

The Interconnectedness of Black Liberation: The Cross-Political Relationship of African and African American Leaders in the Struggle for Independence and the Civil Rights Movement (1950–60)

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ABSTRACT

The linkages between African and African American freedom advocates began long before their demands actualized in the latter half of the 1950s and early 1960s. Some of the leaders of this global Black movement for self-determination met when they were students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States, notably, Lincoln University and Howard University. While these movements and their aims were generally connected, this article examines the close relationships of their political leaders. It was partly through their relationships that they were able to advance their political demands for freedom. The article explores the cross-political ties of African leaders Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe, and of African American leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois, in their respective movements for human rights recognition from 1950 to the early 1960s. This was a time in which legal segregation and racial violence targeted Black people in the United States and the presence of European colonialism encroached on the sovereignty of Africans. This article explores how these political relations and the events of these movements influenced one another. This research intends to help readers understand the interconnectedness of the global Black struggle for self-determination, specifically as it relates to African American Civil Rights leaders and the leaders of independence movements in Africa like Azikiwe and Nkrumah, who would become the first presidents of Nigeria and Ghana, respectively.

Keywords: de-colonization, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Pan-African, Ghana, Nigeria

Introduction

The anti-colonial movements on the African continent and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States transcended their respective borders through leaders who believed it was an era of global Black self-determination in the face of European-descended oppressors. These leaders believed the freedom of one group was entwined with the liberation of the other. The linkages of these communities existed long before their demands for self-determination actualized in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some of these linkages resulted from the education of future political and intellectual leaders at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the US. The period's defining events also strengthened the bond between the two communities as they

significantly spurred anti-colonial sentiment, namely, the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935,¹ World War II, and the fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945. This article traces the development of racial solidarity between these two groups by exploring the personal relationships between the movements' leaders and how two prominent African American organizations, the Council on African Affairs (CAA) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), supported the anti-colonial movement on the African continent. The article aims to help readers understand the interconnectedness of the global Black struggle for self-determination, specifically as it relates to African American Civil Rights leaders and African independence leaders, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah, who would become the first presidents of Nigeria and Ghana, respectively.

Literature Review

The literature on this topic primarily agrees that specific events, notably the fifth Pan-African Congress (1945) and Ghana's independence (1957), inspired global solidarity for Black freedom and that the CAA led the African American solidarity campaign. However, there is disagreement about a long-held consensus—that the NAACP's anti-colonial advocacy declined at the dawn of the Cold War and the pronouncement of the Truman Doctrine in 1947. Thus, the linkage that unified African Americans and Africans significantly weakened, especially following the CAA's dissolution in 1955. Amid the Cold War, their relationship was redefined and constrained within the binary of support for either American imperialism or African decolonization. The latter was seen as a threat to Western democracy because independence across the continent presented potential frontiers for communism.

Penny Von Eschen, author of *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957*, asserts that the two groups predominately split along these lines: Africans were for decolonization, while prominent African American organizations, specifically, the NAACP, gave public support to America's imperialist policies. Von Eschen's claim is echoed by scholars like James L. Roark, in his piece "American Black Leaders: The Response to Colonialism and the Cold War, 1943–1953." However, Carol Anderson, author of *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941–1960*, disagrees, suggesting that the NAACP's anti-colonial advocacy did not dissipate in the late 1940s but simply evoked another way of fighting. These assertions are not mutually exclusive. However, while the NAACP did not completely renounce its support for anti-colonial movements, it deprioritized its anti-colonial efforts (at the expense of Africans negatively affected by American policies) for fear they might interfere with its advancement on domestic issues. This shift was evident at the All African Peoples' Conference (AAPC) in December 1958, where African Americans were severely underrepresented (Tunteng 1974, 44).

Aside from this disagreement, there is a general consensus about the unique role of the CAA and the defining events of the period. Von Eschen (1997) and Alhaji Conteh (2016) agree that the CAA was a rarity because the organization centered its advocacy efforts to advance decolonization movements across Africa. P. Kiven Tunteng (1974) and Kwadwo Afari-Gyan (1991) share similar viewpoints about the influence of the fifth Pan-African Congress, asserting

¹ Ethiopia was a symbolic beacon of African independence and the defeat of colonial forces. It was considered the last frontier for African, and more broadly Black, self-determination. Accordingly, African Americans supported Ethiopians as they fought to stave off Italian invaders in 1935.

that it led the charge for demanding independence. Preceding the Congress, the conclusion of World War II weakened European colonizing nations, especially France and Britain, and revived independence movements across Africa. These factors, along with the young African leaders at the Congress, set the tone for advancing self-determination. Furthermore, Ghana's independence was an influential event that George Padmore (1957, 1971) viewed as the first fruit of the Congress. Ghana's independence helped positively redefine the essence of African Americans' connection to Africa (Meriwether 2002). The impact of these defining events were global, as was the Black Freedom Movement.

