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Black America's Perceptions of Africa in the 1920s and 1930s

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by

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Abstract

As a symbol of hope, pride, and freedom, Africa has long influenced Black American concepts of identity, culture, and politics. During the first half of the twentieth century, cultural movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) increased Black Americans' awareness of Africa and strengthened concrete historical ties between the "motherland" and the Diaspora in the United States. Between 1934 and 1941, the Italian-Ethiopian crisis sparked enormous support of Ethiopia from the African American community. While this event is often treated as a watershed event in African American politics, this study suggests that the outcry over the Italian aggression in Ethiopia reflects the evolutionary process of Black America's growing concern for Africa which originated decades, even centuries prior to the Italian-Ethiopian crisis and which experienced continuing affirmation. Events of the 1920s and 1930s triggered an increased awareness of these links between all Africans in their quests for political independence linking colonialism in Africa to racism in the Diaspora. This study examines these perceptions of Africa in the 1920s and 1930s through the framework of African American responses to the Italian-Ethiopian war and the Liberian Labor Scandal of 1929. An analysis of Black American responses to these two events highlights the continuity as well as particularities of the respective responses. Considering the movements of the 1920s and incorporating the responses to the Liberian crisis, African American reactions to the Italian-Ethiopian war appear less sudden but instead represent a natural outcome of the preceding decades.

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I. Introduction

According to historian Michael A. Gomez, central to the study of the African Diaspora is the analysis of relationships between different groups of African descended people. He argues that despite the diverse histories of different communities within the Black Diaspora this approach remains of importance due to the collective experiences of enslavement and discrimination as well as the shared symbol of Africa as the motherland.[1] Through analyzing African American perceptions of the sub-Saharan African nations Ethiopia and Liberia in the 1920s and 1930s, this study surveys African American perceptions of Africa. From 1929 onwards, the "Liberian labor scandal" (Americo-Liberians, black Americans who expatriated to Liberia in the nineteenth century, were charged with the enslavement of Native Liberians) seriously threatened the independence of one of the two free black nations unscathed by colonialism in Africa. Only six years later, the other free African nation, Ethiopia, was invaded by Italy. African Americans saw a connection between the Liberian and Ethiopian fights for independence and their own struggles for civil rights. Analyzing their responses to both affairs constitutes the core of this work.

By means of these responses, this study analyzes black America's public opinion on Africa and its manifestations in black America's consciousness of Africa. It explores an important chapter of African American politics in the 1930s as it tells the story of black America's quest for political independence. Strategies to achieve these goals differed as African American politics ranged from integrationism to Black Nationalism. Correspondingly, this study represents the voices of integrationists, Pan-Africanists and

[1] Michael A. Gomez, Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

Black Nationalists. What they all share in common is their call for decolonization and their wish to see Africa free. Against this background, the reactions to the Liberian labor scandal and the Italian-Ethiopian war provide a window into Pan-Africanist ideas of unity stemming from a common history of enslavement as well as the common political goal of independence from European and American colonization. In addition, this work also reflects the story of Black Nationalism as it pertains to Africa and how it shaped black American politics in the 1920s and 1930s.

This study originated from a research paper entitled "African American Responses to the Italian-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1936." When conducting the research for this paper, I learned of Ethiopianism; the mystical symbolism of Ethiopia in the African Diaspora and how it inspired Nationalistic responses in African Americans to the Italian-Ethiopian war. This sensitivity to Africa, however, did not emerge out of context but instead was cultivated over decades preceding the Italian-Ethiopian crisis. A meaningful analysis of African American responses to the Italian-Ethiopian war needs to consider the influence of the Marcus Garvey Movement and the Harlem Renaissance on the African American perception of Africa and second, an analysis of African American responses to the Liberian Slavery Scandal which threatened the sovereignty of one of the last independent African nations.

It is important to elaborate on the ties that existed between the two African nations and black Americans. For people of the African Diaspora, Ethiopia has played a crucial symbolic role which is closely tied to their struggle against white oppression and imperialism. The symbolism was enhanced by modern movements within the African Diaspora, and in the United States in particular, so that even at the beginning of the

Italian-Ethiopian crisis in 1934, African sovereignty had shaped African American ideals of equality.

Religious, cultural and political ideas also referred to as Ethiopianism, were projected onto this African country and are thus essential in understanding African-American responses to the invasion of Ethiopia. Politically, the victory over Italy at the Battle of Aduwa in 1896 is one key aspect in Ethiopian history which instilled black pride for this country. As stated in a *Chicago Defender* article on "the Mythical Ethiopia," every black person should know "that Ethiopia since the time of the Pharaohs has been and remains an independent country; that Ethiopia has met and defeated a modern European army [...]; and that Ethiopia is the last independent black nation on the Black Continent."[2] In addition, Ethiopia was the first African nation to gain acceptance into a political league with Western powers. Thus, the country's entry into the League of Nations in 1923 forced both Europe and the United States to "recognize for the first time an African nation at the full level of international diplomacy."[3] In other words, Ethiopia represented not only a model for an independent black nation but also hope for people of African descent that had been subjects to white domination.

These political ideas were supported in the religious realm. Ethiopia played a central role in black Christianity as ministers depicted the biblical Ethiopia as a black nation. Especially the passage of Psalms 68:31, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God," was often quoted and offered hope through its "liberatory promise."[4] During the Italian-Ethiopian crisis this passage and its hopeful implications gained in importance as

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[2] Operative 22, "Operative 22 Digs Into The Mythical Ethiopia," The Chicago Defender 15 Feb. 1936: 1.
[3] William A. Shack, "Ethiopia and Afro-Americans: Some Historical Notes, 1920-1970," Phylon (1960-), Vol. 35, No. 2. (2nd Qtr., 1974), 144.
[4] William R. Scott, "Black Nationalism and the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict 1934-1936," The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 63, No. 2. (Apr., 1978), 119.

it was increasingly referred to by the black church in addition to the black press in order to either claim Ethiopia's infallibility or to preserve hope for a victorious outcome of the conflict with Italy.

Studying the African American responses to the Italian-Ethiopian war, however, raises an important question: As black America's reactions to the Italian-Ethiopian war were clearly aimed at preserving Ethiopia's independence and defeating Italian colonialism, were black Americans equally concerned with the future of Liberia, the only other independent African nation at that time?

Beginning in the 1820s, approximately 15,000 African Americans returned to Africa and settled in Liberia under the auspices of the American Colonization Society (ACS).[5] Interestingly, Wilson Jeremiah Moses explains, this organization was controlled by white Americans. In the early 1850s, some African American leaders were opposed to the expatriation initiated by the ACS while at the same time supported the idea of emigration controlled by Blacks. These sentiments inspired African American led expatriation schemes.[6] In 1859 for instance, Martin Delaney and Robert Campbell led a voyage to Nigeria.

But Liberia held a special position especially during the post-Reconstruction period, often referred to as the nadir of American race relations. In the 1880s, Alexander Crummell journeyed to Liberia, the country he hoped would become "an instrument for [...] the destruction of slavery."[7] Over the course of the following years, various expeditions to Liberia were undertaken. An organization called "The African Movement"

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[5] Gomez, Reversing Sail, 144.
[6] Wilson Jeremiah Moses, The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 35.
[7] Moses, 68.

organized several tours to West Africa before the turn of the century. By 1914, the African Orishatukeh Fadumah repatriated sixty black Americans to Liberia.[8]

Bishop Henry McNeal Turner's "African dream" best exemplifies the vision and hopes that some associated with expatriation to Africa. Edwin S. Redkey explains that Turner had an "ideal of equality and achievement" which he believed could not be realized in the United States but in Africa, the "'fatherland' symbol of the entire colored race."[9] Driven by the motivation to escape American racism, he was involved in a number of emigration projects, of which the most famous was the "Liberian Exodus" of 1878. Turner himself served as Liberian consul in the American South beginning in 1893. It is important to note that Turner saw African American emigration to Africa not only as an escape from white racism but also as a necessary means to fight white colonialism in Africa. According to Redkey, Turner feared that "the same Europeans who once stole Africans from Africa would now steal Africa from the Africans."[10] While Ethiopia's victory against European dominion inspired pride, African sovereignty in Liberia offered hope for freedom and self-government.

Hence, Marcus Garvey had several precursors in the antebellum years as well as the post Civil War United States. In the late 1910s his full blown expatriation scheme catapulted the role of Liberia into the forefront of black American consciousness. Consequently, although Ethiopia's war against Italy was a crucial event of the 1930s and provides invaluable insight into African American perceptions of Africa, Liberia as a nation with concrete historical ties to the United States needs to be incorporated into the

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[8] Moses, 203.
[9] Edwin S. Redkey, "Bishop Turner's African Dream," The Journal of American History Vol. 54, No.2 (Sep., 1967), 276-277.
[10] Redkey, 279.

discussion of black politics in the 1930s. The topic for this thesis was further influenced by the need to provide a comprehensive account of black American perceptions of Africa in the 1930s. A handful of studies focus on the black American population and the war in Ethiopia, fewer works have been written regarding African American perceptions of Liberia.

Apart from straightforward histories on the nation, very little historic work has been dedicated to Liberia. The black American perception of Liberia in the 1930s is almost completely overlooked. Instead, Liberia is mainly dealt with in connection with Marcus Garvey, his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and its attempt to establish African UNIA headquarters in Liberia in the early 1920s. Yet, there is one exception. Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis, 1929-1936 (1980) by I.K. Sundiata is an important exception. Sundiata devotes one chapter of his work to the reactions of the African Diaspora to the Liberian slave trade scandal. He argues that Liberia was a symbol of black independence and black enterprise, a statement that clearly reflects the impact of Garvey's Liberia operations on black politics and ideology.[11] While a large part of this chapter deals with the Americo-Liberian relations to black Americans and West Indians which had been largely shaped by Garveysim in the 1920s, Sundiata only touches upon pan-Africanists like W.E.B. Du Bois and George Padmore and their responses to Liberian politics in the early 1930s. Sundiata continues to make the point that "the defense of Liberia was, by 1935, influenced by reaction to the Fascist attack on Ethiopia."[12] Unfortunately, however, he does not analyze to what extent the reactions to Liberia and Ethiopia cross-fertilized each other. Another shortcoming of this chapter and

[11] I.K. Sundiata, Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis, 1929-1936 (Philadephia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980), 107.
[12] Sundiata, 110.

therefore Sundiata's analysis of the Diaspora's reactions to the labor scandal in Liberia is his sparse use of primary documents or the black press.

In his succeeding work, Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940 (2003), Sundiata presents the history of Liberia under the slogan of "What is Liberia to me?" He discusses the role of this nation and the implications of its history to the African Diaspora.[13] The Pan-African outlook of his analysis makes his work essential for this study in two important ways. First, he discusses the historical ties between Liberia and the United States as well as the role of Liberia in Marcus Garvey's vision. Second, he provides a very detailed account of the charges of slavery leveled against Liberia. Unfortunately, his presentation of black American responses to the Liberian labor scandal does not go beyond his earlier work.

Most of the literature on black Americans and the Italian-Ethiopian war such as Brenda Gayle Plummer's Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960 (1996), Joseph E. Harris' African-American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941 (1994) as well as William R. Scott's The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941 (1993) presents the war in Ethiopia as an event in world history that led to the emergence of unprecedented black interest in international affairs. Even though the role of the mystical Ethiopia is crucial in the 1930s, these historians have overlooked the role of Liberia and the Liberian labor scandal which played a significant role in unifying black political identity. The profound dilemma that this scandal posed to the black American population in their struggle for independence is

[13] I.K. Sundiata, Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 10.

discussed in the black American press. Its exploration presents an invaluable insight into African American perceptions of Africa.

