided the soldiers abroad and the citizens at home with various brands of personal hygiene products and foods that were necessary for survival. It is obvious that the war called for some heavy duty changes among the preexisting factories in Cincinnati. Overall, it is easy to say that "the war accelerated the consolidation of industry, business, agriculture, labor, and government that had been taking place since the 1890s"<sup>11</sup> and efficiently brought better products and lower prices to Americans. However, the number of workers available to provide the United States Armed Forces

with the products they needed dwindled as more men were called to serve.

With the majority of men and some women from Cincinnati overseas fighting the war, the number of employees working in the factories declined. Due to the extreme need for products to be produced in large quantities, factories, and especially the military (because of their reliance on factory workers for wartime goods), could not afford to lose able bodied workers. Because of the indisputable demand for wartime products, “no groups were affected by the war more dramatically than women and minorities.”<sup>12</sup> However, according to the National Industries Conference Board, in early 1942 the “percentage of women employed in war industries [was] only a fraction of that at the peak of the last World War [I].”<sup>13</sup> When the federal government hired nearly a million women nationwide, they became the workhorses in the factories, with no questions asked. Women, minorities, children, the elderly, and even the retired, were essentially forced into employment to fill the openings created by those who left for war.

Women across the nation were asked by the government to take their places in the factories to insure that products were still produced. In Cincinnati specifically, by the end of 1942 “thousands of women who [had] never done industrial work before [became] regular producers in the city’s war plants.”<sup>14</sup> They did the countless leftover jobs that the few men available could not do alone. At the Gray Company, women were the prime form of labor behind the building of one of the largest machine tools ever developed in the city. In order to construct the 265,000 pound monster of a planer, women were “at work in every department of the Gray plant” and although they were “not the skilled craftsmen, they [filled] essential positions all along the production line.”<sup>15</sup> In some cases, women were even preferred to men for certain jobs. In Cincinnati, “a group of eighteen women were hired to do inspection work in the factories because of their patience and accuracy.”<sup>16</sup> With women who believed in preciseness performing these tedious tasks, factories were kept clean and up to par to insure that the production of goods was at its best. For women who did not want or were unable to work in factories, other opportunities to aid in the at-home war effort still existed, and the opportunities for minorities exploded as well.

Women who did not work in factories performed a countless number of other jobs to help contribute to the war effort both in and out of their homes. For those who did not work outside the home, they contributed to the war effort by “planting victory gardens, entertained soldiers at USO canteens, collected scrap, and more important than that, they sustained morale on the home front during the absence of men.”<sup>17</sup> Growing a victory garden was one of the favorite activities among stay-at-home women as it helped with the food production. Women who were able to leave their homes, “toiled at jobs in which women had always been accepted, such as nursing, teaching, sales, and clerical positions.”<sup>18</sup> With all of these jobs available to them due to the lack of men available, women felt more independent and self-sufficient and matured over the course of the war as they learned what it took to really help out their city and nation.

Minorities also saw a giant opportunity and took advantage. When the need for workers in factories became apparent in northern cities, and especially Cincinnati, “southern blacks migrated from farms to factories, where they earned more than ever

and were exposed to new lifestyles.”<sup>19</sup> However, blacks usually received the dirtiest of jobs in the factories due to the racism that was prevalent in the city. In order to even get factory jobs in Cincinnati and other cities, labor leader A. Philip Randolph essentially had to force President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue an Executive Order that would ultimately prohibit discrimination in war industry and federal jobs.<sup>20</sup> In the end, the demands of wartime bureaucracy saw an explosion in both female and minority employment by the government.

While some children worked in factories, the main way they participated in the war effort was through public school activities. Cincinnati Public Schools were very active in the war effort and used the war as a lesson for their students. Students and teachers found a medium for doing their part in their schools during the early stages of the war. With the goal of preparing students for the real world and allowing them to become efficient and intelligent citizens, Cincinnati Public Schools did their part. All schools in the area participated to the best of their abilities and took part in the accomplishments. Teachers in elementary schools taught their students about the benefits of reducing the use of electricity, gas, food, and other materials, and those in high school learned to knit, sew, and take care of the sick. With the help of their teachers, “53,897 children in 81 schools...made 50 Red Cross flags, 30,000 triangular bandages, 13,000 sign posters, tickets, greeting cards, and programs.”<sup>21</sup> Due to their great accomplishments, on December 17, 1941, Dr. Couter, the superintendent, pledged the Cincinnati Public Schools system to the acceptance of emergency duties and agreed that “it will make available its facilities to any agencies for any activities whose purpose is the forwarding of the total war effort of the community while organizing and administering its own program of activities at the same time.”<sup>22</sup> Cincinnati school efforts did not stop there, however.

