

W. E. B.
DU BOIS
ON
AFRICA



EUGENE F. PROVENZO, JR.
AND EDMUND ABAKA, EDITORS

W. E. B. DU BOIS ON AFRICA





Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

W. E. B. DU BOIS ON AFRICA



Edited by Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. and
Edmund Abaka

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2012 by Left Coast Press, Inc.

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © 2012 Taylor & Francis

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963.

W. E. B. Du Bois on Africa / edited by Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. and Edmund Abaka.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-61132-180-7 (hardback : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-1-61132-181-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Blacks—Social conditions. 2. Race relations. 3. Pan-Africanism. 4. Africa—Relations.

I. Provenzo, Eugene F. II. Abaka, Edmund III. Title.

HT1581.D85 2012

305.896—dc23

2012005497

ISBN 978-1-61132-181-4 paperback

ISBN 978-1-61132-180-7 hardcover

Contents



<i>Preface</i>	7
<i>Introduction</i>	11
<i>To the Nations of the World</i>	31
<i>The Color Line Belts the World</i>	35
<i>A Day in Africa</i>	37
<i>The First Universal Races Congress</i>	39
<i>Africa</i>	45
<i>The African Roots of the War</i>	53
<i>The Negro's Fatherland</i>	65
<i>The Future of Africa</i>	69
<i>Africa II</i>	71
<i>French and Spanish</i>	75
<i>Race Pride</i>	77
<i>Pan-Africa</i>	79
<i>To the World</i>	83
<i>A Second Journey to Pan-Africa</i>	91
<i>Africa for the Africans</i>	99
<i>Back to Africa</i>	101
<i>On Migrating to Africa</i>	109
<i>Kenya</i>	111
<i>Africa: January 1, 1924</i>	113

<i>The Place, the People</i>	117
<i>African Manners</i>	119
<i>Italy and Abyssinia</i>	121
<i>Liberia</i>	123
<i>The Pan-African Congresses</i>	125
<i>Africa—Its Place in Modern History</i>	131
<i>Pan-Africa and New Racial Philosophy</i>	165
<i>The Future of World Democracy</i>	169
<i>“What Is Africa to Me?”</i>	185
<i>The Disenfranchised Colonies</i>	191
<i>The Rape of Africa</i>	199
<i>“Suez”</i>	227
<i>Ghana Calls</i>	231
<i>Independent Movements in Africa</i>	235
<i>Pan-Africanism: A Mission in My Life</i>	237
<i>Africa Awakened</i>	247
<i>Lenin and Africa</i>	253
<i>Introduction to Nkrumah’s Address to the United Nations</i>	257
<i>Report to the Ghana Academy of Sciences</i>	261
<i>Greetings to the World from Africa</i>	269
<i>First International Congress of Africanists</i>	271
<i>Bibliography of W. E. B. Du Bois’ Works Related to Africa</i>	273
<i>Index</i>	279
<i>About the Authors</i>	287

Preface



What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his father loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?
—Countee Cullen

In his 1940 autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn*, W. E. B. Du Bois included the above poem by Countee Cullen and then asked the question: “What is Africa to me?” That is the subject of this book, or more specifically: “What is Africa to W. E. B. Du Bois?” Our approach to answering this question is to assemble many of Du Bois’ original writings on Africa and to add commentary and background to them, as well as provide a larger interpretive discussion in our Introduction.

While Du Bois wrote indirectly about Africa in his 1895 doctoral dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*,¹ it was not until the summer of 1900 that he wrote specifically about Africa. As part of the report for the Pan-African Conference held in London, from July 23 to July 25, 1900, Du Bois along with Alexander Walters, Henry B. Brown, and

¹W. E. B. Du Bois “On Migration to Africa,” unpublished memorandum to Paul Hagemans included in Herbert Apthetker, editor, *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887-1961* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), pp. 43-48.

PREFACE

H. Sylvester Williams wrote a declaration, "To the Nations of the World." (See the first document in this work.) In this remarkably prophetic work, which was almost certainly written primarily by Du Bois, his most famous quote was published: "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line."

In the declaration, there is the remarkable recognition (for this period) of Africa's contribution to world history. It argues that, while the darker races of Africa are supposedly less advanced than those of European society, "This has not always been the case in the past and certainly the world's history, both ancient and modern, has given many instances of no despicable ability and capacity among the blackest races of men." (p. 10). Perhaps even more noteworthy is the declaration's argument that the people of Africa were being sacrificed to the greed of Western colonizers, "their liberties taken away, their family life debauched, their just aspirations repressed, and avenues of advancement and culture taken away from them." Du Bois and his co-authors go on to call for the recognition of Europe's "ruthless economic exploitation" of Africa, and that it be put to an end.

"To the Nations of the World" sets forth many of the themes about Africa that Du Bois pursued until his death sixty-three years later in 1963. It was in London at the Pan-African Conference of 1900 that he began his role as a spokesman for Pan-Africanism and identified the problem of racism as not simply a phenomenon in the United States, but as part of a larger international problem of racial discrimination, exploitation, and colonization. Thus Du Bois laid the foundation for future African activists and intellectuals, from Nnamdi Azikiwe, Emmanuel Kwegyir Aggrey, Julius Nyerere, to George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah—all key future leaders of the modern Pan-African movement.