Black politics of the 1930s and black America's responses to the Italian-Ethiopian War cannot be analyzed in a vacuum. This thesis will demonstrate to what extent the black population was politically conscious on an international scale not only in the early 1930s prior to the war in Ethiopia but also with regard to other places and events within the black Diaspora. The roots of black diasporic political consciousness go back to the beginning of the twentieth century.[14] Even though black America's reaction to the Italian-Ethiopian war remains significant for this analysis, it will be placed into a larger context which will reevaluate the cataclysmic status for black interest in international affairs that historians have attributed to this war. To this regard, the 1920s will gain new significance as their legacy and impact on black ideology of the 1930s have often been understated. The events and movements of the 1920s need to be taken into account as they have significantly shaped black political thought.

In the 1920s, the New Negro Movement, which became popular as the Harlem Renaissance, and Marcus Garvey's Back-to-Africa Movement fostered Ethiopianism and increased the importance of Africa. Though different in their outlook, the identification with the African continent was central to both movements. While Garvey's movement claimed Africa as the future homeland, the source for the liberation of all people of African descent, the art and literature of the Harlem Renaissance celebrated African art,

[14] The first Pan-African Congress which took place in London in July 1900 is often presented as the beginning of the Pan-Africanist movement. P. Olisanwuche Esedebe argues in Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991 (1994) that the Chicago Congress on Africa of 1893 marks the "official" beginning of Pan-Africanism.

tradition, and heritage from abroad and thus instilled in African Americans an unprecedented pride in their history prior to the Middle Passage.

This celebration of African heritage is best exemplified in the poems of the 1920s by Langston Hughes. In the poem "Negro," Hughes demonstrates the link between African Americans and Africa. "I am a Negro: Black as the night is black. Black like the depths of my Africa."[15] The celebration of an African heritage is another theme in his poems. Passages such as "Under my hand the pyramids arose" and "I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood and human veins" refer to an ancient history, a history of achievements and glory that presents a source of pride which in turn emphasizes the inhumane nature of the racial status quo in the United States.[16] Thus, Harlem Renaissance writers like Hughes were highly politicized in that they linked the African Diaspora in their works while at the same time condemning American race relations.

Whereas in the Harlem Renaissance Africa was an object of interest and inspiration, it played a much more radical role in Marcus Garvey's vision of Africa. Through his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), he launched a full-blown nationalistic campaign in the 1920s. "Ethiopia, Thou Land of Our Fathers," was the title of his organization's official anthem.[17] Religion, and again the above quoted biblical passage played an inevitable role in his idea of Black Nationalism. In the UNIA catechism he argues that the psalm proves that "Black Men will set up their government

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[15] Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed. Voices From the Harlem Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 153.
[16] Huggins, 153, 155.
[17] William R. Scott, The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941 (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 182.

in Africa, with rulers of their own race."[18] For many, his campaign presented an appealing alternative to their struggle for racial equality in the United States.

Garvey's movement, however, was crucial for fostering identification with the African continent, and Liberia in particular. Liberia gained in importance in the 1920s when Garvey turned to Liberia as a new place for the UNIA headquarters. At that time, by 1920, about 5,000 Liberians had migrated from the Americas.[19] In 1924, the Liberian government, however, banned Garvey's UNIA from the African nation. Motivated by economic and political interests, the Americo-Liberian elite rejected Garvey's UNIA for two reasons. First, the economic returns promised by Firestone's interest in Liberian rubber plantations far exceeded the prospects promised by Garvey. Second, the United States government and its British and French allies did not favor Garvey's movement and even urged Liberia to reject the UNIA. With this rejection of the UNIA, the Liberian government became collaborators in American neo-colonialism.

Notwithstanding this defeat, black American interest in Liberia did not decline with the Garvey Movement, particularly against the background of the Liberian labor scandal of the early 1930s. Garvey's momentum further testifies to the nationalistic outlook of his followers. His organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was the largest and most influential Black Nationalist organization ever founded. In the mid-1920s, the UNIA had more than 250 branches throughout the world which through their common concern for anti-colonialism and black independence connected the African

[18] Tony Martin, Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Dover: The Majority Press, 1976), 77.
[19] M.B. Akpan, "Liberia and the Universal Negro Improvement Association: The Background to the Abortion of Garvey's Scheme for African Colonization," The Journal of African History, Vol. 14, No.1. (1973), 108

Diaspora.[20] Therefore, treating the Italian-Ethiopian war as a catalyst for black international interest presents a distortion of the facts and diminishes black politics of the 1920s. Garveyism highly internationalized a large proportion of people of African descent throughout the world. Against this backdrop, the role of the Italian-Ethiopian war needs to be reevaluated as a culminating rather than a watershed event.

An analysis of black America's perception of Africa in the 1930s will therefore fill the historiographical gaps mentioned above and correct the distorted views on black interest in international politics that has been the result of prioritizing the Italian-Ethiopian war while ignoring the legacy of the 1920s. Therefore, my thesis will shed new light on the history of the African Diaspora, its role in the lives of black Americans, and its impact on black American politics.

For an analysis of black America's perception of Liberia and Ethiopia, the black American press plays a crucial role. In the 1930s, before the invention of television and without black radio shows, newspapers were the principal means of communication for the black American population. Newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *New York Age* present the key primary sources for tracing political ideas and black ideology as well as reflections on and reactions to political events. The black press, to a much larger degree than the white press, was a platform for black intellectuals and academics. Compared to their white counterparts they had fewer publishing outlets like university and commercial press available to them. As a result, scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and Kelly Miller frequently wrote for

[20] Winston James, Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America (London: Verso, 1999), 366.

black newspapers, and public figures like George Padmore and J.A. Rogers, both from the Caribbean, became renowned columnists.

As Penny M. von Eschen argues, "the black press was the main vehicle through which public intellectuals spoke to one another and to their main audiences."[21] However, even though newspaper editorials and columns reflect to a large extent the ideology of black intellectuals, focusing my research for this thesis on a reading of the black press will also give voice to ordinary people since the main audiences of the black press were both the middle and working classes which actively communicated with the press through letters to the editor. These letters, thus, present in addition to editorials and columns another significant insight into black political ideology. Therefore, the black press of the 1930s serves as an invaluable source that provides a balanced account of black American politics.

II. The Liberian Slavery Scandal

In June 1929, the U.S. Department of State accused the Liberian Government of a direct involvement in a system of labor export to Fernando Po, an island in Spanish Guinea. In response to these accusations, the League of Nations appointed an inquiry commission of three members: Cuthbert Christy, the Englishman and representative of the League of Nations, the American representative Charles S. Johnson, a professor of Sociology at Fisk University, and the Liberian representative ex-President Arthur Barclay. The commission's report which was first published in the African American

[21] Penny M. von Eschen, Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1959 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 8.

press by the *Afro-American* on October 25, 1930 found that although "classic slavery" in terms of slave markets did not exist in Liberia, slavery according to the Anti-Slavery Convention of 1926 in form of "inter- and intra-tribal slavery" as well as pawning ("the giving of a person [...] in servitude by a debtor to a creditor for an indefinite time and without compensation") existed.[22] In addition, the report states that some Americo-Liberians took natives as pawns and "have criminally abused the system for personal ends." Finally, the report accused the Liberian government of having shipped laborers to Fernando Po and of having sanctioned this "compulsory recruitment of labor."[23]

In the aftermath of the release of this report, Liberia became the target of international discussions and condemnations. On November 15, 1930 the *Afro-American* published a copy of the Liberian "Emancipation Proclamation" in which President King declared all enslaved Liberians free and the systems of servitude and pawning illegal.[24] In the following month, however, both President King and Vice-President Yancy resigned and "Edwin Barclay, the Secretary of State succeeded to the presidency."[25] Yet, the external pressure did not cease. As a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Defender* points out, other countries were very "interested" to put a stop to slavery in Liberia.[26] The League of Nations and the US Department of State in particular put a lot of pressure on Liberia when it refused to recognize its Barclay interim government pending the abolition of slavery and forced labor.[27] In the meantime, a second international commission was appointed to oversee the improvements accomplished in Liberia.

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[22] Cuthbert Christy, "Liberia in 1930," The Geographical Journal Vol.77, No.6 (Jun., 1931): 537.
[23] "Liberian Slavery Exposed," Afro-American 25 Oct. 1930: 1.
[24] "Liberia's Emancipation Proclamation," Afro-American 15 Nov. 1930: 3.
[25] "Liberian President Resigns," The New York Amsterdam News 10 Dec. 1930: 1.
[26] Pauliney Dalgarno, "What the People Say," The Chicago Defender 31 Jan. 1931: 14.
[27] "Liberian Head Warned by U.S. to Ban Slavery," Afro-American 2 Apr. 1931: 2.

In short, until 1935, when events in Ethiopia superseded excitement about Liberian affairs, the West African republic was under close scrutiny. This debate assumed alarming proportions when it seemed that Liberian independence was at stake because "Liberia may be placed under white control."[28] In this context, the nature of the special interest of the League of Nations and the United States to end Liberian slavery becomes of central importance.

II.1 Black Dilemma

The debate over the Liberian labor scandal had hazardous implications for the African Diaspora. The enslavement of native Africans by the Americo-Liberian elite, whose ancestors had been slaves themselves before they left the United States to immigrate to Liberia, was soon discussed on an international scale. The Liberian government was accused of involvement in and profit-sharing of the forced recruitment and export of indigenous workers to the Spanish island Fernando Po. Many whites argued that the existence of slavery in Liberia demonstrated black incapacity to self-govern which confirmed the argument of black inferiority. While Sundiata points out that this form of slavery did "not provide the greatest example of forced labor in Africa" this attack on Liberia, however, entailed grave ramifications for the African Diaspora.[29] Did the Americo-Liberian elite's involvement in a slave trade prove "black incapacity"? Did Africa need "white control"? These questions inflicted the debate for the status of Blacks in the Diaspora.

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[28] "Liberia May Be Placed under White Control," The Chicago Defender 26 Mar. 1932: 3.
[29] Sundiata, Brothers and Strangers, 87.

Hence, these discussions created a dilemma for the black population in the United States. In an article published in the *Afro-American* on August 17, 1929, it was argued that slavery in "Liberia, founded as an asylum for slaves freed from their chains in America [...] is [...] indefensible."[30] In another article published by the same newspaper Liberia is referred to as "a national home for free Negroes."[31] The existence of slavery "in the one country one would least expect to find it," as the editor of *The New York Amsterdam News* claims, therefore seriously shook the perceptions that most African Americans had of the "haven for former slaves."[32] The reality, in contrast, revealed that those former slaves "permitted a system of bondage to grow up that [was] not much unlike that which caused the Civil War."[33] This analogy between slavery in Liberia and the past and contemporary conditions for African Americans in the United States will emerge as a prevalent theme in the discussion of black Americans and their defense of Liberia.

As mentioned above, in the eyes of many whites, the existence of slavery in Liberia questioned the capacity of the Liberian government. The international debate, however, soon moved beyond the group of Americo-Liberians and questioned the competence of Blacks to govern themselves in general. The *Chicago Defender* explained that "the world had been looking to this African nation of free people to see what the black man could do if given the opportunity to govern himself."[34] And now the world, or rather the white world, believed that the Liberian labor scandal provided the answer to this "experiment."

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[30] "Slavery in Liberia," Afro-American 17 Aug. 1929: 6.
[31] "4,000,000 Persons Are Still in Slavery," Afro-American 30 Nov. 1929: A7.
[32] "Timely Topics of the Week," The New York Amsterdam News 22 Oct. 1930: 1.
[33] Ibid.
[34] "League of Nations Demand Liberia Free Slaves," Chicago Defender 13 Dec. 1930: 11.