Vocational schools were responsible for the hundreds of “soldiers” who became available for the production front of the nation. Cincinnati was an especially popular place for vocational schools which were highly looked upon as training facilities for students who wanted to become factory workers. Central Vocational High School, a combination of five smaller vocational schools, became the number one vocational school in Cincinnati. Principal Roy F. Kuns stated that in the great industrial city of Cincinnati, “it [was] only natural that vocational education [could] and [did] play an increasingly important part and that the best in vocational education [was] provided for Cincinnati youth.”<sup>23</sup> It is argued that vocational education planted its roots in Cincinnati due to its vigorous industrial life and the fact that Cincinnati was recognized nation- and worldwide as a central heart of the machine tool production industries. With their education, more able bodies were available for the companies to hire and direct to factory-work lifestyles.

With the aid of the public, public schools in Cincinnati were able to start collection drives. Cincinnati alone topped the entire nation in different types of collection drives. From mid-1941 through the end of the war, Greater Cincinnati enthusiastically gathered rubber, paper, rags, grease, and metal for scrap drives. The scrap came from factories, households, and collection barrels placed around the city. The “Roll Out The Barrel” campaign started in 1942 and allowed for the placement of one barrel in every school yard in Cincinnati and on busy street corners. Barrels tended to fill quickly

and “when a barrel is filled with two hundred to three hundred pounds of scrap metal it was emptied.”<sup>24</sup> In September, two hundred tons of tin were collected in Cincinnati alone, beating every other city in the United States. Other larger cities were unable to compete with the drive of Cincinnatians. The largest contributions of cans in the city came from the Kroger Grocery and Baking Company, “which turned over to the city 6,000 pounds of the material.”<sup>25</sup> When the War Production Board called for Americans to “contribute 4,000,000 tons of scrap metal in two months, the nation responded with 5,000,000 tons in three weeks.”<sup>26</sup> While this may have seemed like a lot for one city to do all by itself, due to the dedication, devotion, and enthusiasm of the people, Cincinnati hosted many other collection drives with quite nearly the same results.

While the students of Cincinnati were busy doing their studies and aiding the war effort in the ways previously mentioned, they still had one other huge contribution. The students alone “collected tons of rubber and various metals and even collected 2,000,000 pounds of scrap paper.”<sup>27</sup> To the students, this was a favorite and most rewarding accomplishment because they were able to fully understand their duties and responsibilities in a time of need while actively participating in the community. Allowing the students to understand what it meant to be a part of a community was a major goal of the Cincinnati Public School District, and when the faculty and staff saw the reactions of the proud students, they knew that they had succeeded in not only aiding the war effort but in aiding the development of their students.<sup>28</sup>

Grease was in high demand during World War II because of its many capabilities and drives were held throughout the country to collect it in large quantities. Cincinnati was yet again praised for its efforts in collecting grease. Specifically to the area, the Hamilton County Kitchen Grease program was announced on February 4, 1942 and included a long list of factors. The program included things such as “spot checks of households and butcher shops...placement in butcher shops, by Girl Scouts, of official kitchen grease posters and giving out by the Girl Scouts at butcher shops of thousands of kitchen grease leaflets...and the experimental job in a small school area where grease is collected by the school children.”<sup>29</sup> Hamilton County’s residents voluntarily put forth their time and effort to provide help towards the war efforts. The Boy Scouts even placed tricolor barrels around the city and collected the contents regularly.

One of the newest collection campaigns that came about during the war was the collection of keys. Since nickel had been deemed as a critically necessary metal for the war by the government, this new campaign took off quickly. Cincinnatians continued the already existing policies of “‘jolting them with junk,’ ‘bouncing them with rubber,’ and ‘greasing them with kitchen grease’ and participated in a new salvage campaign that tumbled the Axis with a shower of keys.”<sup>30</sup> Sponsored by the paper industry, containers were placed in retail stores throughout the city and eventually throughout the nation. Since nickel was so important in producing parts for planes, tanks, guns, and other goods, it was vital that the government had their hands on as much of it as they could gather to insure a United States victory.