Presently, the literature lacks microanalyses of individual relationships and how those informed the interconnected, globalized prism of Black liberation in the twentieth century, as well as explorations of women's roles in this movement. The few works that have analyzed cross-continental friendships of those committed to Black liberation, like Obiwu's "The Pan-African Brotherhood of Langston Hughes and Nnamdi Azikiwe" and Afari-Gyan's "Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore and W.E.B. Du Bois," mention the existing gap in the literature. Notably, the infrequent study and mention of women's contributions to the movement further the erasure of women. Save for Contah's "Forging A New Africa: Black Internationalism and the Council on African Affairs, 1937–1955," women's leadership is particularly under discussed. For example, there is little mention of Mary McLeod Bethune's election as CAA chairperson on April 21, 1948 (NAACP Papers 1948, Part 14). Amy Ashwood Garvey, in her address at the fifth Pan-African Congress, stated that "very much has been written and spoken of the Negro, but for some reason very little has been said about the black woman—she has been shunted into the social background to be a child bearer—this has been principally her lot" (Høgsbjerg 2016). As women were key leaders in the collective movement, more research should acknowledge their contributions so as not to perpetuate their erasure.

African Students' Relationships and Experiences at HBCUs

HBCUs have a long history of educating African students. Since their inception, they have served as sacred, private spaces for Black students to engage with their peers, instructors, and administrators in strategizing for liberation. Race consciousness has been central to HBCUs and has remained a guiding force in the work of HBCU graduates. Despite existing in a white supremacist society, HBCUs have acknowledged the harsh realities of Black people in the US and assembled networks of leaders committed to global racial uplift, serving as formidable grounds for the development of future African and African diasporic leaders.

Attending HBCUs fundamentally shaped African students' political outlook and their understanding of the interconnected global Black liberation struggle. One of the earliest examples was Reverend John Chilembwe, a native of British colonial Nyasaland, or present-day Malawi.² Upon graduating from the Virginia Theological College and Seminary, Chilembwe, returned home in 1900. There, he led a historic revolt known as the Chilembwe Uprising of 1915, where the native people rose up against European colonial settlers. Although the uprising was quelled in twelve days with the death of Chilembwe, it left Europeans uneasy about their

² New nations were not born at the pronouncement of independence; rather, existing nations were freed from their colonial oppressors. Throughout this article, former colonial names are only mentioned sparingly because, out of respect, the author prefers to reference these regions by the names they chose for themselves and not the names that are often symbolic of colonial interests in their region.

colonial mission. The native people celebrated Chilembwe's bravery. His commitment to the revolutionary overthrow of colonial masters was heavily informed by his time in Virginia, a state with an extensive history of enslaved peoples' rebellions (Shepperson and Price 1958, 106). As a student, Chilembwe likely heard about rebellions like John Brown's Harpers Ferry of 1859. The Chilembwe Uprising shared similar aims with Brown's Harpers Ferry insofar as both sought to take hold of local armories and kill white people who had helped maintain the people's oppression. As exemplified by Chilembwe, the education of African students at HBCUs informed their anti-colonial advocacy efforts and connected them to African American leaders who themselves were advocating for equal rights recognition.

After graduation, many of these students returned home to lead their nation's independence movements. This was the case of Nkrumah and Azikiwe, who both returned to the African continent after graduating, prepared to continue the struggle for independence from Britain, which had colonized the Gold Coast, present-day Ghana, and Nigeria.