We believe that Du Bois' significance as an international figure for racial equality and social justice, and as a champion of Africa and its peoples, has been underemphasized in much of the scholarly writing about him—particularly in the United States. The writings collected in this volume make clear how prophetic and important Du Bois was as a voice calling for the freedom of the oppressed peoples of Africa and of the larger Black diaspora. Du Bois did not simply theorize about Africa. He wrote at length about its history, provided eyewitness accounts of its cultures, and championed the rights of its people. In the United States, he was among the very few authors during the first half of the twentieth century who wrote about Africa for African Americans. This is particularly significant considering the fact that writings on Africa by European explorers, travelers, and colonial officials

PREFACE

often perpetuated the idea of an Africa without a history of its own—part of a process of colonization that the theorist Edward Said has described in an Arab context as one of “Orientalization”—a topic we will deal with in more detail in the Introduction.²

Du Bois’s accomplishments as an early author on Africa are even more noteworthy, since there was so little research that was published and available to him on the subject. Particularly in his early articles in the *Horizon* and *The Crisis*, and the early chapters of his brief 1915 history, *The Negro* (a work that is dominated by African themes and content), Du Bois provided a much needed antidote to European models of domination, control, and exploitation.

As a minor note, we have included a number of unique articles, addresses, and interviews by Du Bois on the subject of Africa from the end of his life. These pieces are available primarily in the form of carbon copies in the Du Bois Papers included in the Archives and Special Collections at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Some of these materials have incomplete citations for their sources—particularly English versions of articles that were translated and published in Russian.

* * *

As the editors of this collection, we believe we have a unique perspective. Eugene Provenzo is an educational historian and social theorist who has had a lifelong interest in Du Bois as a cultural and intellectual force. Edmund Abaka is an historian and Africanist, originally from Ghana, who is interested in Du Bois as the father of Pan-Africanism and one of the early scholars who gave Africa a voice on the “world stage.” We believe that whatever the limitations of our work, our perspectives (and we hope insights) have been extended and strengthened by our different backgrounds and interests, and our collaboration. Du Bois, who was at heart a Hegelian, would have appreciated the idea that from our differences could evolve a synthesis in our understanding of his work and his importance to the idea of Africa.

* * *

We would like to thank the different people who have helped us in the development of this project. Mitch Allen at Left Coast Press, Inc. has

²Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

PREFACE

been a constant source of encouragement and interest. We appreciate his imagination and insight as a publisher. Asterie Baker Provenzo has provided careful and thoughtful editing and encouragement. Thanks to Betty Acquah Abaka for her support and encouragement. Regine Darius and Jennifer Serrano helped with compiling texts and final materials. Thanks to them for their help and careful work.

Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr.
Edmund Abaka
University of Miami
Fall 2011

Introduction



WE. B. Du Bois stands as the pre-eminent Africanist and Pan-Africanist of the twentieth century. His remarkable insight and foresight regarding Africa and African-American issues are unparalleled in articulation and direction. He was an intellectual and activist who not only wrote about Africa and people of African descent, but also participated in or helped organize the major Pan-African Congresses of the first half of the twentieth century. Du Bois's interests were varied and far-reaching. His mission was to lead the fight to free Black people from oppression (including colonial oppression) and racism. He wrote on a variety of topics, especially on African Americans in the United States. He also paid a great deal of attention to the idea of the African diaspora. African history and culture constitute a major theme in his work. He wrote about Black people and African history and culture as integral to world history—as harbingers of human civilization, as enslaved peoples, as the embodiment of song, dance, human happiness, and human decency, as also hewers of wood and drawers of water that made the European and American capitalist systems work.

Du Bois, saw both African Americans and Africans under the colonial system, and much of the Black diaspora as a people in bondage. He firmly believed that American society had violated its fundamental democratic principles by tolerating racial discrimination and exploitation, which often took the form of lynching of Blacks and denying them suffrage as well as equal rights in work and social settings. He felt strongly that “abolishing colonialism was part of the worldwide movement for democracy, as was the ending of racism in this country.”¹

In his 1903 work *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois famously emphasized what he called the double consciousness of being an American—the *two-ness* of being an American and a Black, a member of a distinctive

INTRODUCTION

community anchored to the Black race that had its historic roots in Africa.² This metaphor of double-consciousness to depict the two-dimensional pattern of estrangement for African Americans became the twin props on which rested many of his writings—fighting against oppression and racism, and for the rights of Black people in America (a national and civic agenda) and in other parts of the Black world (a global agenda). He saw the causes of these two problems rooted in a colonial system in which white economic and political interests in the United States and the Americas, as well as in Europe were complicit. He rejected any notion of Black or African intellectual and cultural inferiority, an issue over which he had clashed with other leaders of the Black community such as Booker T. Washington.

Du Bois and the Ideal of Pan-Africanism

Sylvester Williams coined the phrase Pan-Africanism in 1900. It was the Atlantic slave trade (a topic Du Bois had studied in depth several years earlier), however, which specifically led to his study of the treatment of enslaved and free Africans (their ideas, events, activities, and oppressions), and eventually gave rise to Pan-Africanism as an idea and a movement.³ Du Bois was one of a select group of individuals who provided the ideological framework and guided public opinion on Pan-Africanism during a period when mainstream historians and cultural leaders considered Africa a “continent to be without a history.” His 1896 Harvard doctoral dissertation, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, specifically linked the history of the slave trade in Africa to North America’s history.⁴ His formulation of key concepts held the movement together, connected multiple groups in the Atlantic basin (North America, the Caribbean, South America, Europe, and Africa), and influenced many of the leaders of the movement to take up the mantle of Pan-Africanism both during and after his life time. These leaders included among others, Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta, and Julius Nyerere on one side of the Atlantic and George Padmore on the other. Padmore attests to this influence of Du Bois when he notes,

He [Du Bois] was not the first Negro intellectual to have a vision of a Pan-African movement, yet the credit must go to him for giving reality to the dream and conserving its ideas until such time as it found acceptance as the basic ideology of emergent African nationalism.⁵

This first generation of post-independence African leaders, armed with Du Bois’s intellectual arguments, often utilized his “humanistic socialism

INTRODUCTION

applied to the African context”⁶ as the foundation for their political programs before and after freedom from colonial rule. Herein lies the basis of Nkrumah’s push for continental African unity, which clearly resonates with Du Bois’s idea of race and colonialism as a worldwide phenomenon, one that drew all the Africans and part of the Black diaspora into a common cause. Thus for Nkrumah, as the leader of an emerging democracy such as Ghana: “The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent.”⁷ Clearly, the struggle for African independence was not just at a national level, but at a continental and even world diasporic level.