In the late 1920s, the African American existence in the United States was defined by discrimination, segregation – de facto in the North and de jure in the South- and racial violence. In other words, deprived of basic civil rights, Blacks in the US still had to deal with the legacies of slavery and persistent racism. The exposure of slavery in Liberia and the conclusion that the white world drew from this affair, therefore presented a threat to black America's struggle for equality. More over, the notion that white interference was justified to solve the problem on African soil confirmed the idea of black inferiority. In short, the attack against Liberia's independence presented an attack against the autonomy of all members of the black Diaspora and thus increased the sense of race solidarity.

As a result, the African American population was facing the dilemma of which side to support in the current affair. Should they take up the case of the native Africans that allegedly had been enslaved by the Americo-Liberian elite and thus support the "white" argument of black inferiority? Or should they strengthen the side of the Liberian government and thus sanction or at least ignore the charges of slavery? The way in which Black Americans found a way out of this dilemma and raised their voices in the debate about the Liberian labor scandal attests for the interdependence they saw in the debate over Liberia and their own struggle against inequality in America.

II.2 In Defense of Liberia

African American protests in defense of Liberia targeted primarily the interventionist politics of the United States. A central point of criticism was that the United States acted imperialistically under the pretext of democritizing Liberia, extending freedom, and abolishing slavery. In the scope of the Liberian affair, the danger of "white control"

became a thread in the arguments of African Americans against American intervention. S. Haynes argued in an article published in the *Philadelphia Tribune* that the United States joined forces with Europe in the colonization of Africa by "seizing the only territory open to Stars and Stripes – Liberia."[35] This charge of American imperialistic intervention under the pretext of democritization is presented as an imminent threat by J. A. Rogers in the same newspaper. He claims that it is very likely that the United States government plans to slowly take over Liberia while using the allegation of helping abolish slavery in Liberia. In fact, he states that the League of Nations might even invite the United States "to take definite part in the government of Liberia" in order "to extent its colonial empire in West Africa."[36]

Consequently, in the eyes of many black Americans, American empathy for the cause of abolishing slavery in Liberia seemed blatantly hypocritical. In this regard the black press communicated its argument by fleshing out the irony that lies in the concern of the United States to abolish a system of slavery and oppression in an overseas nation like Liberia. This aspect refers to the existence of slavery for centuries until Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. The editor of *The New York Amsterdam News* argues in this vein when he explains that the system of slavery discovered in Liberia "is not much unlike that which caused the Civil War."[37]

However, the irony of America's concern over Liberia was rooted principally in contemporary domestic race relations. The *Philadelphia Tribune* claims ironically that in the United States "where all people are free and privileged, [...] slavery has exited [...]

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[35] S. Haynes, "Negro Press Demands that All Negroes Register and Vote," Philadelphia Tribune 30 July 1931: 16.
[36] J.A. Rogers, "See United States Using Slavery Charge as Pretext for Lodging in Liberia," Philadelphia Tribune 31 Oct. 1929: 1.
[37] "Slave Conditions in Liberian Republic," editorial, The New York Amsterdam News 22 Oct. 1930: 1.

against the highest law of the land for seventy years and nobody has done anything about it."[38] Two letters published in *The Chicago Defender* clearly convey the hypocrisy in this inconsistency. One claims that the United States, "the country that holds the record of brutality to its citizens" is not in the position to advise Liberia and should instead "clean up her own backyard first."[39] The other letter is even more derisive in its criticism of US policy towards Liberia. The author makes direct reference to a statement delivered by Secretary Simson of the US State Department in which he warned the Liberian government to abolish its system of slavery. In response to this warning, the author ironically notes that "it would be [...] an amusing event should Liberia [...] urge upon our state department to abandon lynching." This would be, in his words, a "tit for tat."[40]

The League of Nations also became a target of African American protests. Since the League was dominated by European powers it was argued that it had an imperialist agenda and worked hand in hand with the imperial European powers as well as the United States. Accordingly it was thus believed that Liberia had become a strategic victim of the League's attacks. The author of a letter to the editor of *The Chicago Defender* claims that it was in the League's nature to take "possession of countries of weaker powers" and it therefore failed to meet its responsibility as "the international court of justice." In conclusion, the League operated by hypocritical motives and also, most importantly, the attacks on Liberia were disproportionate. The author brings this argument to the point when he claims that "had the league of nations wished to promote

[38] "The Rape of Liberia," Philadelphia Tribune 15 Dec. 1932: 16.
[39] Pauliney Dalgarno, letter, The Chicago Defender 31 Jan. 1931: 14.
[40] J. Jackson Tilford, letter, The Chicago Defender 24 Jan. 1931: 14.

peace it ought to go to India, China, South America and Russia where the situations are more critical."[41]

Another common response to the attacks on Liberia was the argument that slavery also still existed in other parts of the world. Some legitimately accused the press of labeling Liberia as the place with the worst form of slavery. As J.A. Rogers reported, "this diverted attention from the European countries which permit slave traffic in their African colonies."[42] In other words, as *The Pittsburgh Courier* claims, conditions in Liberia are not perfect but also not worse than elsewhere in Africa. In the same article it is also argued that Liberia is a young nation and that it was therefore unfair to judge her capacity solely based upon this single affair. In contrast, the author states that Liberia's history is "most inspiring" as the country successfully preserved its independence. "The Americo-Liberians after a century of struggle and privation are in better shape than ever before."[43] To this regard, *The Chicago Defender* points out succinctly that it is not justified to attack a country which "has not been able, in 100 years, to outgrow a system which 'enlightened' Americans clung to for twice that period."[44]

Despite the passionate diplomatic defense of Liberia, the imminent threat of its independence and the calamitous ramifications that would result for the African Diaspora, there is literally no account for any form of grassroots organization in support of Liberia. This constitutes a major disparity to the later responses to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Research of the black American press yields few sources such as letters to the editor or announcements for meetings to mobilize in defense of the West African

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[41] Wrogbe Nepe, "What The People Say," The Chicago Defender 25 Oct. 1930: 14.
[42] J.A. Rogers, "Rambling Ruminations," The New York Amsterdam News 14 Oct. 1931: 8.
[43] "Liberian Slavery," The Pittsburgh Courier 24 Aug. 1929: 12.
[44] "Other Papers Say," The Chicago Defender 31 Jan. 1931: 14.

republic. One reader of the *Afro-American* suggests in a letter to the editor sending African American troops to Liberia in order to "forever rid that nation of the stigma that it has brought against itself."[45] A second letter to the editor published in September of 1931 presents a more concrete call for action. "Let us, then, find a leader who will campaign against this evil. [...] Let our influential men and women arouse public sentiment."[46] It is crucial to note that both letters are directed against the Liberian government as they conform to the belief that the uncovering of slavery in Liberia discloses the failure of the Americo-Liberian elite. But things did not happen according to the proposal of the second letter to the editor. Ironically, as discussed in the following chapter, those African Americans who were concerned about agitating public discussions and who enjoyed a certain status of influence, ideologically subscribed to Pan-Africanism and therefore followed a different agenda.

II.3 Pan-African Responses

Despite the lack of motivation to form organizational support for Liberia, the need to defend the country was apparent for the majority of the African American population. A few Pan-African figures showed the most passionate engagement in the defense of Liberia. As the crisis continued, Pan-African ideology played a role of increasing importance on both the political and economic level. Consequently, Pan-Africanists emphasized the desire to uplift the Liberian nation through economic ties with the Diaspora and also, as Sundiata argues, reinforced the ideological and political symbol of

[45] Lenster Brooks, "This Reader Advocates Sending U.S. Troops to Liberia to Abolish Slavery There," Afro-American 18 July 1931: 4.
[46] Johnnie Williams, "A Call to Help End Slavery in Liberia," Afro-American 12 Sep. 1931: 6.

Liberia for Blacks worldwide. W.E.B. Du Bois, George Padmore, and Nigerian-born Nnamdi Azikiwe were at the forefront of those who devoted themselves in their works to "emancipating Africa from colonial rule and to improving the condition of black people in both Africa and the Americas."[47] As an analysis of their responses reveals, Pan-Africanists condemned the relationship among the Americo-Liberian elite, the Firestone Corporation, and the U.S. government as a symbiotic cabal to exploit the Liberian masses.

In the essay "Liberia, The League and The United States," published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1933, W.E.B. Du Bois most strikingly advocates his support for the West African nation. While he does not whitewash the Americo-Liberian elite, he clearly identifies the Firestone rubber company, the United States government, and the League of Nation as the key players that harm Liberian independence. Du Bois presents an overview of Liberian history and argues that the country's economic development had been profoundly inhibited by white imperialism. He explains that dependent on foreign capital, Liberia turned towards the United States for a loan in order to avoid falling victim to France or England which were "on the point of seizing the country" in the early 1900s.[48] After having recovered from the effects of the First World War (despite its large German trade, Liberia sided with the Allies in order to secure its independence from Britain and France as well as to receive a loan that the United States government promised and later refused to confirm), Liberia still needed foreign capital to invest in building an infrastructure. Out of this necessity, he explains, in order to protect the country from European imperialism and to seek protection from the United States,

[47] Sundiata, Black Scandal, 108.
[48] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Liberia, The League and The United States," Foreign Affairs Vol.11, No.4, 1933:683.

Liberia signed the contract with the Firestone rubber company in September of 1926. In his opinion, Firestone entered this relationship with Liberia out of mere profit making interest and total lack of moral concern for Liberia and its population. He recalls: "When I heard of the terms which Firestone demanded in Liberia my heart began to fall."[49]

In addition, he criticizes the United States government and the League of Nations for their attitude towards Liberia in the scope of the labor scandal. He argues that after the commission report was released, "the United States was singularly impatient [...] urging action" from Liberia to end the export of slavery and to improve labor and public health conditions.[50] Yet, he complains, "the United States refused to recognize President Barclay and united with the British and German legislations [...] to ask the Council of the League of Nations to appoint an International Governing Commission to take over Liberia."[51] The League of Nations treated Liberia in an equally disrespectful manner when they appointed three experts from France, the Netherlands, and England, to study conditions in Liberia in the summer of 1931. Du Bois explains that Liberia had asked for experts with "open minds," delegates from countries that were no colonial powers.[52] A similar situation occurred in 1933 when the United States sent a white Southerner as an observer to Liberia. As the spokesman to a delegation of black and white citizens, Du Bois had, according to a newspaper article in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, "sharp exchanges" with the assistant secretary of state about the sending of this white Southern observer and

[49] Du Bois, 684.
[50] Du Bois, 688.
[51] Du Bois, 689.
[52] Du Bois, 689.

suggested that "it would have been much wiser to have sent a colored American instead of General Winship."[53]

In his essay on Liberia, Du Bois discusses a letter that he wrote to Mr. Firestone to submit a proposal for the realization of the Firestone investment in Liberia. The suggestions he outlines in this letter unfold his Pan-African vision for the future of Liberia. "I intimated that the one thing above all which he must avoid was taking capital into a small country and putting it under the control of officials who despised the natives and organized ruthless exploitation."[54] Instead, he argued, he should employ trained African Americans. Firestone however did not share Du Bois' concerns for the economic independence of Liberia and the well-being of its native people and instead counted on the exploitation of indigenous people. As the labor crisis unfolds, Du Bois clearly accuses the Firestone Company as the main culprit in the slavery scandal. He explains that "labor supply for modern industry in Africa always tends to approximate slavery because it is bound up with the clan organization of the tribes."[55]

In his concluding paragraph, Du Bois admits that Liberia lacks "training, experience, and thrift," yet, he blatantly attacks white imperialism when he sarcastically states that Liberia's "chief crime is to be black and poor in a rich, white world [...] where color is ruthlessly exploited as a foundation for American and European wealth."[56] At the same time he appeals to Blacks in the Diaspora to perceive the global implications in the

[53] "Delegation Asks U.S. To Cease Backing Firestone In Liberia," The Pittsburgh Courier 12 Aug. 1933: A1.
[54] Du Bois, 684.
[55] Du Bois, 687.
[56] Du Bois, 695.