Azikiwe attended two HBCUs, Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and Howard University in Washington D.C., before graduating from Lincoln University of Pennsylvania in 1930 (Azikiwe 1970, 145). Nkrumah, a protégé and friend of Azikiwe, set his sights on obtaining an American education after he met fellow Ghanaian James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey, a Livingston College graduate (Nkrumah 1957, 15). Yet, it was Azikiwe who encouraged Nkrumah to attend Lincoln University. After graduating from Lincoln, both Azikiwe and Nkrumah taught courses there and maintained contact with Horace Mann Bond, the Lincoln University president. Bond said, in 1947, that Azikiwe was "the justification of a great people struggling to rise from modern slavery; and, unaided, throwing off the chains of economic exploitation and colonialism. He is the justification for humanity itself" (Horace Mann Bond Papers 1947). Nkrumah and Azikiwe marked their place as esteemed alumni when they were bestowed honorary doctorates in law, Nkrumah in 1951 from Lincoln, and Azikiwe in 1954 from Howard (Nkrumah 1957, 157; Azikiwe 1970, 148). Azikiwe also received an honorary doctorate in literature from Storer College, making him one of two people in its history to receive an honorary degree (Burke 2004, 303).

The men knowingly sought education at Lincoln to, as Nkrumah states, return "prepared to serve [their] fellowman" (Clarke 1974, 10). As such, Nkrumah familiarized himself with African American political organizations, including the NAACP, the CAA, the Committee on Africa, and the Committee on African Students. He joined these organizations to better understand how they organized to advance their mission, to inform his efforts upon returning to Ghana (Nkrumah 1957, 45). While a student, Azikiwe wrote for *The Hilltop* and *The Lincolnian*, the school newspapers of Howard and Lincoln University, respectively (Azikiwe 1965, 2). He became involved with the Black press and became a *Baltimore Afro-American* and *Philadelphia Tribune* correspondent. Additionally, some of his articles were published in *The Crisis*, the NAACP's official magazine (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1960). On his coursework, Azikiwe asserted that his "studies in political science gave [him] the necessary background for [his] life's work" (1970, 117). In particular, he referenced Professor Tunnell's political science class, where he "learned from him the need to organize resistance to political misrule" and that "freedom was a universal gift [and] a birthright of humanity of which the Negro was a co-inheritor" (1970, 117). This belief that no race was inferior and that people were equally deserving of the same rights helped deconstruct for Azikiwe the paternalist defense of colonial rule, which suggested colonized Africans were incapable of ruling themselves. The skills and insights Nkrumah and Azikiwe developed in the US aided them in the anti-colonial struggle. Azikiwe, following a brief stint in

Ghana as the founding editor of the *African Morning Post*, returned to Nigeria and founded the *West African Pilot*, a daily anticolonial newspaper that sparked nationalist sentiment. The two men's HBCU experiences equipped them with the skills necessary to realize independence; however, their experiences beyond the campus exposed them directly to the ills of racism in the US.

In his autobiography, Nkrumah recounts routinely experiencing racial segregation in public spaces. He specifically details a time when he travelled below the Mason-Dixon line and was refused water in Baltimore (1957, 42). Even after enduring racially segregated spaces, the aforementioned encounter struck him as particularly dehumanizing. He also learned about the Black experience in the US by preaching at African American churches and conducting a research project, commissioned by the Presbyterian Church, on Black life in Philadelphia. As part of this project, he conversed with hundreds of Black community members. He said that this research exposed him to the African American community in Philadelphia and to racism in the US (Nkrumah 1957, 42).

While in the US, they developed relationships with people who shared their vision for Black liberation. Azikiwe became friends with Simeon Bankole Wright of Sierra Leone and Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse, later George Padmore, of Trinidad. As Nkrumah was learning about the interconnected global plight of Black people, he also maintained a keen interest in events taking place in Africa. Eventually, in 1945, he would serve as a joint secretary of the fifth Pan-African Congress alongside his friend George Padmore. It was there that he engaged with W.E.B. Du Bois, the widely acclaimed father of modern Pan-Africanism, an ideology and “belief that people of African descent have common interests and should be unified” (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1963).

The 1945 Fifth Pan-African Congress

The 1945 Pan-African Congress galvanized support for Black self-determination and placed emphasis on the immediate realization of independence for colonized African people. The Congress brought together leaders from Africa and the diaspora and cemented the foundation of a global Black solidarity network. This Congress was the most politically significant one, primarily because it occurred after World War II, a war that reinvigorated calls for independence and equal rights for Black people. Upon arrival, delegates were greeted by the flags of Ethiopia, Haiti, and Liberia, the only independent Black nations at the time (Working Class Movement Library 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester). Independence was in the air as African and African American delegates worked with the reference point of their neighbor's independence in mind.