Du Bois’s concern for Africa emerged out of comfort in his blackness. He saw the colonial system as one that deprived continental Africans of the right to rule themselves and the people of African descent everywhere, the right to a decent life. To him, the colonial portrait was one of white exploitation of people of color, and of poverty, disease, and ignorance pervasive in the territories of such oppressed people.

Du Bois also believed that the colonial system was the root cause of the two World Wars and that imperialism, colonialism, and racism (as a justification for slavery and imperialism) experienced by people of color had deprived them of dignity, wealth, and even humanity. As a result, as Francis Boderick wrote in *W. E. B. Du Bois: Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis*,

Du Bois’ concern for Africa was not merely a tactical gambit. A deep racial kinship bound him to the [Dark Continent]. He revered the “essence of Africa,” its “internal strife” which had begun all culture . . .⁸

Du Bois too noted this idea as well in 1963, when close to the end of his life he renounced his American citizenship and went to live in Ghana. In a speech shortly after his arrival, he declared himself a citizen of the Republic of Ghana, and how “All the logic of my life” had led him to his new country. As he explained: “My great-grandfather was carried away in chains from the Gulf of Guinea. I have returned that my dust shall mingle with the dust of my fathers.”⁹

The State of Scholarship and Research on Africa in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century

Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow assert that European perceptions of Africa and Africans were until recently rooted in “unconscious phantasies”

INTRODUCTION

which are projected unto Africans and where they live.¹⁰ Consequently, human beliefs and conceptions of social reality “come into being, assume a certain form, and are perpetuated as elements of human culture,” primarily because “they permit individuals within the society to project unconscious phantasies into the external world.”¹¹ Therefore, most of the myths woven around Africa represent collective modes of behavior, which constitute the “acting out of a shared unconscious phantasy.”¹² This fantasy is one involving the inferiority of Africans and the need to bring them closer to civilization and culture.

Marguerite Steen sees Africa represented in the first half of the twentieth century as dark, alien, and evil. With this imagery, she elaborates upon the “conventions of the brooding and implacable jungle and the uncanny powers of African witchcraft.”¹³ Richard Llewellyn’s 1961 work, *A Man in a Mirror*, stresses the image of Africa as an open sunlit land inhabited by “noble savages”—one often juxtaposed against an idealized bucolic vision of England.¹⁴

Africa has excited the European mind since classical times. Yet, most of Africa remained unknown to Europeans until recently. Until the end of the nineteenth century, European knowledge of Africa was largely confined to Egypt and other parts of the Mediterranean coast. The rest of the continent, it was assumed, was dark and foreboding, filled with men with tails, “men with heads beneath their breasts, and men who did not dream.”¹⁵

While mysterious, Africa also held out the promise of fantastic riches. Like El Dorado, the legendary city in South America whose streets were supposed to be paved with gold, Africa held similar riches—ones that were romanticized at the height of European colonialism in works such as H. Rider Haggard’s 1885 classic *King Solomon’s Mines*.¹⁶ In the not-too-distant past, films such as *The African Queen* (1951) and *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan and the Apes* (1984) showed distorted European images of Africa. The notion of Africa being full of howling savages or faithful servants (“sambos”) who were always overwhelmed by the generosity of their European masters, missionaries, and colonial officials out to civilize Africa, had a great deal of appeal in Europe.¹⁷

Haggard’s mythical diamond mines and many of the subsequent fantasies about Africa’s extraordinary wealth were part of a mythology that began with the Portuguese explorations of the sixteenth century, and closely followed by the Spanish and the English in their early explorations of Africa. While these early exploratory voyages did not often achieve the promised wealth that was hoped for, they did create new visions of how the continent could be exploited.¹⁸

INTRODUCTION

These fantasies were persistently reiterated, and over time, the lines between fact and fiction became often blurred. Movies, books, television programs, and even cartoons repeated the familiar theme that African societies have been essentially stagnant and unchanging for centuries, stuck in their primitive customs and unable to grow or change.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, armchair theorists relied on the biased accounts of travelers and explorers through various parts of Africa for material. It was not until the early twentieth century that trained anthropologists began observations in the field. Even then, their work was often tainted by their background, biases, and the secondary sources they used. For most Americans and Europeans, these materials combined with representations in popular culture sources, were the only means of learning about Africa and its people.

As Edward Said has clearly demonstrated in his classic study, *Orientalism*, the constructions of Arab culture (including in North Africa) often tell us more about European culture than the people it purports to represent.¹⁹ Similarly, the colonialist histories of Africa are often as much fictions, as the novels and movies that are used to represent the continent and its complex geographies and people.