Liberian affairs. "The success of Liberia as a Negro republic would be a blow to the whole colonial slave labor system."[57]

While these statements evidently reflect Du Bois' vision of Pan-Africanism and solidarity among the Black Diaspora his attitude towards the Liberian labor scandal has also been labeled as distorted and naïve. Du Bois' biographer David Levering Lewis explains that despite the enslavement of its native people, for Du Bois Liberia represented "the lodestar of Africa's struggle for independence." Against this background, Levering Lewis argues that Du Bois' "psychic need for a plausible Negro state among the world's nations was a pan-African imperative so exigent that it distorted his keen judgment and even corrupted his humanitarianism."[58] It remains arguable why Du Bois' response to the Liberian crisis did not include an elaborate condemnation of the Americo-Liberian elite. Levering Lewis' argument that Du Bois Pan-Africanist vision distorted his perspicacity presents one interpretation. Just as well, Du Bois might have identified American imperialism as the most imminent danger and therefore deliberately decided to first attack this extrinsic aggressor.

The West Indian writer and journalist George Padmore painted a less rosy picture of the Liberian government while still subscribing to the same Pan-African ideology and enforcing the importance of Liberian independence. In the biography Black Revolutionary: George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism (1967), the author James R. Hooker states that throughout his life Padmore was preoccupied with Liberia. Even before the Liberian labor scandal, Padmore showed concern not only for the future of the West African nation but also for a sense of unity within the African

[57] Du Bois, 695.
[58] David Levering Lewis, W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight For Equality and the American Century, 1919 – 1963 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 124.

Diaspora. In 1927, as Hooker writes, Padmore reached out to fellow Howard University student Benjamin N. Azikiwe "to help him establish an African student organization 'to foster racial consciousness and a spirit of nationalism aiming at the protection of the sovereignty of Liberia.'"[59] It is crucial to note here that already in this letter did Padmore refer to the Firestone project in Liberia as a "manifestation of imperialism."[60]

With regard to the Liberian labor scandal, Padmore sternly criticized the Americo-Liberian elite particularly during the early years of the crisis. As quoted from an article published in the *New Leader* in September of 1941 he argued: "'I have always considered it my special duty to expose and denounce the misrule of the black governing classes in Haiti, Liberia and Abyssinia, while at the same time defending these semi-colonial countries against imperialist aggression.'"[61] At the same time, Padmore believed that the United States, under the umbrella of the Firestone Company, presented next to the Liberian ruling class the second main threat to the independence of both the republic and its people. His book The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers (1931) presents an insightful account of Padmore's initial response to the affair. In a chapter entitled "Under the Yoke of Yankee Imperialism," Padmore claims that the Americo-Liberian elite willingly cooperated in Firestone's "imperialist project." He further argues that the Liberian government not only tolerated the slave trade to Fernando Po but even legally sanctioned this system for the benefit of "degenerate black politicians" to enrich themselves by selling native workers to the slave trade. In his opinion, therefore, the Commission appointed by the League of Nations, whitewashed the Americo-Liberian

[59] Nnamdi Azikiwe, My Odyssey: An Autobiography (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 138.
[60] Azikiwe, My Odyssey, 138.
[61] James R. Hooker, Black Revolutionary: George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1967), 22.

elite as well as the Firestone Company. In this context, it is crucial to discern that Padmore points out what he regarded as the commission's central motive. "They [the commissioners] found no evidence against Firestone because they knew that if they did it would be more embarrassing for the United States Government to take official action." Thus, Padmore argues, the official discourse of the Liberian affair provides the United States "with the pretext for assuming still greater political control over the republic in the form of a protectorate."[62]

As the crisis continued, Padmore's views reconciled more with Du Bois'. According to an interview printed in *The New York Amsterdam News* on September 15 of 1934, Padmore still regards the Americo-Liberian elite as "'a tool in the hand of American Capitalism.'"[63] At the same time, similar to Du Bois, he continues to identify the Firestone Company as the main evil and believes that it is crucial to preserve Liberia's independence because the rule of either the League of Nations or the United States over the African nation are "attempts by the Firestones [...] to make more profits out of Liberian rubber.'"[64] Influenced by race rather than class consciousness, however, Padmore turned to Du Bois in 1934 with a note that stated: "'Liberia has her faults, but since white politicians are no better than black ones, it is our duty to save the "baby from the white wolves".'"[65] This argument supports the argument that Du Bois was in fact very calculating and not naïve at all in his response to the Liberian affair.

The third essential Pan-Africanist figure in the struggle for black emancipation emerging from the Liberian crisis was Padmore's fellow student and Nigerian born

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[62] George Padmore, The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers (Hollywood, California: Sun Dance Press, 1971): 69-71.
[63] "Padmore Hits Soviets Again," The New York Amsterdam News 15 Sep. 1931: 1.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Hooker, Black Revolutionary, 33.

journalist and politician Nnamdi Azikiwe. In his autobiography My Odyssey (1970) he recalls that the above mentioned correspondence with George Padmore in 1927 first aroused his interest in Liberia and its position in world politics.[66] This interest lasted and became a dominant force in Azikiwe's politics. In January of 1931 he sent a letter to the Liberian government to inquire about employment opportunities in the republic's diplomatic service. In his application letter, he claims that "Liberia is the only hope for young Africans, politically speaking."[67] Ironically, he was not offered an appointment because due to "'the present financial depression in Liberia [...] the procedure of appointing wealthy and qualified foreigners [...] is the only alternative.'"[68]

In November of the same year, Azikiwe delivered a paper entitled "In Defense of Liberia" at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in New York City. This paper was published in January of the following year in *The Journal of Negro History*. In his address, Azikiwe agrees with both Du Bois and Padmore that the Firestone Company represented "a case of United States economic nationalism."[69] Beyond this charge, however, Azikiwe openly attacks the United States for their engagement in the Liberian crisis. He points out the "hypocrisy" that underlies American commitment to ending slavery in Liberia when he argues that "If peonage is slavery and forced labor is slavery, the United States has no right to charge Liberia with slavery because the United States itself is a slave state."[70] Notwithstanding his attack on Liberia, Azikiwe does not whitewash the Americo-Liberian elite. His central argument in

[66] Azikiwe, My Odyssey, 139.
[67] Azikiwe, My Odyssey, 164.
[68] Azikiwe, My Odyssey, 165.
[69] Nnamdi Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 17, No.1 (Jan., 1932), 31.
[70] Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," 40-41.

his discussion of the Liberian labor scandal is that the slave trade in Liberia is not unique but rather common in colonial politics.[71]

Unique to Azikiwe's evaluation of the question of guilt associated with the labor scandal is his charge against Spain. He explains that in the agreement between Spain and Liberia which was signed in 1914 and in which Liberia agreed to supply Spain with laborers, Spain agreed to "accord Liberians good treatment" and "effect punctual repatriation."[72] Yet, Spain failed to comply with either premises. As a consequence, as Azikiwe argues in a second essay on the subject that appeared under the title "Liberia: Slave or Free?" in Nancy Cunard's work Negro: An Anthology (1934), that it is unjustifiable to blame Liberia alone for this affair when "the real criminal is not Liberia, but Spain."[73]

In the final subchapter of his article "In Defense of Liberia," Azikiwe discusses whether the Liberian labor scandal demonstrates Liberia's failure. In this connection, he elaborates on the implications of the Liberian slavery scandal for the prospect of the black republic as well as the conclusions that should be drawn from this affair. In this context he claims that the denunciation of Liberia as a failure "is generally done to take advantage of the people and pave way for economic exploitation."[74] In his opinion therefore, the Western attacks on Liberia are based on imperial motives. In contrast, he argues that the West African republic is too young to make a definite judgment about its achievements. In his book Liberia in World Politics (1934), Azikiwe elaborates on this argument. He explains that for any country to be "a perfect model of human government

[71] Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," 41.
[72] Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," 43.
[73] Nnamdi Azikiwe, "Liberia:Slave or Free?" Negro: An Anthology ed. Nancy Cunard, Hugh Ford ed. (New York: The Continuum Publishing Group, 2002), 449.
[74] Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," 46.

[...] would require centuries, because political institutions are both evolutional and revolutionary in their tendencies."[75] In addition, he argues, that no government is perfect and that other nations would not be able to escape condemnation if they became subject to investigation like Liberia.

Therefore, he appeals to African Americans "to be less critical in [their] attitude of the African and be more sympathetic and co-operative in [their] views on the 'backward' conditions in Liberia and Abyssinia."[76] Finally, he takes a quote from the editorial of the *American Journal of International Law* in order to explain this necessity of black solidarity: "'The fate of Liberia means more than the fate of a nation, it may presage the destiny of a race.'"[77] In his book on Liberia he further elaborates on this appeal. He argues that Blacks in the Diaspora must not remain inactive in the crisis that threatens Liberia's independence. He makes the point that Liberia presents the future to black people all over the world because in Liberia Blacks from the Diaspora can establish "a black hegemony."[78] Against this backdrop he appeals to "all peoples of African descent [...] who are dissatisfied with their present status, to come over and build a new civilization."[79]

This Pan-African vision of Liberia as the future homeland for African Americans leads us to what scholars refer to as economic Pan-Africanism. The Pan-African responses presented above are predominantly politically based and reflect the idea that through banding together people of the African Diaspora could exert enough political power to fight slavery, colonialism and racial discrimination. But Pan-Africanism also

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[75] Nnamdi Azikiwe, Liberia in World Politics (Westport, CT: Negro University Press, 1934), 223.
[76] Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," 47.
[77] Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," 49.
[78] Azikiwe, Liberia in World Politics, 396.
[79] Azikiwe, Liberia in World Politics, 398.

contains of the economic argument that financial power within the Diaspora will uplift its people. Marcus Garvey's scheme for black enterprises and emigration to Liberia is a prominent example. Based upon the historical symbol of Liberia and especially in view of the persistent pressure put on Liberia by Western nations, the idea that Liberia was the place where black enterprise might and should flourish became more exigent. The Great Depression and its resulting economic hardships worldwide exceedingly affected the African American population. This explains why, as Sundiata argues in his first book Black Scandal, "there was no actual upsurge of Afro-American investment in Liberia in the early 1930s" but instead "there was a proliferation of schemes for, and interest in, Afro-American participation in the economic development of the Black Republic."[80]

Those that believed in the possibility and also necessity of establishing an economic base in Liberia, regarded Thomas J.R. Faulkner as a pioneer. Faulkner emigrated from Baltimore in the late 1900s and became a successful entrepreneur in Liberia where he operated a variety of businesses. He even established the country's only electric lighting plant. In the *Afro-American* Faulkner is acclaimed for his accomplishments as entrepreneur and politician as well as for his genuine concern for the West African republic. The newspaper claims that Faulkner "has done more to modernize the country than any man living or dead."[81]

William N. Jones, managing editor of the *Afro-American* was the most prominent figure of economic Pan-Africanism in support of Liberia. In November of 1933, Jones traveled to the Black Republic as representative of a group of fifteen distinguished

[80] Sundiata, Black Scandal, 117.
[81] "Slaves Freed," Afro-American Nov 1 1930: 1.