For the entire country, a huge task was at hand. The greatest borrowing campaign in history started in April 1943 as war loan drives started in nearly every area of the United States. The United States Government called upon its “130,000,000 constituents to loan the government the money needed to carry through the world conflict in



which so many millions of American men and women are now participating.”<sup>31</sup> With eight total nationwide drives, Cincinnatians once again came together and put their best foot forward to continue some of the most impactful decisions in the country. With over 8,500 volunteers going door-to-door, Hamilton County exceeded its quota and bought over \$1.7 billion worth of war bonds. As a way to encourage the buying of bonds, Cincinnati hosted special bond sales events in which Hollywood actors and actresses would come to the city and explained why it was vital that the public purchase war bonds.<sup>32</sup> With the heavy purchase of war bonds, the nation greatly aided its own cause at home.

It is obvious that collection drives were a vital part of fighting the war on the home front. Cincinnati alone played a huge role in the collection of so many products. With the high demand for items like tin, paper, rubber, and other metals, it was important that the city of Cincinnati recognize, as a whole, that individual contributions made a giant difference in the war. War drives allowed for not only Cincinnati, but the entire nation, to donate to the war effort and make an impact on the outcome of World War II. Also, as seen in the eyes of the students of Cincinnati, war drives allowed for the public to feel like it had a role in the war effort besides fighting on the front line or working in factories to mass produce goods that needed to be shipped out to the military. In addition to taking part in these collection drives, many young women and girls joined organizations like the Red Cross.

While there were Red Cross organizations located throughout the entire nation during World War II, the Red Cross of Cincinnati made a great impact on the war. With its “Million Dollar War Fund,” the Red Cross of Cincinnati was available to take care of injured soldiers who had been wounded in combat. The war fund included spending money on things such as “home service, blood donor service, disaster relief, first aid, home nursing, nutrition service, blood transfusion service, new nurses, and the Junior Red Cross.”<sup>33</sup> With the money spent wisely, the Red Cross of Cincinnati was fully functional and took on any challenge that was thrown at them. Young girls were excited to join and become members of the Junior Red Cross because it was a way that they could help aid the war effort and eventually be a part of the war relief team.

Located on the Ohio River, Cincinnati was not only a vital city because of the efforts of those who lived there, but because of how easily accessible it was. Due to this, the Air Command Center for Foreign Service was transferred from Washington to Cincinnati on August 1, 1942. The main goal of the newly moved command center was to train pilots for overseas flight missions. The new Cincinnati based command supervised the training of each one of the pilots as they developed their own methods of training and procedures. The duties of Cincinnati were clearly laid out as “purely administrative.”<sup>34</sup> According to Major General Harold Lee George, “Cincinnati [was] the ‘heart and nerve center’ of the vast and intricate job of getting warplanes from factory to fighting front.”<sup>35</sup> After his visit to Cincinnati, he stated that the city was remarkable because of the ratio between planes and accidents. George stated that it was amazing how as the number of planes increased, the accident rate decreased. Also, due to Cincinnati’s location, equipment was transferred to Cincinnati as well. Dock machinery which was normally purchased by the Army to repair harbors that

were completely destroyed by bombers, or demolition squads and boats that were used by the United States Military, were brought to Cincinnati for supervised operations.<sup>36</sup> As World War II continued, Cincinnati became a main hotspot for military training and operations on a scale much larger than factory and collection work.

However, one thing that made Cincinnati especially important during World War II was Union Terminal. Even though Union Terminal operated as a passenger railroad station from 1933 until 1972, it was only used to its capacity during World War II.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the war, Union Terminal was the main source of freight and passenger transportation and by 1944, it was averaging 34,000 passengers daily, most of whom were military personnel. Factories throughout Cincinnati relied heavily on the railroads to move their products, so Union Terminal became a vital friend to them.<sup>38</sup> However, after World War II, Union Terminal returned to its prewar state, just as everything else did. Cincinnati Union Terminal saw less and less action, and by 1972, passenger service was reduced throughout the nation and removed from Union Terminal to a smaller venue.