As the predominant European power in Africa during the colonial period, the British were responsible, to a considerable degree, for the perpetuation of the myths on Africa. Katherine George describes the European view of Africa in pre-nineteenth century literature as “at best quite absurd, and at worst, the results of malice and cynicism.”²⁰ Interestingly, the British have been ethnocentric rather than malicious and cynical in their understanding of Africa. But the traditions they follow have been around for a long time because authors use the “expected conventional images,” which no doubt add color and vitality to an otherwise dull presentation. In the end, European, and especially British images of Africa are “built out of a stock of stereotypes formulated in highly conventional idioms and metaphors. The typical form is the narrative of travel which appeared from the beginning of British contact and has continued to the most recent present. Travel ranges from the standard trek on foot to travel in every possible conveyance: hammock, bath chair, sedan, jeep, motor cycle, and even a balloon.”²¹

British views of Africa came from many sources, including the seventeenth and eighteenth century slave traders along the West African coast and its interior. During the nineteenth century, numerous explorers flocked to Africa to find the sources of rivers and to map out possible

INTRODUCTION

routes for trade. Guided by a sense of urgency to seek prospects for trade and hampered by weather conditions, problems of supplies, and difficulties of transport, they constantly relied on African hospitality. These explorers, most famously David Livingstone (1813–73) and Henry M. Stanley (1841–1904), were often young, educated, middle-class Scots, ambitious to make their way in the world. They looked toward Africa and other places for adventure, saw a great deal, and described what they saw in detail. More often than not, the bulk of their descriptions were of the physical appearance of people and places and dealt very little with issues of culture, language, and religion.²² Political observations were limited to the commentary on rulers and their entourages, and behavior. Cultural practices that were alien to the European were always considered “savage.”²³

Overall, the tone of the explorers’ journals was remarkably homogeneous. In their compulsion to continue their journeys, they judged the Africans (if they noticed them at all) on their usefulness in helping them (Europeans) in achieving their goals. For these Europeans, all Africans were savages but those who aided them were “good men.”²⁴ The explorers often demanded help and were annoyed if it was not forthcoming. They did nothing to allay the suspicions of Africans as they marched from one group to its enemies with no comprehension of, or regard for, their traditions and rivalries. Their description of African rulers represented an inversion of the British ideal of kingship while chiefs were presented as savages “for whom rule could only mean self-aggrandizement and the unequivocal and brutal exercise of unlimited personal power.”²⁵ European travelers typically found the manners of the people offensive—they were too noisy and their dancing lacked decorum: “. . . when commenced a most grotesque kind of dance in which was more action than elegance and more labour than grace . . . displaying their activity in a manner which was rather distressing than agreeable to witness . . .”²⁶

Religion and customs received short shrift in the travel narratives. The explorers and travelers were interested in the details of the costumes for “native customs” rather than the customs themselves. The costumes, in a way, became the hallmark of civilization or savagery. The explorers did not label the Africans as inferior or ugly. In their opinion, the Africans were inferior because they were savages. The degree of their ugliness depended on the cultural chauvinism of the writer, and smacked more of xenophobic predilections than explicit racism.²⁷

Thus, the Europeans matter-of-factly, consistently, and determinedly accepted Africans as savages and hence, inferior to civilized Europeans.

INTRODUCTION

By early nineteenth century, the writings on Africa and its people became more antagonistic and hostile. Terms such as the White Man's grave became more common and the image of Africa as hostile and repelling was more firmly implanted. In the Victorian period, the books of explorers "exerted an extraordinary power over peoples' minds . . . In the sixties the great outpouring of these African publications began . . . One would have thought that there was enough here to inform, confuse, and finally satiate the most besotted student of African travels, but still the public could not have enough."²⁸ The literature was dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and morality which the Victorian era sought. The accounts stress the values of the Victorian ethos and the explorers appeared as paragons of Victorian manhood.²⁹ The journeys of exploration, financed by missionary and geographical societies, government, and even by the explorers themselves, were all dedicated to grander goals than merely making money. The suppression of the slave trade became the avowed step toward the greater goal of civilizing Africans and no responsible Briton would leave the Africans to their own devices.³⁰ By mid-century, British superiority entailed a commitment to action—the responsibility of the superior for the upliftment of the inferior. Both Samuel Baker and David Livingstone clearly articulated this supposed British responsibility:

It is on the Anglo-American race that the hope of the world for liberty and progress rest . . . But in Africa the land is cheap, the soil good, and free labour is to be found on the spot . . . the inborn energy of British colonists would develop . . . resources . . . By linking the Africans to ourselves . . . it is hoped that their elevation will eventually be the result.³¹

The end of slave trading in the early nineteenth century gave way to "legitimate trade" in African commodities essential for the European Industrial Revolution. This led to a period of informal control of Africa by Europeans, when the "flag followed trade." Consequently European chartered companies, such as the Royal Niger Company, sometimes supported by private armies, exerted significant control over territories in Africa.

Chartered by different European governments, these companies were in theory their "overseas representatives." Together with various missionary groups, they served as the bridgehead for European conquest and control in the scramble for colonial possessions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The colonial economies, which subordinated the interests of the African people to those of the European metropole, intensified the exploitation of African resources and people, particularly

INTRODUCTION

during World War I and II. Thereby, they contributed significantly to the intensification of the struggle for independence.

Du Bois on Africa

Writing on Africa at a time when very few primary sources were available, Du Bois not only attacked the negative construction of Africa's role in world history, but also looked critically at the role of colonialism and the two World Wars in the exploitation of Africa and people of color the world over.