The sheer number of countries and organizations represented heightened the importance of the Congress. Padmore described it as “the largest and most representative Congress yet convened” (1957, 148–49). There were more African countries represented at this Congress than ever before, although they were all Anglophone. In attendance were Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Hastings Banda of Nyasaland (present-day Malawi), Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), and I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson of Sierra Leone.

Most notably, the Congress ushered in a new generation of young leaders, namely Nkrumah, Kenyatta, and Padmore, who served on the Congress's committees. There was a shift from the predominantly African American leadership of past years to include younger African and African diasporic leaders. Their presence and ongoing engagement with the decolonizing efforts in their respective countries fostered a sense of urgency to obtain independence for colonized

African people at all costs. They were not interested in negotiating for gradual independence or a semi-autonomous state; their aim was to lead the charge for immediate independence. In fact, shortly before the Congress began, the Pan-African Federation in Britain, whose leaders helped organize the Congress, wrote a stern letter dated September 1945 to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, calling imperialism evil and demanding the immediate right to self-determination for colonized people (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1945).

Effectively, this conference linked the struggles of all Black people to a common oppressor—white people of European origin who maintain racist systems, like colonialism and Jim Crow, which denied Black people their human rights. Thus, the victories of one movement were not isolated from the global vision of Black self-determination. Independence from colonial rule was first realized under Nkrumah's leadership when Ghana gained its independence on March 6, 1957.

An Influential Cross-Continental Event

Ghana's independence was celebrated by Ghanaians and Black people globally as a momentous feat toward collective liberation. Ghana's independence fueled allied movements in Africa as well as the US Civil Rights Movement. At the 1958 AAPC, Nkrumah said to African leaders, "now you've seen an independent state...go on and free your part of Africa" (Shepperson 2008, 51). Similarly, African Americans like Martin Luther King Jr. referenced the success of the Ghanaian independence movement in speeches to re-energize the spirit for civil rights and racial equality. In "The Birth of a New Nation," Dr. King emphasized that, like Ghanaians, African Americans had to exercise persistent resistance against unjust systems in their civil rights fight. He told his audience, "Ghana has something to say to us. It says to us first that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed. You have to work for it."

The continued coverage of Ghanaian independence by the Black press in the US heightened African Americans' awareness of the feats of African anti-colonial movements. Ghana's independence led African Americans to reexamine their relationship to the African continent (Meriwether 2002, 8). Rather than being cast away, Africa was now centered as a source of pride and hope.

The Council on African Affairs

Many African American scholars and activists of the period saw themselves as working in partnership with African people toward a shared goal of Black liberation. This spirit of collective liberation was the essence of the CAA, originally co-founded in 1937 by Paul Robeson and Max Yergan as the International Committee on African Affairs (ICAA). The organization's initial purpose was to educate the American public about the events in Africa, from the perspective of Africans (Von Eschen 1997, 18). The CAA fulfilled its purpose primarily with its monthly publication entitled *New Africa*. Following a restructuring in the 1940s, the CAA diversified its advocacy efforts to include fundraising, lobbying, and campaigning in support of African self-determination (Von Eschen 1997, 20). The publication was widely distributed among a readership that included universities, civic organizations, and African American newspapers. Its articles also appeared in many mainstream publications for which Alphaeus Hunton, *New Africa's* longtime editor, served as a correspondent (Conteh 2016, 35). *New Africa* was a pioneering US-based publication that centered African voices and not the narratives of colonializing oppressors commonly propagated by mainstream media. It regularly cited African-

based newspapers like Azikiwe's *West African Pilot*, and Hunton, through his friendships with African leaders like Azikiwe, Nkrumah, and Kenyatta, kept abreast of the latest developments in their independence movements (Conteh 2016, 33). *New Africa* kept its readers informed about African independence movements and served as an eminent platform for Africans to share their perspectives with a broader audience.