Because of the collective efforts of Cincinnatians during World War II, it was only fair that they receive high praise from officials. It was clear that Cincinnati was well prepared for the war because of its industrial nature and outstanding community that stood together when the United States needed help the most. Due to the efforts of Cincinnati throughout the course of the war, it was obvious to the people that their city was regarded with greater appreciation and gratitude than other American cities that had tremendous war plants and relied heavily on an influx of new workers while the men were off at work.<sup>39</sup> Cincinnati comfortably and easily handled all of the changes that it had to go through during the course of the war, from an immensely increased population to people being forced into factory work. According to L. C. Woolsey, a Cincinnati man himself, “war is an ill wind that usually blows nobody any good and it seems to be one of the necessary evils.”<sup>40</sup> Even though this was the case when World War II broke out, Cincinnati still made do with what it had and greatly helped with the war effort not only on the fighting front but the home front as well.

With war came the loss of soldiers and the changes that took place back on the home front afterwards. Since around 2,300 deaths were from Hamilton County alone, the lives of families were shaken. In response to this, Greater Cincinnati memorials were built to honor the husbands, fathers, sons, and daughters who had served their country proudly, rather than commemorating the battles that had taken place. At the end of the war, for returning veterans, Cincinnati may have seemed the same as before World War II, however, the city was ultimately forced to change due to wartime experiences and concerns. Cincinnati’s entire skyline changed, along with the locations in which the residents lived, as well as the hopes and outlooks people had for their lives. Industries converted back to the production of their prewar products in a more relaxed and less demanding manner. Women and minorities were also stripped of their wartime jobs and were forced to go back to the jobs they had held prior to the outbreak of World War II while most veterans enjoyed the benefits of the jobs available in Cincinnati.<sup>41</sup>

In the postwar era, Cincinnati continued to change, but at a more radical pace. With the *Metropolitan Master Plan* of 1948, Cincinnati was projected to leave behind

the industrious life that was so helpful in aiding in the American victory of World War II and transform into a modern metropolis. Cincinnati's riverfront and entire downtown area was completely redeveloped from its pre-World War II days, while neighborhoods were refurbished. The oldest parts of the city were even demolished (which forced people to move out into more cramped areas) and the property was given to the interstate highway system which connects Cincinnati, Ohio to nearby states. Cincinnatians themselves even changed their lives and moved out of the cities into the booming suburbs as the population of the city was nearly doubled from its prewar stage.<sup>42</sup> As was true of all major cities across the United States, changes took place because they had to. World War II led to suburbanization, a highway system, airports, civil rights, and the GI Bill.

Overall, World War II changed Cincinnati and every other area in America, and even the world, in ways both large and small. The war itself successfully rid the world of some of history's most atrocious regimes, essentially ended the Great Depression, and brought in an era of unplanned prosperity, while also restoring a strong feeling of patriotism among Americans. World War II also "launched blacks and women on the road to liberation, although the destination was not reached and the road was littered with obstacles."<sup>43</sup> The United Nations was even created as a replacement for the old, worn out League of Nations, to assist in maintaining world peace. The United States had easily become the arsenal of democratic ideals after the war, and even broader than that, the source of world leadership.

Even more drastically, the war changed the lives of every person who was involved in its victory. Whether the students in the public schools of Cincinnati, who learned what leadership was like and what it meant to be a part of a community, the women who took over the jobs at the Crosley Corporation or the Gray Company, or those who fought overseas, the lives of everyone were changed. Soldiers returned home to a world that was completely different from what they had experienced in combat and a world that quickly changed again right before their eyes.<sup>44</sup> Veterans who came back to Cincinnati after the war saw real changes, especially the explosion of industries that had taken place throughout the duration of the war to support the war effort. A few years after, everything that these veterans knew to be home was modernized, and the world of the heroes who were forced to fight a war that they wanted to avoid was gone. Overall, there is no doubt that both the city of Cincinnati and the lives of the people who lived there changed tremendously due to World War II.