Du Bois wrote at length about racism both in Africa and toward the African diaspora. He fought for the eradication of racism and the decolonization of the continent. These efforts resulted in his playing a decisive role in the Pan-African movement, which he invested with his exceptional intellectual leadership and vision. This was true of not only the 1900 Pan-African Conference in London, but also others held between 1919 and 1945. It was these meetings largely convened in European capitals that became the most important crucibles for training and mobilizing many of the future leaders of post-colonial Africa. It is in this context that Du Bois is best known as an Africanist, and more importantly, a Pan-Africanist, that is, as a trenchant and tireless critic of African colonization, exploitation and ultimately, as the father of Pan-Africanism. Du Bois narrated Africa's plight as an object of colonial conquest and exploitation quite early in his writings. Decrying the European colonial expansionism in Africa and other parts of the world, Du Bois noted prophetically in a brief article written for the American *Collier's Magazine* in 1906,

The tendency of the great nations of the day is territorial, political and economic expansion, but in every case this has brought them in contact with darker peoples, so that we have today England, France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and the United States in close contact with brown and black peoples, and Russia and Austria in contact with the yellow.³²

He further asserted that,

The methods by which this continent has been stolen have been contemptible and dishonest beyond expression. Lying treaties, rivers of rum, murder, assassination, mutilation, rape and torture have marked

INTRODUCTION

the progress of Englishman, German, Frenchman, and Belgian on the dark [African] continent. The only way in which the world has been able to endure the horrible tale is that by deliberately stopping its ears and changing the subject of conversation while the devilry went on.³³

Thus, Du Bois castigates the world for turning a blind eye to the rapacious practices of the colonial establishment, including the “lying treaties” that Du Bois mentions involving various colonial powers that tricked African leaders into unknowingly signing away their kingdoms or empires.³⁴ A leading example of this was the Battle of Adowa in 1896 between Emperor Menilek of Ethiopia and the Italians, which was a direct result of conflicting Italian and Ethiopian accounts of the 1889 Treaty of Wichale. While the Italians’ version asserted that Emperor Menilek had put his kingdom under Italian tutelage, the Amharic or Ethiopian version denied it. Consequently, when Menilek realized that he had been deceived, he repudiated the treaty and mobilized for war, in which Ethiopia defeated the Italian forces and thus staved off its colonial take-over.³⁵ In the matter of murder, rape, and torture, Du Bois was referring specifically to the atrocities of King Leopold of Belgium and his African Association activities, which included amputation and torture of Congolese as a means of intimidation and subjugation. Under the African Association (a personal business consortium controlled by King Leopold), amputations and torture became the lot of Africans who failed to fulfill quotas for rubber production.³⁶ Similarly, the army was used to intimidate and kill villagers who did not conform to the dictates of the Association’s occupying military force.³⁷ Du Bois also wrote about Kenya and of the theft and monopoly of the best land by Whites, and how the attempt to reduce laborers to semi-slavery was one of the worst results of British penetration. For him, the British colonial administration in Kenya represented an administration “characterized by oppression and deliberate hypocrisy.”³⁸

Unlike other uprisings, the 1898 Hut Tax War in Sierra Leone involved a revolt against the colonial tax policies of the British in West Africa, which were meant to dispossess the local population of their personal wealth. Similarly, taxation in cash and kind was also instrumental in the *Maji Maji* revolt in then Tanganyika (1905–6), as well as in the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, among others.³⁹

Colonial land and taxation policies caused many problems in Africa. In Kenya for example, the attempt to turn the Maasai into tax entities provoked rebellion, as did the European seizure of fertile agricultural land for

INTRODUCTION

the colonists. The *Mau Mau* revolt that began in the early 1950s is an example of the African response to British rule in Kenya.⁴⁰

Writing from the perspective of the late 1940s, Du Bois questioned how it was possible for the European powers to effectively take over African interests, and in addition, why there was not a more organized and effective protest against these actions by the African diaspora. As for the United States, Du Bois was particularly dismayed by the fact that African Americans showed such little interest in the struggle on the part of Africans for their freedom:

We American Negroes often excuse our lack of interest in Africa by saying that we have lost nothing in Africa. We are mistaken; we have lost the chance to be treated as men because as long as caste and race discrimination is by common consent practiced in colonial regions in Africa and Asia, it will be current in America. The European aristocracies which are built and derive living and luxury from debasement of black men in Africa are not going to recognize Negroes as men in America and the Americans who ape European aristocrats are going to imitate race hate as their passport to superiority.⁴¹

Du Bois rejected the idea of African inferiority, which was the primary assumption of international groups such as the 1911 First Universal Races Congress in London. Inherent in the attitude of the European and American leaders of the conference was the acceptance of the superiority and civilization of Whites, the inferiority of Black people and hence, their incapacity to rule themselves. Arguments were put forward that the races were designed to develop separately. Many of the leaders at the congress believed that the Black and White races represented different stages in human development, with thousands of years separating the Negro, who remained nearest the ape, and the White man the furthest from the common simian ancestor. As Du Bois explained in a 1911 article published in *The Independent*:

Had these assumptions remained merely academic opinions it would not be necessary to recall them, but they have become the scientific sanction for widespread and decisive political action—like disfranchisement of American Negroes, the subjugation of India and the partition of Africa. Under the aegis of this philosophy strong arguments have justified human slavery and peonage, conquest, enforced ignorance, the dishonouring of women and the exploitation of children. It was divine to enslave Negroes . . .⁴²

INTRODUCTION

Such opinions, in Du Bois's view, represented not only bad science, but also tragically flawed and unjust social policy.