However, the publication's solidarity with African independence advocates and critique of the colonial project made it a target of colonizing nations struggling to maintain hold of the regions they colonized and thwart the growing independence movement. Consequently, *New Africa* was banned in Kenya, the Belgian Congo, and South Africa (Sherwood and Adi 2003, 91). *New Africa* supported the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army (KAU), or the Mau Mau, unlike mainstream media. Its alignment with the KAU's ideals led to a critique of the NAACP in the article "The NAACP Convention and the Question of African Freedom," which asserted that the NAACP was not an outward supporter of African liberation (Conteh 2016, 57). *New Africa's* articles contextualized the KAU's cause, citing that its actions were in response to the violence endured under British colonization. The publication's support continued even as the colonial administration imposed a state of emergency in 1952, in which the rule of law was suspended and suspected KAU members were arrested en masse.

New Africa's amplification of independence movements was not uncritical of African leaders, nor did it only amplify the political elite. In fact, it sometimes targeted people with whom the editor and other CAA board members had close relations. In a few instances, namely the damming of the Volta River and the increased taxation on cocoa farmers in Ghana's Ashanti region, its articles condemned Hunton's longtime friend Nkrumah's actions (Conteh 2016, 55–56), expressing concern that Nkrumah was not working in the best interest of Ghanaians and African self-determination. However, there were moments when its amplification of African figures led the publication to side with a gradual realization of independence of African countries, as opposed to an immediate declaration of independence from colonizing countries. Over time, the publication shifted its position to advocate for the immediate declaration of independence (Conteh 2016, 44).

The CAA's support was not restricted to *New Africa*. Equally as important were the conferences and fundraisers held to support movements in Africa. The CAA's 1944 conference "Africa—New Perspectives" was attended by Nkrumah, a then-Lincoln University student and member of the African Students Association (Sherwood and Adi 2003, 91). The conference was held in collaboration with ten sponsors including the African Students Association, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), and the First Episcopal District AME Church in Pennsylvania (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1944). The CAA also held rallies and fundraisers to support movements in Africa. In 1946, they hosted "Help Africa Day" and raised \$5,000 and collected 22,000 cans of food. Of this, the CAA donated the food and \$1,700 to help South Africans combat famine (Conteh 2016, 50). Additionally, it launched a fundraising campaign on April 24, 1954 to support Kenyans facing rights abuse under British colonial forces (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1954). The CAA's relentless support of colonized African nations made it the leading organization in the African American solidarity campaign for decolonization.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

The NAACP, unlike the CAA, was primarily concerned with the domestic plight of African Americans. However, at the urging of internal actors like W.E.B. Du Bois and Channing H. Tobias, who were more closely aligned with African independence movements, the organization

publicly acknowledged the interconnectedness of racialized systems of oppression that maintained the second-class conditions of Africans and African Americans. At the NAACP's board of directors meeting on December 9, 1946, in a discussion concerning Director of Special Research Du Bois's memorandum calling for the organization to produce pamphlets about the situation on the African continent, both Du Bois and Tobias urged the board to advocate alongside African people and oppose colonialism. Tobias asserted, "we cannot be ignorant of what is going on in Africa" (NAACP Papers 1946, Part 16). It is evident that the NAACP recognized the freedom struggle across Africa, yet its actions in solidarity with Africans were not at the top of its agenda. This is not to say the organization was reluctant; in fact, it was a willing supporter of Africans' struggles, although it rarely initiated any action. Nevertheless, the NAACP did recognize the linkages that connected the domestic predicament of African Americans to the international condition of Africans under colonial regimes. This staged the backdrop for its support of anti-colonial movements in the 1930s and 1940s, primarily through government lobbying, that is, until the Cold War and the growing suspicion of communism led the organization to distance itself from the African cause.

As early as 1930, *The Crisis* asserted the NAACP's belief that the strife of African Americans was only a portion of the global anti-Blackness that perpetuated the oppressive systems of colonization afflicting much of Africa (NAACP Papers, *The Crisis* April 1930). In 1941, the NAACP advocated that US President Franklin D. Roosevelt declare that the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms be applied to both African and Asian people, many of whom were colonized (Roark 1971, 257). Roosevelt never submitted to their pleas.

In a speech delivered at Storer College on June 2, 1947, Azikiwe acknowledged Roosevelt's hypocrisy as well as Winston Churchill's refusal to extend four freedoms to colonized people. He defined the Four Freedoms to mean political freedom, social equality, economic security, and religious freedom, saying:

I come from the part of the world where, in spite of our sacrifices in man-power, money and materials so as to destroy Nazism, we are still living under a political system of benevolent despotism. And when we demand to exercise elementary human rights not only are we silenced by our self-appointed ruler, but the outside world seems to close its eyes, stuff its ears, and seal its mouth on the subject of what is to us a righteous cause. In my humble opinion, democracy is the hope of a confused world (1961, 83).