At the onset of the entry of the United States in World War II, the entire nation as a whole shifted its focus to respond to the demands of the war. Cincinnati alone played a major role in this process as everyone became heavily involved in nearly every aspect of the war on the home front. With all of America working hard to supply the overseas armed forces and the home workforce with the things that they needed, no city stood out more than Cincinnati. Cincinnati responded to the stringent demands of the government with might and, in a sense, pleasure because they knew that they too had a role to fill in the war. Companies throughout the city agreed to take on the manufacturing of additional products and hired women to insure that the production of goods was completed. Cincinnatians happily led the charts in collection drives across the nation and continued to do their part in any way that they could.

It is not a hidden fact that the city of Cincinnati played a major role in the victory of World War II. As an industrial center of the nation, Cincinnati was responsible for nearly everything related to wartime products. World War II is not a war that should be forgotten about by the people of Cincinnati today. It was their city that was a game changer for the course of the war, and without the dedication of everyone, the outcome may have been different. With all of the changes made to Cincinnati today, however, it seems that it would be nearly impossible for the city to repeat its great efforts in another time of war. Even though that may be the case, one should not forget that the nation as a whole, and especially Cincinnati, played a part in winning World War II.

Victoria Lalena graduated from Northern Kentucky University in May 2015 with a BA in Social Studies. During her free time, she enjoys spending time outside with her dog, playing disc golf, walking, and practicing baseball with her family. Now that Victoria has earned her degree, she is looking forward to taking some time off to relax and enjoy the summer weather. This will be Victoria's first publication, and she is excited to share it with you.

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# REVIEWS

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## The Iran-Iraq War

Rob Johnson

[London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011]

*Review by Harrison Fender*

In the last decade of the Cold War, a nine-year long conflict raged between the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran and Ba’athist Iraq. It was a war that, at times, mirrored the First World War in that chemical weapons were used, and massed formations of infantry charged entrenched positions. It was also one of the few wars where both belligerents used surface to surface missiles against one another. Oddly enough, this was not a proxy war so typical of the Cold War era with the Soviet Union supporting one side and the United States the other. In his book, *The Iran-Iraq War*, Rob Johnson examines the many issues surrounding the conflict, such as each side’s relations prior to the war, the different strategies they employed against one another, the home front, and the role of the international community.

Like any armed conflict, the Iran-Iraq War does not simply begin for one cause alone; there are many background factors that caused Iran and Iraq to go to war. Johnson examines the many reasons why the war began, tracing the tension between both nations as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> Century when the Persian and Ottoman Empires fought against one another due to religious differences and territorial ambitions. Even after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of Iraq, relations between the two were still tense. Johnson points out that the disputed Shatt al Arab waterway as well as Kurdish uprisings sponsored by both countries led to strained relations between them. It not until Saddam gained absolute power in Iraq and Islamist revolutionaries overthrew the Shah in Iran when relations between the two were broken.

Although the war can be regarded as “Saddam’s War”, Johnson explains that both sides hoped to make gains during the conflict. Iraq was hoping to make territorial gains by extending the Iraqi coastline along the Gulf and at the same time quell the revolution in Iran. Johnson also explains that Saddam’s ambitions were to make Iraq the next leading power in the Middle East since Egypt’s decline in prestige among Arab nations resulting from a peace accord with Israel in 1978. Meanwhile, Iran wanted to overthrow Saddam’s Ba’athist regime in Iraq and expand the revolution into neighboring states. To this end, Johnson provides a brief background on Saddam Hussein and the Ba’athist Party as well as Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Regarding the war, Johnson gives information on every major operation and campaign of the Iran-Iraq War. He mostly covers the campaign in the southern front around the Shatt al Arab and the Fao peninsula. It was in these regions where both Iran and Iraq hoped to defeat the other in ground combat, thus resulting in the collapse

of the enemy's regime. However, as Johnson points out, both sides encountered difficult terrain, and their armies were stretched to the limit at times. Iraq was severely outnumbered in terms of infantry, but Iran suffered from a shortage of armored vehicles and aircraft. Johnson also discusses the "Tanker War" in the Persian Gulf and the "War of the Cities". The "War of the Cities" was a terror campaign fought with bombers and ballistic missiles with the intention of terrorizing the enemy's civilian populace into rebellion or submission. The "Tanker War" was an economic war consisting of operations in the Gulf conducted by both sides, including attacks on tanker vessels or oil installations in the Gulf with the objective of decreasing each other's revenue from petroleum. It was in the Gulf, Johnson writes, where foreign powers intervened in the conflict in order to keep the supply of petroleum flowing without interruption.