Rationalizing the scramble for Africa, Du Bois noted that,

The answer to this riddle we shall find in the economic changes in Europe. Remember what the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have meant to organized industry in European civilization. Slowly the divine right of the few to determine economic income and distribute the goods and services of the world has been questioned and curtailed. We called the process Revolution in the eighteenth century, advancing Democracy in the nineteenth, and Socialization of Wealth in the twentieth.⁴³

The First World War marked a transition point in the colonial domination of Africa, which led Du Bois to express a significantly new line of thought different from his previous discussion of the European exploitation and Africa in articles in *The Crisis*, which he had begun editing for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1910.

Du Bois and the First World War

Du Bois wrote that World War I “was a war over spheres of influence in Asia and colonies, and in that war, curiously enough, both Asia and Africa were called upon to support Europe.” He noted that Senegalese troops probably saved Europe from the first German onslaughts: “They were the shock troops brought to be slaughtered in thousands by the climate and cannon of Europe.”⁴⁴ Du Bois continued:

One must not forget that incident on the fields of Flanders which has been so quickly forgotten. Against the banked artillery of the magnificent German Army were sent untrained and poorly armed Senegalese. They marched at command in unwavering ranks, raising the war cry in a dozen different Sudanese tongues. When the artillery belched they shivered, but never faltered. They marched straight into death; the war cries became fainter and fainter.⁴⁵

It is to Du Bois's credit that he raised the issue of Africa's contribution to the World Wars all but neglected until a few decades ago. It is worth noting that to this date, no World War commemorative activities of Europe or North America ever pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of African soldiers who had participated in World War I and II.

INTRODUCTION

In World War I, Africans were irrevocably drawn into a war fought by the European powers, most of whom had colonies in Africa and elsewhere. Large numbers of Africans took part in the war as combatants and carrier corps, providing labor wherever needed. Two hundred and eleven thousand Africans were recruited from the French colonies of West and Equatorial Africa, 270,000 from French North Africa and 40,000 from Madagascar, to fight against Germany. This number was complemented with 135,000 Maghrebians who worked in French factories.⁴⁶ Similarly, the British recruited 85,000 West Africans, largely from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Nigeria, together with over a million East Africans. In addition, about 25,000 Africans assisted British troops in France as part of the South African Native Labor Contingent.⁴⁷

Through propaganda and coercive force, the European colonial powers mobilized Africans for war using African chiefs as willing and unwilling tools of recruitment for a “White man’s war.” For most of the duration of World War I, Africa was a major theater of war and campaigns were fought in Togoland (1914), South West Africa (1914–15), Cameroon (1914–17) and East Africa (1914–18) and involved substantial numbers of African troops.⁴⁸

Due to the coercive measures of recruitment, the poor treatment of African soldiers and carriers, and the generally more intrusive nature of colonial policies and intervention in African economies during the war, African nationalism, along with the Pan-African movement, became radicalized between the two World Wars.

In an article in the final months of the war in *The Survey* titled “The Negro’s Fatherland,” Du Bois asserted that,

Africa is today held by Negro troops trained under European white officers. These Negro troops have saved France. They have conquered German Africa. They and their American Negro brothers are helping to save Belgium. It would be the least that Europe could do in return and some faint reparation for the terrible world history between 1441 and 1861 to see that a great free central African state is erected out of German East Africa and the Belgian Congo.⁴⁹

Between the two World Wars, Du Bois organized a series of Pan-African Congresses that would forever change the course of the decolonization struggle in Africa and the struggle of the African diaspora. While he was not the first to convene a Pan-African conference or congress in 1900, the ones under his leadership united all parts of the Black World

INTRODUCTION

and connected people in far-flung places (from Africa to the Caribbean, to Europe and to the Americas) in a common struggle for emancipation from colonialism, racial prejudice, and recognition for the contribution of Black people to world history.⁵⁰ Du Bois's work energized the Black student struggle in London as well as in Europe. West African and Caribbean students in Europe at the turn of the century fought against racial prejudice on the one hand and for decolonization on the other.⁵¹ The congresses of Du Bois and the Garvey movement also strengthened the student movement in their agitation for an end to colonial rule in Africa.

In 1918 when World War I ended, Du Bois was in Paris where he contacted Blaise Diagne, the Senegalese Deputy in the French Parliament, to organize a Pan-African Congress in the city during the Versailles Peace Conference. He hoped that such a conference would ensure that issues of Africa and African people would be brought to the attention of the victorious European allies. In this context, a January 1919 *Chicago Tribune* article (dated December 30, 1918 in Paris) noted that,

An Ethiopian Utopia, to be fashioned out of the German colonies, is the latest dream of the leaders of the Negro race who are here at the invitation of the United States government as part of the extensive entourage of the American peace delegation. Robert R. Moton, successor of the late Booker T. Washington as head of Tuskegee Institute, and Dr. William E. B. Du Bois, editor of *the Crisis*, are promoting a Pan-African Conference to be held here during the winter while the Conference is in full blast. It is to embrace Negro leaders from America, Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti, and the French and British colonies, and other parts of the world.⁵²

The Tribune article added that, "The Negro Leaders are not agreed upon any definite plan, but Dr. Du Bois has mapped out a scheme which he has presented in the form of a memorandum to President Wilson."⁵³

The New York *Evening Globe* of February 22, 1919, described the Pan-African Congress as:

The first assembly of the kind in history, and has for its object the drafting of an appeal to the Peace Conference to give the Negro race of Africa a chance to develop unhindered by other races.⁵⁴

Even though the United States and European governments refused to issue special visas, fifty-seven delegates from fifteen countries attended the 1919 Pan-African Congress. Nine African countries with twelve delegates

INTRODUCTION

represented the continent. The United States had sixteen delegates and the West Indies, twenty-one. Most of the delegates were already in Europe at the time of the war.