The confusion of democracy that Azikiwe calls attention to here is that its ideals and freedoms were only applicable to Western powers, many of whom were colonizing countries. While the exclusion of colonized people maintained the brutality of the colonial system, it also further dehumanized colonized nations by maintaining them as undeserving of human rights. In spite of this, the NAACP continued to lobby US government officials to oppose colonization.

At the height of the NAACP's support for African independence movements in the 1940s, after World War II, Walter White, the NAACP's executive secretary, stated, "World War II has given to the Negro a sense of kinship with other colored—and also oppressed—peoples of the world" (Von Eschen 1997, 7). Following the war, there was increased coverage of the continent's events in *The Crisis*, and the NAACP hired Du Bois as director of special research in 1944 and continued to advocate for the US government to support the anticolonial movements. White, unlike Du Bois, believed he could leverage his connections with government officials and single-handedly, under the auspices of the NAACP, curb US foreign policy to support decolonization across Africa. However, he was repeatedly met with resistance and soon realized

the US was closely allied with Britain and France, the two prominent colonizing powers in Africa, and would not go against its allies' desire to keep hold of the countries they had colonized (Janken 2003, 300). Further, US President Truman's vested self-interest in keeping hold of the Italian American vote informed the US's willingness to support Italy's attempts to recolonize Libya and Eritrea (Janken 2003, 311). The US was not only silent on the oppression of colonized people, it was ready to endorse colonization if it helped to maintain its alliances, and it even sought to suppress those who criticized its position or advocated for decolonization. An early target of the US government's silencing campaign was Walter White, who had been vocal about his dismay. Chester Williams, the public liaison officer of the US Mission to the United Nations, threatened to terminate White's access to high-powered government officials by restricting his access to closed door meetings if he continued to critique US foreign policy (Janken 2003, 30). Ultimately, White decided to stop critiquing the US's endorsement of colonization to maintain his close connections, which, he calculated, would be crucial to the African American cause in the Jim Crow era. Considering the detrimental effects that its continued anti-colonial activism would have on its domestic aims for racial uplift, the NAACP decided to step away from anti-colonial efforts to focus on domestic concerns. Du Bois's dismissal as the director of special research in 1948 marked this shift. To prove its loyalty, the NAACP embraced the Truman administration's foreign policy agenda, parts of which were harmful to the African cause, as the US and its allies feared the independence of those nations would present a new front for communism to take hold.

Nkrumah and Azikiwe's Relationships with African American Leaders

While there was a shift in the relationship between African Americans and Africans following the disbandment of the CAA and the NAACP's departure from anti-colonial efforts, individual relationships between Africans and African Americans did not wither. In particular, the friendships of Azikiwe and Nkrumah proved mutually beneficial. Their African American and diasporic friends helped amplify their cause, attended their Independence Day celebrations, and held positions in their country's governments upon independence. Nkrumah and Azikiwe accommodated those who relocated to their respective countries and popularized the work of their African American friends. The remaining parts of this section analyze four of these dynamic relationships: between Azikiwe and Langston Hughes, Azikiwe and W.E.B. Du Bois, Nkrumah and Du Bois, and Nkrumah and George Padmore.

Azikiwe's relationship with Hughes is best defined as a Pan-African brotherhood (Obiwu 2007). The two Lincoln University alumni were close friends for over three decades. They bonded over their Pan-Africanist views, love for Black literature, and celebration of racial pride. Their friendship inspired their work—Langston Hughes wrote "Azikiwe in Jail" following Azikiwe's arrest in Ghana on seditious libel charges for publishing "Has the African a God?" in the *African Morning Post* (Obiwu 2007, 156). Furthermore, in Hughes's piece "Cultural Exchange," he paid homage to African leaders like Nkrumah, Ahmed Sékou Touré (*Guinea*), and Azikiwe (Obiwu 2007, 157). Azikiwe popularized Hughes's work in Nigeria when he published his pieces in *The West African Pilot*, and when he quoted Hughes's *Youth* poem in his inaugural speech as Nigeria's Governor-General in 1960, a celebration that marked the realization of the Pan-Africanist freedom that Azikiwe and Hughes shared (Obiwu 2007, 159).