African Americans that had founded the "Save Liberia Movement."[82] A speech addressing a Liberian chief during his visit provides invaluable insight into his vision of economic ties between the United States and Africa. Jones explains that the "Save Liberia Movement" plans to raise money to help improve Liberia's infrastructure. In addition, he expresses the interest in establishing a system of trade through which the African American population could buy products such as coffee and rice from Liberia for a fair price.[83] In a report of his experience in Africa published in late December of 1933, Jones appeals to the black American population to institute a nation-wide campaign in support of Liberia. He further reiterates the importance of supporting Liberia through trade relationships and a program that would enable African Americans to go to Liberia and seek employment in administrative and governmental positions. In addition, he advocated raising money to pay off the Firestone loan.[84]

Despite Jones' enthusiasm and commitment, his plan was not implemented. The United States State Department and many African Americans opposed his proposal for economic investment in Liberia. *The Pittsburgh Courier* decried his efforts as "an incredible philanthropy." The main counter-argument reads as follows: "We cannot see why Negroes should [...] give to Liberia, when that money is needed right here to fight lynching, segregation, discrimination, illiteracy and inadequate education."[85] In this vein, and without the necessary support on a larger scale, Jones' economic Pan-Africanist scheme was aborted.

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[82] Sundiata, Black Scandal, 120.
[83] "How West African Chief Received AFRO Editor," Afro-American 6 Jan. 1934: 3.
[84] "Jones Returns from Liberia on the Bremen," Afro-American 23 Dec. 1933: 1.
[85] "An Incredible Philanthropy," The Pittsburgh Courier 3 Feb. 1934: 10.

II.4 The Dissident: George S. Schuyler

Hence, the African American responses to the Liberian labor scandal and the global attack on the African nation were not unanimous. Opposed to both groups of Pan-Africanists who promoted the necessity of political and economic ties between countries of the African Diaspora was the journalist and writer George S. Schuyler. Referring to himself as a conservative in his autobiography Black And Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler (1966) Schuyler argues that "Negroes have the best chance here in the United States [...] once we accept the fact that there is, and will always be, a color caste system. It is tragic and pointless to wage war against the more numerous and more powerful white majority."[86] According to Henry Louis Gates Jr, Schuyler was not only one of America's most influential journalists but also one of its "boldest and most controversial" in the sense of W.E.B. Du Bois' "double-consciousness." [87] Gates even argues that very few people have been affected by this "double-consciousness" more than Schuyler. As a result, he explains, "while opposed to white racism and segregation throughout his long career, Schuyler also chastised excesses of black nationalism."[88] These controversies as well as his "intellectual role as that of a dissident" become obvious in his engagement in the Liberian labor scandal.[89]

In February of 1931, sent by the *New York Evening Post* as a correspondent and by the publishing house of Brewer, Warren & Putnam, Inc. to gather material for his book Slaves Today: A Story of Liberia (1931) which appeared in the fall of 1931, Schuyler

[86] George S. Schuyler, Black And Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler (New Rochelle: Arlington House Publishers, 1966), 121-122.
[87] Henry Louis Gates Jr., "A Fragmented Man: George Schuyler and the Claims of Race," New York Times 20 Sep. 1992: BR31.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

traveled to the West African republic. His mission was to investigate "to what extent the Liberian government was remedying the evils which the international commission had reported."[90] His findings were published, as he recalls, in a series of six articles entitled "Slavery in Liberia" in "the *New York Evening Post*, the *Buffalo Express*, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, the *Washington Post* and one or two other papers."[91]

In the *Washington Post*, Schuyler's series "Slavery in Liberia" appeared between June 29, 1931 and July 4, 1931. His reports which are based upon his travels through Liberia and interviews with government officials as well as indigenous Liberians clearly attacked the Americo-Liberian elite. His book Slaves Today falls in the same category as he, according to reviews, "hits the governing class of Liberia with everything he can pick up."[92] According to Azikiwe, Slaves Today is "'biased and superficial'" and Du Bois denounced it as "beneath contempt."[93] He denounces the Liberian government as "cruel, immoral, incompetent" and argues that "though bound by ties of blood and tradition to American Negroes, they have no affection for them."[94] With regard to the charges of slavery he claims that despite the international pressure that was put on the Liberian government to abolish slavery in their country, he found "little improvement [...], little change of heart on the part of the bulk of the government class."[95] In contrast he illustrates through an interview conducted with a former Liberian slave that although the slave trade was officially prohibited the shipment of slaves to Fernando Po persisted.

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[90] George S. Schuyler, "Slavery in Liberia: Reports of Liberian Slavery Discovered to Be Well-Founded," The Washington Post 29 June 1931: 1.
[91] Schuyler, Black and Conservative 186.
[92] Aubrey Bowser, "Book Review: Another 'Land of the Free'," The New York Amsterdam News 2 Dec. 1931: 8.
[93] Sundiata, Brothers and Strangers, 235.
[94] George S. Schuyler, "Slavery in Liberia: Reforms Are Blocked by Political Influence," The Washington Post 4 July 1931: 1.
[95] George S. Schuyler, "Slavery in Liberia: Reports of Liberian Slavery Discovered to Be Well-Founded," The Washington Post 29 June 1931: 1.

Therefore, he proclaims, the emancipation proclamation issued by President King was to no avail but in the Vai tribe which Schuyler regards as "the most highly cultured of the Liberian aborigines."[96] According to Schuyler's research, "naturally, when the emancipation proclamation was issued" the Vai tribe abolished their system of chattel slavery which Schuyler argues was equally cruel as the system of slavery in the American South.[97]

Aside from commenting on the condition of the slave traffic to Fernando Po, Schuyler's reports disclose other charges against Liberia. In the second article of his series Schuyler argues that domestic slavery is in full swing in the capital of Liberia. Although "there are no slave blocks to be observed," he explains that it is a common sight to see Natives following "well-dressed [and] aristocratic Liberians."[98] In other words, he argues, "in the palms of Liberian officials and their associates, there are thousands of pawns and domestic slaves tolling away in households and on farms."[99]

A third charge Schuyler presents against the Liberian government was that of exploitation in forms of exactions and monthly requisitions. In his third report he argues that Liberian officials kept the hinterland of the country impoverished and economically dependent. He explains that "after the departure of the International Commission" tons of rice, fowl and cattle were carried from the Sanoguellah district to Monrovia and "was not paid for."[100] He further argues that "everywhere the natives complain bitterly against these exactions but are without redress. The very people to whom they would appeal are

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[96] George S. Schuyler, "Slavery in Liberia: Liberian Officials Possess Slave-Wives," The Washington Post 30 June 1931: 1.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] George S. Schuyler, "Slavery in Liberia: Tribute Is Exacted of Liberian Natives," The Washington Post 1 July 1931: 1.

the identical persons who are exploiting them."[101] In this article, Schuyler recalls a meeting with the chief of a native tribe and the cordiality with which he was treated once it was known that he was American and not a member of the Americo-Liberian elite. This chief and chiefs of other tribes explained to him that "it is the custom of the Liberians to go upcountry empty handed and return laden down not only with food, but furniture, ornaments and native cloth."[102]

The African American press with one exception excoriated Schuyler's series on Liberia. *The New York Amsterdam News* argued that his report was "in some respect more damaging than that of the League of Nations commission [and that] there seems to be small hope that anything will be done to change conditions."[103] After a summary of Schuyler's main grievances about the Liberian government the article concludes with the statement that "only Liberia can free itself," leaving the paper's readership with little interest to take action in the international debate.[104]

Overall, however, Schuyler's reports generated heated discussions about his political motive to strengthen and even broaden the charges brought against the Liberian government as well as his role in the international debate about the future of the African country. At the forefront of criticism was the African American journalist and writer S. A. Haynes who voiced his disapproval of Schuyler in a letter that appeared in various newspapers in July and August of 1931. Published as a letter to the editor of the *Philadelphia Tribune* on July 30, 1931, Haynes accuses Schuyler of having "stirred up a

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] "Schuyler Exposes Liberia," The New York Amsterdam News 15 July 1931: 8.
[104] Ibid.

hornet's nest with his uncharitable report on conditions in Liberia."[105] In this context the argument of American imperialism plays an essential role as Haynes refers to Schuyler as "a pawn [...] in the unfinished rape of Africa" and opines that Schuyler was chosen by American imperialists because "he knows little about international politics and therefore lacked a proper conception of the sinister motives which prompted his selection."[106] In clear defense of Liberia, Haynes concludes that there is more "shame and disgrace" in the motive of white imperialists than in the Liberian affair.[107]

The circulation of Hayne's letter naturally sparked a riposte from Schuyler. On August 8, 1931, in a letter to the editor of the *Afro-American*, Schuyler counters Hayne's accusations and defends his reports on Liberia. Most crucially, he tries to destroy one of the central arguments that African Americans have employed in their fight in defense of Liberia when he states that "That slavery and forced labor exist elsewhere does not absolve the black 'Land of Liberty' from blame and censure. This particular argument is the poorest I ever heard."[108] He further argues that he is unaware of any desire on part of the United States to take over Liberia and even speaks charitably of American involvement in the Liberian affair because, as he claims, "if it hadn't been for our government's intervention the French and English would have grabbed Liberia long ago."[109] In this context, he explains that "what was required was an unbiased report."[110] In his autobiography Schuyler later elaborates on this issue. In his opinion, he explains,

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[105] S. A. Haynes, "Negro Progress Demands that All Negroes Register and Vote," Philadelphia Tribune 30 July 1931: 16.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] George S. Schuyler, "That Slavery and Forced Labor in Other Countries Absolve Liberia from Blame Is Poor Argument, Says Schuyler," Afro-American 8 Aug. 1931: 6.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

Garveyites and Black nationalists "expect a Negro newspaperman to lie to satisfy their egos. I have always refused to do this [...]. I believe in calling the shots as I see them."[111]

According to these politics, Schuyler continued to ostracize himself from the ideology of defending Liberia for the global cause of equality for people of the African Diaspora. In one issue of his column "Views and Reviews" published in *The Pittsburgh Courier* Schuyler's lack of understanding for this global cause becomes evident. He argues that "the NAACP, the Age and almost all other Negroes want the U.S. government to end slavery and forced labor of Negroes in Mississippi, but they seem not so keen to end the slavery and forced labor of Negroes in Liberia."[112] A retort to this argument by Black Americans in defense of Liberia would be that Schuyler fails to see the inconsistency on part of the United States government that results from its interest to get involved in the slavery affair in Liberia and the country's lack of concern for domestic racial inequality on the other hand. In the same issue, Schuyler speaks in favor of imperialism as "it is more of a benefit than a bane [...] and enables people to concentrate on becoming civilized" and he even suggests that "American supervision should last for at least 20 or 25 years until the Liberians are competent of administering the country, which clearly they are not at present."[113]

In another issue of his series in *The Pittsburgh Courier* Schuyler buys into the argument of Liberian incompetence for self-government even more blatantly. In his opinion, "Liberia has been on the down grade for the last 60 years" and the labor scandal proved that it is in need of "intelligence, discipline, responsibility" and "an administration

[111] Schuyler, Black and Conservative, 186.
[112] George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," The Pittsburgh Courier 8 Oct. 1932: 10.
[113] Ibid.

respected by the sister nations of the world."[114] In his words, the Americo-Liberian elite "has failed on every count except the genteel lying misnamed diplomacy."[115] Against this backdrop he states at a later point that "the Aframerican who goes there [to Liberia] a resolute advocate of Liberian independence is more than likely to come away convinced of the necessity for American intervention."[116]

In this context, his conceptualization of race is of essential importance. In an address to the Native African Union that Schuyler delivered in August 1931 in defense of his articles on Liberia he states that he is not interested in "race of any sort" but in class and that according to this ideology he interprets the Liberian labor scandal as "the exploitation of a lower class by an unsympathetic upper class."[117] Ibrahim Sundiata argues in his work Brothers and Strangers (2003) that Schuyler's "nonracial" thinking was "truly radical" and constituted the antithesis of many other African American intellectuals at that time. In Sundiata's opinion, Schuyler believed that Black America's destiny was not "a castelike state for all of perpetuity" but "to be like everyone else."[118] Schuyler's proclaimed disinterest in race raises the question of how he viewed the interest of Firestone, the U.S. government and Europe in Africa. It remains arguable whether Schuyler discerned the Liberian labor scandal as the revelation of a neo-colonial scheme.