Besides looking into the campaigns and battles, Johnson also looks at the limitations both sides encountered during a long drawn out war. He points out that, although Iraq had technology and international support on its side, it had to draw out massive loans to pay for its war. Therefore, at the end of the war, Iraq was in debt to neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Iran, on the other hand, had alienated itself from most of the world and had trouble gaining foreign support from all but a few nations. Iran also had trouble gaining spare parts for its equipment which was mostly American made.

As mentioned before, this war was unique in that it was not a proxy war involving the United States or the Soviet Union. During the course of the war, both the Soviets and the Americans found themselves openly helping the Iraqis while covertly supplying the Iranians. As Johnson explains, both superpowers had their reasons for helping both sides. The United States didn't want to see Iran defeat Iraq and spread its revolution to the Gulf States. At the same time, the United States did not want Iran to become destabilized only for the Soviets to exploit the turmoil and influence the country much the same way they were doing in Afghanistan. The Soviets supported Iraq due to a treaty of cooperation the two nations had agreed upon while also supporting the Iranians because they did not want the United States to exert too much authority over the region.

Johnson also analyzes the other countries of the world who decided to either fund or supply arms to one nation or the other. Iraq had the financial support of the Gulf States and used the funds to buy weapons from the Soviets, French, British, and others. As Johnson points out, Iran was not as isolated as it may have looked as it received support from Syria, Libya, China, and North Korea. Indeed, Johnson's analysis of the war from an international stand-point is interesting and informative.

In short Johnson's book is a great start for anyone interested in the recent history of the Middle East, the Cold War, or the Iran-Iraq War in general. The reader will find an easy to read book that contains a mix of not only military history, but also political and diplomatic history. However, Johnson does not provide many maps; only four generalized maps of the Iran-Iraq border and the Gulf are included. When reading about the campaign around the Shatt al Arab, for example, it can be confusing as no tactical maps are provided. Johnson also, at times, makes general statements about battles and will not go into further detail. By the end of the book, most of his focus

seems to be on operations in the Gulf rather than ground operations. Yet, Johnson may have done this because it was here where the war drew the most international attention. Despite this, the book is still informative and provides a wealth of information to those not familiar with the conflict.

Harrison Fender is a senior history major with a minor in English at Northern Kentucky University. He will serve as the vice president of NKU's Alpha Beta Phi chapter of Phi Alpha Theta during the 2015-2016 academic year. After earning his degree, he plans to further his education in graduate school.



# REVIEWS

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## **Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America**

Gilbert King

[New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012]

*Review by Dr. Eric R. Jackson*

It has been sixty years since the *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* decision was rendered. This landmark case was one of five separate school desegregation suits that had reached the Supreme Court, with *Brown* being the first because all of the cases that came to the high court were heard in alphabetical order. The *Brown* case began in 1951, when Oliver Brown and twelve other parents, represented by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), brought a suit in Kansas that challenged the state's public school segregation law and claimed that it was in violation of the *Plessy v Ferguson* decision of 1896. In preparing for its hearing in front of the United States Supreme Court the NAACP attempted to illustrate two important objectives: 1) that the climate in the United States was right to end racial segregation throughout the country; and 2) that the "separate but equal" doctrine that had come to the forefront under *Plessy* contained a contradiction in terms of separate facilities, especially in the field of public education, was inherently unequal.

The NAACP lawyer who argued the case in front of the Supreme Court was Thurgood Marshall. Arguably the most important American lawyer of the twentieth century, and the successor to the great NAACP litigator Charles Hamilton Houston, Marshall compiled an outstanding and very impressive track record for being involved in or winning numerous civil rights cases throughout the 1940s, with one of the most famous cases being the 1949 "Groveland Boys" trial. This little known case, and its aftermath, is the focus of this book review.

In *Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America*, author Gilbert King chronicles the events that brought Thurgood Marshall, the man who was known by many people during the 1940s and 1950s as "Mr. Civil Rights," to Lake County, Florida to defend four African American young men who had been accused of raping a seventeen year old white teenage named Norma Lee Padgett. Within this riveting volume, King contends that despite being barely mentioned in the massive array of civil rights history literature as well as in the various biographies of Marshall, this case "was the key to Marshall's perception of himself as a crusader for civil rights, as a lawyer, willing to stand up to the racist judges and prosecutors, murderous law enforcement officials, and the Klan in order to save the lives of young men falsely accused of capital crimes" (p. 4).