Azikiwe's inauguration presented an opportune time to praise those he admired. Accordingly, upon introducing Du Bois at a state luncheon, he reverently called Du Bois "the cornerstone of African freedom" (Miller 2018, 30). Azikiwe's relationship with Du Bois began

when Du Bois, then editor of *The Crisis*, published several of Azikiwe's pieces. From then on, the two continued to support one another's efforts. Azikiwe, then president of the National Council of Nigeria, in a 1946 message to Du Bois, pledged his organization's support of the Pan-African Congress's petition to the United Nations advocating for decolonization (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1946). Even upon Du Bois's death, his wife, Shirley Graham Du Bois, remained engaged in Nigeria's political developments and congratulated Azikiwe in 1963 when the Federation of Nigeria was declared (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1963).

Du Bois was also close to Nkrumah and maintained communication with him following the Congress, where the two had worked together. Upon the release of Nkrumah's first book in 1957, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, Du Bois reviewed it in a speech, reporting that the book had stirred his imagination more than any book he had read in the last decade (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1957). Nkrumah invited Du Bois and his wife to attend Ghana's Independence celebrations, but the couple were denied passports and were unable to attend. However, in 1961, Nkrumah brought Du Bois to Ghana and helped him realize his dream of compiling an encyclopedia Africana. Upon arrival, Du Bois received a house, courtesy of the Ghanaian government (Afari-Gyan 1991, 8). Nkrumah even approved a graduate student from the Achimota School to work alongside him. Du Bois would spend the final years of his life in Ghana, passing away at the age of 95 shortly after receiving his Ghanaian citizenship in 1963. Much can be said of Nkrumah's and Du Bois's relationship, however, at its essence were mutual respect and admiration for the tenacity and work of the other. To Du Bois, Nkrumah was the "voice of Africa" (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1960), while for Nkrumah, Du Bois was a fatherlike figure and "a great son of Africa" (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers 1963).

In close proximity to the final resting place of W.E.B. and Shirley Du Bois in Ghana lies George Padmore, another beloved friend of Nkrumah. Padmore was like a brother to him, and Nkrumah called their friendship rare because of their like-mindedness and instant affinity to one another (Afari-Gyan 1991, 3). Padmore, a longtime communist, broke with the Soviet Union in 1934 after it refused to aid Ethiopian efforts against the Italian invasion. He surmised that it was not concerned with the independence of African people (Afari-Gyan 1991, 2). As such, he embraced a Pan-African perspective that sought liberation for African people by African people. It was after his ideological rebirth that he and Nkrumah served as joint secretaries for the Congress. From there, Padmore became Nkrumah's trusted advisor. After independence, Nkrumah appointed Padmore as Ghana's special adviser on African affairs. However, not everyone supported his appointment, with some citing that West Indians were already sufficiently represented in senior positions; others disliked how much influence he had, and still others thought of him as an outsider (Afari-Gyan 1991, 4; Tunteng 1974, 41). Nonetheless, Padmore served for two years before his untimely death in London. His ashes were flown to Ghana to be buried. As special adviser, Padmore organized the AAPC, bringing together representatives from across Africa to work for independence in their countries.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the cross-continental experiences and relationships of Nkrumah and Azikiwe were influential to their attainment, in part, of independence for their respective countries. Similarly, the realization of independence across Africa, specifically Ghana, encouraged the US civil rights movement. Both groups united to advance the collective cause of Black liberation, which required that all Black people, regardless of geography, be free from racial oppression. Nkrumah and Azikiwe were informed by their time in the US, particularly by their experience at HBCUs,

where they began building solidarity networks with African Americans and were exposed to the NAACP and the CAA. Following World War II, the fifth Pan-African Congress set the course for the immediate realization of independence, an aim that Nkrumah's country, Ghana, would realize in 1957. Shortly after, in 1960, Nigeria, Azikiwe's country, declared its independence from Britain.

In the US, amid the Cold War, the anti-colonial solidarity campaigns by the NAACP and the CAA were silenced under pressure from the government to stamp out critics of American foreign policy and those accused of having communist ties. Although these organizations responded by distancing themselves from the African cause, the individual relationships between African and African American leaders remained. The relationships of these leaders epitomize the ties between Africans and African Americans in the struggle for global Black self-determination.

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