Sundiata concludes that for Schuyler "Du Bois' totemic Africa was unnecessary."[119] However, notwithstanding his "post-racial" thinking, Schuyler was still a controversial

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[114] George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," The Pittsburgh Courier 12 Nov. 1932: 10.
[115] Ibid.
[116] George S. Schuyler "Writer Calls Liberia 'Graveyard of Ambition'," The Chicago Defender 27 May 1933: 11.
[117] "Schuyler Defends Liberian Expose," The New York Amsterdam News 12 Aug. 1931: 3.
[118] Sundiata, Brothers and Strangers, 237.
[119] Ibid.

figure. While attacking the defense of Liberia based upon kinship Schuyler supported at the same time the attempts derived from economic Pan-Africanism. In January of 1935 he claims that he was "more and more convinced that American Negroes should do something about Liberia [...] an undeveloped paradise waiting for American Negroes who are technically equipped, courageous, industrious and thrifty."[120] And as reported by *The Pittsburgh Courier* as early as July of 1932, Schuyler proposed that a group of well known African Americans initiate a movement "possibly known as SAVE LIBERIA SOCIETY" in order to raise funds with which to amortize the Firestone loan and to develop the country through colonization. He argues that "the financial tangle that Liberia find itself in can be straightened out if American Negroes made up their mind to save Liberia, and they should."[121] In consequence, despite his ideological feuds with other black intellectuals about his news coverage of the Liberian affair and his disapproval of impartial sympathy for people of African descent, Schuyler did see the importance of saving Liberia and thus did not fundamentally differ from his fellow campaigners.

III. War on Ethiopia

The Italian Ethiopian crisis was initiated by the Italians on December 5, 1934 through the famous "Walwal incident," the climax of many years of dispute over the exact demarcation of frontiers between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. This military dispute took place in the Ogenda region well within the borders of Eastern Ethiopia, where

[120] George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," The Pittsburgh Courier 26 Jan. 1935: 10.
[121] "Schuyler, Mudgal Agree on Program," The Pittsburgh Courier 30 July 1932: 5.

Italian forces illegally occupied the only wells in the region. Benito Mussolini used this incident to demand raparations for Italian losses which led to months of diplomatic altercations. On October 3, 1935 50,000 Italian troops invaded Ethiopia. In early May of the following year, Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa surrendered to the Italian troops after days of siege. As pointed out by a *New York Times* journalist, the significance of the Italian occupation of and victory over Addis Ababa is "far more symbolical than material."[122] Shortly after this victory, the Italians annexed Ethiopia. The last African republic that had successfully combated foreign intervention for decades and therefore was a symbol of pride and freedom for people of the African Diaspora would remain an Italian protectorate until 1941.

The invasion of Ethiopia, an imminent threat to its independence, forced the black nation to begin, as the *New York Times* explained, "a life-or-death struggle for an independent existent." While for Mussolini the war between Ethiopia and fascist Italy presented a "cry of justice and victory," it challenged the people of the African Diaspora to respond.[123] Throughout the world, Ethiopia's defense found ideological and political repercussions. The unequivocal military aggression against Ethiopia, in contrast to the Liberian labor scandal, entailed no strategic dilemma and resulted in unified African Americans responses. "All found themselves on the same side of the question."[124]

III.1 Ethiopia and Italian Imperialism

[122] Arnold Cortesi, "Italians Are Jubilant," New York Times 3 May 1936: 1.
[123] "Text of Mussolini's Speech to People of Italy," New York Times 3 Oct. 1935: 3.
[124] Sundiata, Brothers and Strangers, 290.

The history of Italian foreign policy demonstrates that Mussolini's imperial interest in colonizing Ethiopia in the early 1930s was "no new and sudden inspiration."[125] On the contrary, since the 1880s when Italy obtained the colonies Eritrea and Somalia on the horn of the African continent, Ethiopia became an obsession for Italian politicians who wanted to create a land bridge between these two territories. Further, as the leading European nations had already begun their race for colonial land in Africa, the recently unified Italy was determined to secure her place among the European powers.

The Treaty of Ucciali, which was concluded in May 1889 between Count Pietro Antonelli and Menelik II, the self-proclaimed emperor of Ethiopia, became the basis for the first conflict in Italian-Ethiopian relations. This treaty granted Italy permission to occupy a territory stretching from the town of Massawa to the city of Asmara, a territory closely tied to Ethiopia. Historian George W. Baer points out that it remains unanswered why Menelik recognized this agreement, especially since his main goal was to gain "international recognition for Ethiopia as a sovereign, independent state."[126] However, he refers to Edward Ullendorf who suggests that an Italian occupation "might make the rases of the north more willing to accept his protective leadership."[127]

Regardless of Menelik's motivation for signing this agreement, the first military dispute between Italy and Ethiopia emerged from article 17 of the treaty. The treaty was copied in both Italian and Amharic. However, the translations of article 17 differed in meaning. According to the Italian version, Menelik "agreed to conduct all his foreign

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[125] F. Ernest Work, "Italo-Ethiopian Relations," The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 20, No. 4. (Oct., 1935), 438.
[126] George W. Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 2.
[127] Baer, 2.

affairs through the medium of the Italian government."[128] The Amharic translation, in contrast, granted him the choice to do so. In other words, "by the Amharic text Ethiopia remained a free and independent state. By the Italian Ethiopia became a protectorate of Italy."[129] It is unclear whether this disagreement was deliberately incorporated by the Italians. Even though Baer claims that it was not Antonelli's purpose, given Italy's succeeding claim to Ethiopia it seems very likely that it was a strategic translation "error."

In response to ongoing disputes over the treaty and Menelik's refusal to accept the Italian interpretation of article 17, the Italians declared war on Ethiopia in 1896. The main battle took place on March 1 of 1896 in Aduwa, where the Italian troops were completely defeated. For the Ethiopians this battle was a great military victory that instilled national and racial pride, but Italy was left with "a sense of humiliation, [with] the shameful scar."[130]

Ten years later, an agreement between England, France, and Italy threatened Ethiopian independence for a second time when they divided Ethiopia into "three spheres of influence,"[131] This treaty of 1906 which described European interest in Ethiopia is often referred to as the European guarantee of Ethiopian independence. F. Ernest Work correctly points out the irony that lies in the title. "The very existence of the treaty of 1906 constitutes a threat to the independence of Ethiopia rather than a guarantee of that independence."[132] While this treaty did not directly challenge Ethiopian independence at that time, it implies that Italy's defeat in Aduwa did not put an end to European interest in

[128] Baer, 2.
[129] Work, 440.
[130] Baer, 4.
[131] Work, 442.
[132] Work, 442-443.

Ethiopia. In fact, it later created the basis for Mussolini's claim to Ethiopia despite the latter's acceptance into the League of Nations in 1923.

World War I presented another opportunity for Italy to annex Ethiopia. In 1915, Antonio Salandra, Italy's prime minister from 1914 until 1916, signed a secret treaty with England and France in which Italy agreed to join the Allied Powers in exchange for the right "to expand from Eritrea and Italian Somaliland" once the war was over.[133] However, at the peace conference in Paris, this secret treaty was regarded as void and therefore Italy was not granted any African territory. Italians accused prime minister Salandra of turning the victory into a "mutilated victory", a slogan, "vittoria mutilata" that was later adopted by Benito Mussolini.

During his first years as Italian prime minister, Mussolini did not show direct interest in colonizing Ethiopia and his politics were primarily focused on domestic issues. Foreign minister Raffaele Guariglia, however, claimed that Ethiopia had become an armed and unified nation under Haile Selassie and thus presented "a new and potent danger to Italy's east African possessions."[134] More realistically, as Baer argues, by 1934 Mussolini had failed to implement comprehensive social and economic policies for Italy. An imperialist venture in Africa, more specifically the conquest of Ethiopia, would distract Italians from economic hardships brought about by the Great Depression. Moreover, an aggressive foreign policy reasserted the "slogans of Fascism: activism, militarism, combative nationalism."[135]

In addition, Mussolini blamed Italy's lack of overseas colonies for the country's economic hardships. In contrast to other European nations, he argued, Italy had access

[133] Work, 443.
[134] Baer, 23.
[135] Baer, 34.

neither to cheap overseas resources nor to an overseas market. Hence, empire building became the remedy for Italy's "vittoria mutilata."

The Walwal incident of December 5, 1934 was engineered by Mussolini to provide an excuse for instigating war against Ethiopia. In his "Directive and Plan of Action for the Resolution of the Italian-Abyssinian Questions" he claims that the only way the dispute could be solved was through "the destruction of the Abyssinian armed forces and the total conquest of Ethiopia."[136] As ordered in this "Plan of Action," the war in Ethiopia began on October 3 of 1935, when "with no declaration of war [...] army corps crossed the Ethiopian frontier, and Italian planes bombed Aduwa and Adigrat."[137]

III.2 Racial Implications

According to the ideas of Ethiopianism, some African Americans interpreted the crisis as the cataclysmic event which would overthrow contemporary racial orders. Ethiopia has to fulfill the biblical prophecy as stated in an article in *The Chicago Defender*. "Out of this Italo-Ethiopian war will bring [...] all of the present nations into war. [...] A King is coming to set Africa free from all foreign rulers, and Europe. Asia and America of all their ills."[138] The article's title, "What the People Say: Ethiopia Will Win," demonstrates to what extent the biblical interpretation led to a positive view on the crisis. In a different article in the same newspaper the author states "I am one black man not alarmed or frightened about Ethiopia's trouble with Italy. Ethiopia and the black people of the world are going to come out all right."[139]

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[136] Baer, 59.
[137] Baer, 374.
[138] James M. Webb, letter, The Chicago Defender 1 Feb. 1936: 16.
[139] Jas M. Webb, "Mussolini vs. Ethiopia," The Chicago Defender 15 June 1935: 16.

However, not all interpreted the Ethiopian crisis as a positive force. The *New York Times* called it a "world race war" and especially African American intellectuals of older generations, like W.E.B. Du Bois, pointed towards negative implications of the crisis.[140] In the essay "Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View," Du Bois argues that this war posed "a threat to the sanctity of international agreements, a crisis in Christianity, foreboding a new orientation in the problems of race and color."[141] Du Bois did not support the biblical interpretation of the crisis but instead interpreted the events in a broader context of white colonialism. As he had already stated in his 1903 The Souls of Black Folk, "the Problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea."[142] According to this interpretation, the war would lead to an increase in race hatred since its moral for the African Diaspora was "that if any colored nation expects to maintain itself against white Europe it need appeal neither to religion nor culture but only to force."[143]

Yet, both interpretations suggest a kinship between African Americans and Ethiopians that was increasingly strengthened throughout the crisis between Ethiopia and Italy, in particular by Ethiopians. As claimed by *The Chicago Defender*, African Americans learned of their true racial status through a speech given in Chicago by Lij Tasfaye Zaphird, Ethiopian representative of the Imperial Legation in London. By referring to his audience as "blood-brothers," Zaphird instilled pride in African Americans and appealed to their sense of unity with Africa. "Who said that you were

[140] "Negroes Assail Italy," New York Times 16 Feb. 1935: 6.
[141] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View," 83.
[142] W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, 17-18.
[143] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View," 89.