The *New York Herald* summed up the outcome of the 1919 Pan-African Congress thus:

There is nothing unreasonable in the Program drafted at the Pan-African Congress which was held in Paris last week. It calls upon the Allied and Associated Powers to draw up an international code of law for the protection of the nations of Africa, and to create, as a section of the League of Nations, a permanent bureau to insure observance of such laws and thus further the racial, political, and economic interests of the natives.⁵⁵

Thus, in 1919, the Pan-African movement sought to gain the attention of European leaders on the world stage. It advocated the establishment or adoption of a Charter of Human Rights to guide the victorious Allies in their relations with Africa as they sought to re-divide the continent, especially the German colonies of Togo, Kamerun, and East Africa. The Pan-Africanists wanted all redistribution to be kept in line with the Pan-Africanist goal of the unification, development, and industrialization of Africa, and ultimately, independence.⁵⁶ They called for a consolidation of the German colonies and the Congo into a large country in Central Africa.

A second Pan-African Congress was held in three European capitals in 1921: London on August 28–29; Brussels from August 31st to September 2nd, and Paris on September 4th and 5th. At this congress, where Blaise Diagne presided and Du Bois was executive secretary, one hundred and ten delegates from thirty-three countries were represented. On September 6th, it presented a petition to the League of Nations. A third Pan-African Congress was held in London (November 7–8) and Lisbon (November 25) in 1923. A fourth congress was initially planned for the West Indies in 1925 but transportation challenges made it difficult to pull off. It was finally held in New York from August 21st to 24th, 1927, with 208 paid delegates representing twenty-two states and the District of Columbia; Haiti, the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas and Barbados; South America; the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia; Germany and India attended the congress. At the end of it, a committee made up of Mrs. A. W. Hunton, Mr. M. Dantes Bellegarde, Mr. H. H. Phillips, Mr. Rayford W. Logan, Mr. F. Eugene Corbie, Mr. Otto E. Huiswoud, Mrs. B. Cannady, and Bishop R. C. Ransom, with W. E. B. Du Bois as chairman, was set up to work on the next congress. However, the problems

INTRODUCTION

of the inter-war years, especially the 1929 economic crash contributed to the failure to convene additional Pan-African congresses.

Even though their appeals to the colonial powers and the League of Nations fell on deaf years, these earlier congresses laid the foundation for the 1945 Pan-African Congress, also known as the Manchester Conference, which, more than any other congress or conference firmly laid the groundwork for the mobilization against colonialism already commenced in many African countries and other parts of the Black World.

Pan-Africanism in the Great Depression, the War Years, and Beyond

The effects of the inter-war years, especially the Great Depression, the labor rebellions in the Caribbean and the anti-colonial struggles of the 1930s and 1940s, and fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1938, facilitated the transformation of Pan-Africanism into a coherent ideology and movement, which focused on the liberation of Africa from colonialism. The 1945 Pan-African Congress organized by George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast in Manchester, England, was attended by Wallace Johnson of Sierra Leone, Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, Joe Appiah of the Gold Coast, Hasting Banda of Sierra Leone, and many others, many of whom would go on to become key figures in the anti-colonial movement in their respective countries and also become the first generation leaders of the independent African countries. The congress affirmed the democratic nature of the indigenous institutions of West Africa and concluded that the artificial territorial boundaries created by the imperialist powers were designed to consolidate their hold over Africa and prevent political unity of West Africans.⁵⁷ The 1945 congress affirmed the "right of all colonial peoples to control their own destiny" and resolved to "fight in every way we can for freedom, democracy and social betterment."⁵⁸

World War II and the post-war years represented a period of heightened anti-colonial struggle in many African colonies—British, French, Belgian, and even in the former German colonies. Their struggles took the form of strikes and demonstrations by workers, peasant farmers, and the educated elite. The movement had incorporated some of the ideas of the Manchester Congress into their platforms.

An important by-product of the Manchester Congress was that some of the participants such as Nkrumah, Wallace-Johnson, and others formed

INTRODUCTION

the West African National Secretariat to organize a United West Africa and to apply some of the perspectives obtained directly to the West African situation. The plan for a Federated West Africa was never fully implemented because stalwarts like Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast in 1947. The ideas and perspectives from the Manchester Conference, however, were relevant in Nkrumah's anti-colonial tactics in the Gold Coast and to his larger Pan-Africanist vision of a United Africa.⁵⁹ They represented the culmination of the ideas and perspectives of the Pan-African Congresses in general and the Manchester Conference in particular. Nkrumah continued to work with George Padmore and in 1957, appointed him advisor on African affairs.

In 1957, when Nkrumah declared, to much fanfare, that the liberation of Ghana was meaningless unless it was linked up with the larger liberation of the African continent, he was putting in place the long term aims and tasks of the Pan-African movement. The contribution of the diaspora to the movement had reached maturation as the movement itself "returned home." Even though Du Bois could not attend Ghana's independence celebrations in Accra in 1957, like other colleagues of the diaspora such as Dr. Martin Luther King, he invested Kwame Nkrumah with the leadership of the movement. It is not surprising that in 1958 the All-African People's Conference in Ghana carried the torch of Pan-Africanism aloft on the continent, and many current and future African leaders who attended this conference would carry the anti-colonial struggle to a logical conclusion in their respective countries.