King's *Devil in the Grove* is organized both chronologically and thematic into twenty-two fairly evenly divided chapters that began with a detailed discussion of the nature of Jim Crow and the citrus industry of Lake County, Florida during the 1940s and ends with the decisions of the United States Supreme Court and Governor LeRoy Collins of Florida numerous years later, after the Groveland Boys case first went to trial. More specifically, the first seven or so chapters describe Florida's booming orange industry of the 1940s, the numerous local and regional citrus company leaders who were making millions of dollars from the region's harsh Jim Crow, cheap labor system, and the reign of Sheriff Willis V. McCall, a violent police officer who ruled Lake County, Florida with brutality, violence, and rage. Thus, when Norma Lee Padgett, a white seventeen year old teenage of Groveland, Florida cried rape, Sheriff McCall was the first person on the trail for four young local African American males. Furthermore, when a local reporter questioned the tactics and practices that McCall had used to apprehend and convict the alleged rapists in several newspaper articles, the sheriff proclaimed, "I'm Willis McCall and you're a damn liar" (p. 81).

In the next eight chapters King's book turns to a discussion of the local Ku Klux Klan's ruthless attack, for hours and days, on the African American section of Groveland, Florida, that left many Black Americans homeless. Also highlighted in this section of the book are the number of local, regional, and national events that brought Marshall intimately into the case and the deadly atmosphere of the region. In general, Marshall's resolve was intensified when not only was one of his own associates from the NAACP murdered for his involvement in the case but when Marshall himself received several death threats once he entered the state of Florida. However, according to the author, "Marshall relished any moments in [the] Supreme Court proceedings that forced Southerners to defend their Jim Crow tradition before the country's top legal minds" which "almost made up for the constant humiliation he'd had to endure so often in the courtrooms of the South" (p. 218).

During the next seven chapters, the author focus is on Marshall's almost unstoppable and ruthless quest to prove the innocence of the "Groveland Boys" while at the same time work to end the practice of racial segregation throughout the nation, especially in the area of public education. Of particularly important to Marshall was his appearance in front of the United States Supreme Court to argue the *Brown v Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas* case in 1953 in Washington, D.C. while simultaneously arguing the "Groveland Boys" case in Ocala, Florida. In the end, it took almost every ounce of Marshall and his associate's legal wisdom as well as their various personal contacts, both inside and outside the legal world, to continue to press ahead to stop the execution of any of the "Groveland Boys," who still were alive within the harsh prison environment of Florida. To this end, the author concludes that "Marshall had no other opinions... [but to stop] an execution" (p. 342).

King's *Devil in the Grove* is a remarkable and compelling story that uncovers the fascinating account of a nearly impossible defense of four African American young men who were falsely accused of raping a white teenager in the Klan inflicted area of Lake County, Florida. King's gut-wrenching accounts and almost blow-by-blow description of each and every turn of the trials and tribulations of the "Groveland Boys" continuously keeps you on the edge of your seat. For this achievement alone,

the author should be commended. At the same time, from an academic standpoint, King has done a masterful job in weaving together the fields of history, sociology, and law in a type of detective historical nonfiction fashion. As a result, this book is a must read for anyone interested in any of these disciplines. More importantly, however, this volume has very few shortcomings, and was far above the reviewer's expectations on so many levels. In short, this volume is a haunting and mesmerizing reminder of how far our nation has come from the days of outward, unlimited, unchecked, brutality toward African Americans and the denial of their civil rights as well as a celebration of both famous and little-known men and women, of various backgrounds, races, and ethnicities, who came together to make sure that our country truly upholds the beliefs and promises of the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution.

Eric Jackson is a history professor who has taught courses involving Colonial America, the U.S. Constitution, and Black Studies at Northern Kentucky University. He earned his doctorate at the University of Cincinnati in 2000. Dr. Jackson has written several articles that have been published in the *Journal of African American History*, the *International Journal on World Peace*, and other notable publications. He has also written several books.