Negroes? You are sons and daughters of Africa. Africa, your motherland."[144] Haile Selassie further fostered this kinship but also emphasized the significance of his role in the struggle for black liberation. According to a *New York Times* article he claimed to be "Emperor not only of Ethiopia but of all Africans, and chief of all Negroes, even those under foreign domination."[145]

Hence, African Americans attributed a link not only between themselves and Africans but also between Ethiopia's struggle for independence and their own struggle for equality in the United States. In a letter to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier* the author argues that "War between Italy and Ethiopia threatens all black people in the world. [...] If Ethiopia wins you are not too far to enjoy that which is called 'Freedom'."[146] In another letter to the editor in the same newspaper a New York resident claims this war to be a "supreme test for the Negroes of the world" as "it is a deciding factor in every respect to let the world know whether or not we are going to be predominated by the whites."[147] As a result, the Ethiopian war played a crucial role for black Americans as *The Chicago Defender* argues in its article "Black races Profit from the Italian-Ethiopian Conflict." According to this article "the most notable reaction to this Italo-Ethiopian conflict is the crystallization of interests of the black people in the world [...] The determination to get rid of white rule which seems to be spreading like a wildfire over the black world today."[148]

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[144] "Black Peoples Learn of True Racial Status," The Chicago Defender 4 Jan. 1936: 1+.
[145] "Harlem Ponders Ethiopia's Fate," New York Times 14 June 1935: E10.
[146] J.H. Edmondson, letter, The Pittsburgh Courier 17 Oct. 1935: 2.
[147] Albart Caidwell, letter, The Pittsburgh Courier 28 Dec. 1935: 2.
[148] Metz T.P. Lochard, "Black Races Profit from the Italian-Ethiopian Conflict," The Chicago Defender 4 Jan. 1936: 3.

Against this background, African Americans mobilized to respond to Ethiopia's struggle against Italy. However, opinions on how to react clashed. Editorials in *The Chicago Defender* and *The Pittsburgh Courier* exemplify the opinion shared by those African Americans who were primarily concerned with the struggle for racial equality in the United States. One editor states that Ethiopia's united front crossing religious lines against Italy must serve as a model for black America. "We, too, must learn to present a united front in a crisis and bury our differences."[149] In "Why Go to Ethiopia?" the editor of *The Chicago Defender* appeals to his readership to see the necessity in fighting racial evils, namely lynching, economic disadvantages, and racial segregation, at home. "You MUST realize that you have kinship with all peoples of the earth – but, above all, you MUST FIGHT to correct evils at home."[150]

Yet, it seems that American race relations led many to look beyond the domestic issues with which they had primarily struggled. Statements such as, "We know that the United States will never allow us to be anything as a race here, so why not wake up and try to become a respected race through Abyssinia?" demonstrate to what extent many were increasingly frustrated with American racial politics.[151] The Great Depression had dashed hopes for economic relief and regarding the racial landscape, the Scottsboro Case that filled newspapers at the same time symbolized the hopelessness in the struggle for racial equality at home. Therefore, in their responses to the Italian-Ethiopian conflict, one can see the importance that many African Americans attributed to the liberation of Ethiopia.

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[149] "Learning From the Ethiopians," editorial, The Pittsburgh Courier 16 Nov. 1935:
[150] "Why Go to Ethiopia?", editorial, The Chicago Defender 27 July 1935: 1.
[151] Charles Rothwell, letter, The Chicago Defender 16 Mar. 1935: 14.

III.3 Protests, Fundraisings, and Recruitments

During the pre-war phase of the Italian-Ethiopian conflict, the African American responses were directed at preventing the outbreak of a war. In this effort both the League of Nations and the American President became targets of appeal. In August 1935, the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia sent a delegate to the League of Nations at Geneva. The committee chose Dr. Willis N. Huggins, a professor of social science at a high school in Brooklyn, NY to serve as a representative. His mission to the League of Nations was to represent the attitude of black America and ask that "immediate action be taken against Mussolini's imminent invasion of Ethiopia."[152] Due to his commitment to the Ethiopian cause, Huggins soon became a leading figure in black America's support for Ethiopia and was regarded as "the new leader."[153]

For the League of Nations, its role in this dispute was significant. "If the League stood up successfully in the face of this challenge, there would be hope for its system of collective security."[154] Although it had little means to prevent a war it could sanction Italy. In response to the outbreak of the war, the League accepted a verdict that said that Italy had "violated its obligations under the Covenant [of the League of Nations] and thereby [...] committed an act of war against all other Members of the League."[155] It was thus each member's duty to impose sanctions on Italy in order to restore peace and to protect Ethiopia as its member. While some sanctions were instituted, the League failed to extend its sanctions "to prohibit exports to Italy of coal, steel, and, above all, oil." [156]

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[152] "Huggins to Seek Aid of League for Ethiopia," editorial, The Pittsburgh Courier 3 Aug. 1935:
[153] Lucius C. Harper, "Praise Huggins for Work in Behalf of Ethiopians," The Chicago Defender 7 Dec. 1935: 5.
[154] Baer, 304.
[155] Baer, 374.
[156] Baer, 374.

These sanctions would have disastrously affected the Italian economy and thus would have forced Italy to give up the war. In addition, the Soviet Union was a major seller of oil. Without sufficient sanctions and Soviet support Italy was able to continue its colonial war in Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, President Roosevelt was petitioned by African Americans to get involved in solving the dispute. *The Washington Post* reported that in Harlem the Pan-African Reconstruction Association launched a campaign to collect 10,000,000 signatures for a petition that should be sent to President Roosevelt to intervene in the Italian-Ethiopian dispute.[157] In Chicago, the Baptist leader Rev. Dr. L.K. Williams urged the United States to use their influence to prevent war. He appealed to the President by claiming that "a war between these two nations would menace the world's peace and produce the greatest wrath and unrest."[158] The United States however resorted to a neutral policy and avoided any active involvement in Ethiopia's dispute with Italy. "The fear of involving the United States in international obligations and wars was still [after World War I] uppermost in American minds."[159]

In response to this lack of official support, the African American community resorted to other strategies. When war seemed inevitable, many African American males concluded that the best way to support Ethiopia was to fight in the war against Italy. This sentiment is best reflected by extracts of speeches that were covered by the *New York Times* in an article on a meeting held in Harlem on July 14, 1935. This meeting was organized by the Pan-African Reconstruction Association in order to recruit soldiers for

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[157] "Giant Petition for U.S. to Help Ethiopia Starts," The Washington Post 16 July 1935: 9.
[158] "Negroes Ask U.S. to Save Ethiopia," New York Times 5 Sep. 1935: 16.
[159] Brice Harris, Jr. The United States and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), 42.

Ethiopia. "Those present testified that Africa was meant for Africans and that Italy, along with the rest of the world, had to be made to believe it."[160] Garvey's influence on this statement cannot be ignored. Further, the speeches given by Harlemites reflected their hope that supporting Ethiopia would ultimately benefit their own struggle for racial equality. "I feel somehow that if we help them now, that someday they'll help us."[161] A second speaker claimed that "some day I'd like to see [my boy] in a government position on the shores of Africa."[162]

Yet, the meeting also attempted to settle the logistics of recruiting soldiers for Ethiopia. As the founder of the association, Samuel Daniels, explained it was illegal for Ethiopia to officially recruit troops. However, he claimed, volunteers would be accepted and he promised that "transportation would be guaranteed."[163]

Therefore, by the summer of 1935, with an increased anticipation of the war, recruitment efforts within the black American community became a serious enterprise. As reported by *The New York Age* on July 13 in 1935, "fifty recruits [...] are ready to sail to Africa at the first sign of trouble. [They] have already obtained their passports and visas and are only awaiting the word to start."[164] In addition, four hundred more volunteers from Chicago, Washington, and Philadelphia "have already declared their intention of going to Africa."[165] Also in Texas, organized recruitments took place. According to the *New York Times*, a group of African Americans from Fort Worth, Texas volunteered to "spill their blood in behalf of [their] native land."[166] In the same article the

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[160] "Harlemites Rally to Ethiopia's Aid," New York Times 15 July 1935: 7.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] "50 Recruits Set to Sail in Ethiopia," The New York Age 13 July 1935: 1.
[165] Ibid.
[166] "Texas Group May Enlist," New York Times 14 July 1935: 3.

author states that in Oklahoma one hundred African Americans had signed up to fight for Ethiopia in event of war and that "a state-wide recruiting movement was under way."[167]

A letter to the editor of *The Pittsburgh Courier* from October 19, 1935 further testified that the recruitment effort by the Pan-African Reconstruction Association had repercussions throughout the United States and also that it gained new momentum after the outbreak of the Italian-Ethiopian war. The author of the letter, a resident of Florida, requested information on "the method of enlisting" in order to recruit people of his community."[168] In his closing words he expressed the significance of aiding Ethiopia by appealing to the African American community to "get together and stick together and once and for all become a unified race."[169]

Nevertheless, despite these recruitment efforts and the overwhelming number of eager volunteers, "economic depression and increasingly persistent government restraints and harassment prevented all but two African Americans from participating in the war."[170] The two African Americans that became the only volunteers in the Ethiopian army were Hubert Julian and John C. Robinson, both aviators. While Robinson served the Ethiopian air force for the full length of the war until May 1936, Julian left Haile Selassie's forces before the outbreak of the war. Yet, the reasons for this remained unclear. While some argued that Selassie drove him out of the country after having discovered that he was "a fake" and had never served in the British Forces as he had claimed, Julian himself explained that he left the Ethiopian forces due to his frustrations

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[167] Ibid.
[168] Tom Jones, letter, The Pittsburgh Courier 19 Oct. 1935, 2nd ed.: 10.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Joseph E. Harris, African-American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 54.

with the troops.[171] According to a *New York Times* article he referred to the Ethiopian soldiers as "lazy fellows [...] that are unable to adapt themselves to the tactics that tanks, airplanes and machine-guns necessitate."[172] Upon his return to the United States, first rumors surfaced that Julian was not genuinely committed to the Ethiopian cause. For the black community he became a traitor to not only Emperor Haile Selassie but the entire black race.[173] This animosity even grew stronger when the black press reported in June 1936 that Julian had adopted a new, Italian name.[174]

However, recruiting troops was only one effort through which the African American community sought to support Ethiopia. Raising funds in order to send medical supplies to Ethiopia became another means as soon as the war broke out in October 1935. As early as on October 6 of the same year, Dr. Huggins announced the formation of the organization "Friends of Ethiopia" which would "sponsor a drive to raise funds for hospitalization of the Ethiopian wounded."[175] In announcing his fundraising campaign Dr. Huggins claimed that "$600 would pay for the passage of a doctor and a nurse [...] and $25,000 would buy and equip a hospital plane to be used as a field ambulance."[176] An article by the *New York Times* of December 25, 1935 states that his "Friends of Ethiopia" raised $305 at a mass meeting in West Harlem.[177]

Less than two weeks after Dr. Huggins' opening campaign, *The Pittsburgh Courier* announced that the American Red Cross joined the cause to raise funds and began to cooperate with local organizations. This, as the article argues, gave new impetus to the

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[171] J.W. Smallwood, "Friend Hubert Julian," The Chicago Defender 11 Jan. 1936: 16.
[172] "Fears Ethiopian Tragedy," New York Times 20 Nov. 1935: 15.
[173] Glady's W. Ferman, "Doesn't Agree," The Chicago Defender 18 Jan. 1936: 14.
[174] "Hubert Julian Gets New Italian Name," The Chicago Defender 27 June 1936: 4.
[175] "Funds Sought Here to Aid Ethiopians," New York Times 6 Oct. 1935: 29.
[176] Ibid.
[177] "Friends of Ethiopia Meet," New York Times 25 Dec. 1935: 3.

drive to raise funds for medical supplies. The author further explains that local chapters of the Red Cross united with other local organizations for the sake of preventing "sporadic fund raisings."[178] This campaign experienced gained new momentum in December 1935 when fourteen organizations merged in order to centralize and thus strengthen their support for the Ethiopian cause, with Harlem as their headquarters. Dr. Huggin's "Friends of Ethiopia" was among these organizations which joined the "United Committee for Defense of Ethiopia." Again, he adopted a responsible position as he was elected vice chairman and chairman of field work.[179]