Eventually, W. E. B. Du Bois relocated to Africa, specifically to Ghana. Throughout his professional life he had championed the cause of Africa in his writings, arguing for the recognition of the continent's contribution to world history. In addition, he eloquently waged a more general war against racism and racial prejudice toward Black and dark skinned people the world over. As an ideologue and political activist he convened four Pan-African Congresses, and with the might of his pen, sharpened and guided the arguments and protestations against colonial rule.

In the final days of his life on the continent that was so dear to him, the continent "from whose loins he sprung," Du Bois continued to fight for the cause of African independence and freedom to his last breath. In our judgment, and as reflected in the content of the articles, poems, and chapters included in this volume, he stands as one of the most remarkable Africanists and Pan-Africanists in history. This volume celebrates and attests to that reality.

Notes

1. Meyer Weinberg, *The World of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Quotation Sourcebook*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992, 2.
2. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ed with Intro. By David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1997, 10–13. See also Meyer Weinberg, *The World of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Quotation Sourcebook*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1992, 2.
3. The literature on Pan-Africanism is vast. See for example: George Shepperson, "Pan-Africanism and 'Pan-Africanism': Some Historical Notes," *Phylon*, No. 23, 1962, 346–58; Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa*, trans. by Ann Keep. New York: Africana Press, 1974; P. Olanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776–1963*. Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1994; J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900–1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Classes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973; George Padmore, editor, *History of the Pan-African Congress*. London: Hammersmith, 1947; Philippe Decraene, *Le Panafricanisme*. Paris: Presse Universitaire de France, 1959.
4. *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870*, Volume I, Harvard Historical Studies, 1896. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896.
5. George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa*. New York: Roy Publishers, 1956, 117.
6. Daniel Walden, "Du Bois' Pan-Africanism, a Reconsideration," *Negro American Literature Forum*, 8, 4 (Winter, 1974), 260.
7. This statement on the old polo grounds where Nkrumah declared Ghana's independence on March 6, 1957, has become one of the defining legacies of the work of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. See: Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology*. London: Heinemann, 1961. Also see: George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?: The Coming Struggle for Africa*. New York: Roy Publishers, 1956; Horace Campbell, *Pan-Africanism: The Struggle Against Imperialism and Neocolonialism, Documents of the Sixth Pan-African Congress*. Toronto: Afro Carib Publications, 1975.
8. Walden, "Du Bois' Pan-Africanism," 260.
9. To Kwaku Boateng, February 17, 1963; microfilm reel no. 79, frame no. 1015; W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in Weinberg, *The World of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 46–47.
10. Dorothy Hammond & Alta Jablow, *The Myth of Africa* (New York: The Library of Science, 1977). Foreword.
11. Ibid. Also see: Paul Bohannan and Philip Curtin, *Africa and Africans* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1995), 6–9.
12. Ibid.
13. Marguerite Steen, *Twilight on the Floods: A Sequel to "The Sun is My Undoing."* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1949.
14. Richard Llewellyn, *A Man in a Mirror*. New York: Doubleday, 1961.
15. Hammond and Jablow, *Myth*, 13. See also: Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 6–7.

INTRODUCTION

16. H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (London: Cassell and Company, 1885).
17. Hammond, *Myth*, 14.
18. *Ibid.*, 13.
19. Edward Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
20. Katherine George, *The Civilized West Looks at Primitive Africa: 1400–1800*, *isis*, 49 (1958): 62–72.
21. Hammond, 17.
22. Hugh Clapperton, *Journal of a Second Expedition into the Interior of Africa*, and the *Journal of Richard Lander* (Philadelphia, 1829), 3; Captain William Allen and T. R. H. Thompson, *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger in 1841*. 2 vols. (London, 1848), I, 218–19; Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa, 1795, 1796 and 1797* (London, 1799), 62–63. Hammond, 31
23. Hammond, 30–31.
24. Hammond, 32.
25. Hammond, 35.
26. Alexander Laing, *Travels in the Timannee, Kooranko and Soolima Countries* (London, 1825), 320.
27. Hammond, 37.
28. Alan Moorehead, *The White Nile* (New York, 1960), 61–62.
29. Hammond, 52.
30. Hammond, 54.
31. David Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries; and of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa, 1858–1864* (London: John Murray, 1865).
32. *Collier's Weekly*, October 20, 1906, 30.
33. Africa—Its Place in Modern History, 1930, 42; Weinberg, *The World of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 48.
34. A. Adu Boahen, *UNESCO General History of Africa. Vol. VII. Africa Under Colonial Domination, 1880–1935*. Paris: UNESCO; London: Heinemann, 1985; Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*.
35. Albert Adu Boahen, editor, *UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. VII. Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880–1935*. Paris: UNESCO; London: Heinemann, 1985. Albert Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. Also see: Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855–1991*. 2nd edn. Oxford: James Currey; Athens: Ohio University Press; Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2001.
36. *King Leopold's Ghost*. See also: Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: 1876–1912* (New York: Random House, 1991), especially Chapter 32, “The Severed Hands.”
37. Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Boston: Mariner Book, 1999).
38. People's Voice, January 3, 1948; Newspaper Columns by W. E. B. Du Bois (1986), 841. In Weinberg, *The World of W. E. B. Du Bois*, 48.
39. See Edmund Abaka, “Portuguese Africa,” in Toyin Falola (ed.), *Africa. Vol. IV. The End of Colonial Rule: Nationalism and Decolonization*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002, 379–96.
40. For a response to British policies in Kenya see writings on the Land and Freedom Army, contemptibly called the mau mau, such as Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*. Oxford: James Currey, 1989. See also: Olayemi Akinwumi, “Ngugi Wa Thiong'o on Colonial and Neo-Colonial Kenya,” in Toyin Falola, ed.,