

Introduction

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I am extremely proud to present this sixth volume of our undergraduate research journal in the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies. Some of the papers in this issue were originally presented at our annual undergraduate research conference, where the best of our students exhibit their love of learning and commitment to research in the sciences and the humanities.

As in previous years, this volume contains papers focused on several burning issues in the world today, including those of the liberation of the people of Africa and their descendants in the diaspora from discrimination, oppression, and injustice; climate change and the fight against global warming; and related problems of economic and social change. Kimathi Muiruri opens the presentation with a discussion of the short-lived but rich Pan-African work of former Burkina Faso revolutionary leader and president Thomas Sankara. Focusing on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Sophia Fantauzzi reexamines the desegregation of public schools in North Carolina, the role that the US Supreme Court decisions on *Brown vs. the Board of Education* had on this process, and, most importantly, the role that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Black community groups played in bringing about change in this state and the South as a whole.

Bringing these two sides of the struggle of Africans and peoples of African descent together, Mina Yakubu examines the interconnectedness of Black liberation, with emphasis on the political relationships between African and African American leaders. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the most influential American civil rights leader of the 1950s and 1960s, attended, along with his wife Coretta Scott King, the Independence of Ghana ceremony in March 1957. Other prominent US leaders to emphasize this linkage included the distinguished scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, who eventually became a Ghanaian citizen and is buried in Accra, Ghana's capital, the Black liberation leader Malcolm X, and the writer and activist Lorraine Hansberry.

The Green Belt Movement, the militant organization for environmental protection and human rights that Dr. Wangari Maathai organized in Kenya, with branches in a few other African countries, is examined by Kyende Kinoti in its three major impacts, namely mobilizing women to protect the environment by planting millions of trees and to promote democracy, to fight global warming, and to engage in economic and social development ventures. Women were also foot soldiers in the Montgomery (Alabama) bus boycott led by Rosa Parks and the Rev. King, and in numerous other demonstrations all over the United States against racism and all forms of discrimination. How religion impacted this struggle is examined by Amaya Graham in her article on how the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the civil rights organization that Dr. King and other preachers founded to fight Jim Crow, used religion as a weapon of liberation.

Finally, the issue ends with a review by Carley Wetzel of the outstanding book *Toward Freedom: The Cost of Race Reductionism* (Verso 2020) by Touré F. Reed, who continues to challenge established dogma in the progressive tradition of Adolph Reed Sr. and Jr., his grandfather and father.

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