In the same month, only two months after the beginning of the war, first supplies were shipped across the Atlantic to Africa – "a ton of medical supplies and a truck donated to the Ethiopian Red Cross."[180] Further, according to an article in the *New York Age*, a help organization located in Harlem donated the use of its office for a group of nurses to prepare medical supplies such as bandages and surgical dressings. The same article reports that a new campaign had been launched "to raise a special fund for the purchase and immediate shipment of a field tent hospital with full equipment."[181]

These campaigns were further strengthened by appeals for support from the Ethiopian side. Dr. W. Martin, the Ethiopian minister to the court of St. James in London, England, explained that Ethiopia welcomed medical supplies, doctors, and nurses. However, he also appealed to "veterinarians, industrials and technical men to come [to Ethiopia]."[182] Also Emperor Haile Selassie expressed his gratitude for support from America in an

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[178] "Fund Raising Committees to Aid Ethiopia Unite with American Red Cross for Medical Supplies," New York Age 19 Oct. 1935: 1; this raises many interesting questions since the American Red Cross was a racist organization with a long history of racist practices such as the segregation of blood plasma.
[179] "Harlem Ethiopian Body in Election," The Chicago Defender 4 Jan. 1936: 5.
[180] "Medical Supplies Sent to Ethiopia," The Chicago Defender 7 Dec. 1935: 2.
[181] "Make New Plea for Ethiopia," New York Age 7 Dec. 1935: 1.
[182] "DR. Willis N. Huggins," The Chicago Defender 14 Dec. 1935: 16.

interview published by *The Pittsburgh Courier*. He further appealed to African American doctors to provide their services to his nation. "We would appreciate deeply their services."[183]

Yet, the most crucial aspect of this interview was that Haile Selassie highlighted the opportunities for African Americans in Ethiopia. He explained that African American professionals as well as university graduates would be a great asset for Ethiopia. "I am opposed to all distinctions based on race, religion, color or previous servitude. [...] In the various offices of my country you will find the different races and colors working together."[184] This, needless to say, appealed to the Black American population since Selassie's "race free" Ethiopia presented a concrete alternative to racism in the United States and therefore increased African American desire for active involvement in support of Ethiopia.

III.4 Boycotts and U.S. Italians

In addition to the above mentioned campaigns in support of Ethiopia, African Americans adopted offensive strategies towards the Italian American community. Especially in racially mixed neighborhoods such as Harlem, Italians became an easy target for African Americans who projected their hate and frustration with the Ethiopian war on their Italian neighbors. Yet, pro-Fascist elements in the Italian American community acted in a similar way towards African Americans. And also divisions between pro- and anti-Fascist groups within the Italian American community resulted in physical conflicts.

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[183] "J.A. Rogers Interviews Ethiopian Emperor," The Pittsburgh Courier 7 March 1936: 2.
[184] Ibid.

The first violent dispute between Blacks and Italians occurred in Jersey City, NJ on August 11, 1935. According to *The Washington Post* "verbal exchanges over Joe Louis, Negro heavyweight contender who recently knocked out Primo Carnera, and the Italo-Ethiopian situation touched off the battle."[185] The *New York Times* further states in its coverage on the riot that "numerous unreported fist fights have taken place [...] in the last three months."[186]

Yet, members of both sides willingly unified in the defense of Ethiopia. In their protest against Italian fascism, African Americans, white and U.S. Italians marched side by side "in a picket line before the Italian Consulate [in New York City] on September 4."[187] As some Italians explained in a letter sent to *The Chicago Defender*, "the true Italians, true to the revolutionary traditions, are not on the side of the fascist bandits, but on the side of the invaded Ethiopian people."[188] Yet, peaceful attempts like these were few and as the conflict on the African continent progressed the relations between African and Italian Americans deteriorated.

The majority of U.S. Italians supported Mussolini's regime. In 1930, less than ten percent of the Italian-American population supported the anti-fascist camp.[189] "The achievements of their ancestral home enhanced the prestige of the Italians in America and inspired pride in the accomplishments of the Mussolini regime."[190] In fact, Italian fascism found repercussions in the American Italian community. Fascist clubs were founded as early as 1921 and the Italian American press overwhelmingly supported the

[185] "Italian-Negro Rioting Flares in Jersey City," The Washington Post 12 Aug. 1935: 2.
[186] "Italian-Negroriot Puts 5 in Hospital," New York Times 12 Aug. 1935: 4.
[187] "Defy Police in Picketing of Consulate," The Chicago Defender 14 Sep. 1935: 5.
[188] "U.S. Italians Spurn Fascist Ethiopian War," The Chicago Defender 19 Oct. 1935: 1.
[189] John P. Diggins, "The Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition," The Journal of American History Vol. 54, No.3 (Dec., 1967): 582.
[190] Ronald H. Bayor, Neighbors in Conflict: The Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York City, 1929-1941 (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 78.

Italian cause. However, as Ronald H. Bayor argues, this support was predominantly non-ideological and merely expressed support for Italy, the home country. Nevertheless, those who actively opposed Mussolini's cause were much weaker than those who supported him.[191]

In the early 1930s, about 80,03% of the population of East Harlem was Italian. Beyond this neighborhood, however, the population of Harlem was extremely diverse. Due to a count made in 1938, "even in the areas of highest Italian concentration, the immigrants lived with thirty-four other ethnic and racial groups."[192] As a consequence, shortly after the outbreak of the war in early October 1935, *The Pittsburgh Courier* wrote that "the eyes of the nation observe Harlem [and] the reactions of Negro Harlem and its many Italians who operate most of the beer and liquor places."[193] Acts of hooliganism took on various forms in this neighborhood. For instance, two African American teenagers subsequently "made threats [to Italian merchants] to use the Italo-Ethiopian situation to drive Negro customers from them unless blackmail demands were met."[194] At other incidents, Italian stores were raided. In Harlem, a mob of 400 broke the windows of Italian stores "hurling the fruits and vegetables about the street."[195] Others threw missiles through the windows of Italian owned stores.[196]

Harlem, but also parts of Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, where fights broke out between black and Italian American students at a Public School, were declared "danger

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[191] Bayor, 78-79.
[192] Robert Anthony Orsi, The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 17.
[193] "Eyes Of Nation Observe Harlem," The Pittsburgh Courier 12 Oct. 1935: 2.
[194] "2 Negroes Sentenced in Racket on Italians," New York Times 3 Oct. 1935: 22.
[195] "Mob of 400 Battles the Police in Harlem; Italian Stores Raided, Man Shot in Crowd," New York Times 19 May 1936: 6.
[196] "Machine Gun Trained on Harlemites; Fear Rioting," The Chicago Defender 20 June 1936: 4.

zones."[197] The local police responded by drastically increasing the number of police patrols. According to an article in *The Pittsburgh Courier* from October 24, 1935 "four hundred additional policemen are patrolling Harlem as a result of the protest made by Italian fruit vendors and ice men against feared outbreaks against them."[198]

The boycott of Italian vendors and Italian goods soon became a method of protest that was taken over by African Americans throughout the United States but also one that was adopted overseas. The Pan-African Reconstruction Association, an organization formed in New York City, carried on a campaign to boycott Italian made goods as protest against the war in Ethiopia. *The Chicago Defender* featured a photo showing a protest banner of this organization which writes "Let Justice Triumph, Defend Ethiopia: Don't Buy Italian Merchandise."[199] According to an article by *The Pittsburgh Courier* on a boycott of Italian goods in Birmingham, Alabama, this boycott was felt not only in the urban regions of the North but basically affected the whole country.[200] And even more so, the black press covered news stories on boycotts of Italian goods in England as well as in South Africa.[201]

While these boycotts were ineffective in stopping Mussolini's aggression against Ethiopia they had disastrous economic effects on Italian Americans. In an article published in *The Pittsburgh Courier* on October 26, 1935 the author claims that "within the past two weeks more whites, particular of Italian extraction, have given up trying to do business in Harlem than perhaps during the past two years."[202] On the other hand,

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[197] "1,200 Extra Police on 'War Duty' Here," New York Times 4 Oct. 1935: 6.
[198] "400 Extra Cops for Harlem," The Pittsburgh Courier 26 Oct. 1935: 4.
[199] "Boycott Italian Goods," The Chicago Defender 29 June 1935: 3.
[200] "Birmingham Italians Facing Store Boycott," The Pittsburgh Courier 2 Nov. 1925: 2,
[201] "Chain Letters Urge Italian Boycott," The Washington Post 10 Aug. 1935: 3. "Natives Put Boycott On All Italian Goods," The Pittsburgh Courier 21 Dec. 1935: 6.
[202] "War Activities Quicken Harlem Trade Interest," The Pittsburgh Courier 26 Oct. 1935:

however, this opened new opportunities for African Americans in Harlem as their boycott of Italian merchants and goods strengthened their own businesses. As reported by the *New York Age*, "several white storekeepers reported that their trade had been cut in half" while the trade of local black merchants increased.[203] The *New York Age* further reported that the boycott had expanded to all white-owned stores, regardless of nationality even though some store owners had put up signs in their windows declaring that they were not Italian.[204]

The events surrounding the Italian-Ethiopian crisis thus changed the economic landscape of Harlem and the relations between U.S. Italians and African Americans demonstrated that Du Bois was accurate in prophesying an increase of race hatred as one result of the war in Ethiopia. However, in New York the Italian-Ethiopian war did not have a direct impact on the demographics of East Harlem where the majority of Italian-Americans lived. Even though Italians began leaving East Harlem in larger numbers after the late 1930s, this was mainly due to an increase in migration from Puerto Rico but also to the effects of the Great Depression. "Italian Harlem was hit hard by the Depression. Skilled and unskilled workers lost their jobs. Evictions were common sight."[205]

Hence, this suggests that the boycott of Italian stores initiated by African Americans in Harlem and other ethnically mixed neighborhoods was not a catalyst for an Italian migration out of Harlem. From the Italian perspective it seems that the implications of the Italian-Ethiopian war simply added up to the hardships that had already existed. On the other hand, African American vendors benefited from the decrease of Italian merchants. Therefore, the effect of the war on inter-racial relations in Harlem was a stricter

[203] "Boycott Against White Merchants as Result of East African War," New York Age 12 Oct. 1935: 1.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Orsi, 43.

separation of Italian Harlem and black Harlem. The Italian migration away from Harlem and the eventual transition of East Harlem into Spanish Harlem was a product of the increased Puerto Rican immigration after World War II as well as the suburbanization which was encouraged by the post World War II housing boom and urban population density rates.

IV. Conclusion

The question that needs to be tackled first is whether African Americans were equally concerned about defending Liberian and Ethiopian independence. Ethiopia was invaded by an imperialistic power which presented a more direct and visual threat than the neo-colonial subordination of Liberia. Responses to the invasion of Ethiopia seem more organized, resonated with more people and therefore elicited a louder outcry. African Americans also had a very strong reaction to the Liberian slavery scandal. The majority agreed that it was necessary to defend Liberia against American and European intervention. Newspapers were inundated with reports on Liberia and a variety of perspectives regarding the charge of slavery. Yet, there were no grassroots response movements and those very few efforts that existed were squelched before they could gain in significance and influence. This was not a matter of the lack of Black American leadership but instead reflects the significant differences between the responses to direct militarized colonization and neo-colonialism. While the enemy in the Ethiopian crisis was easily identified, the Liberian crisis suggests a collaboration between the Americo-Liberian elite and the neo-colonial forces which presented a serious dilemma to the

African American population. With the exception of Schuyler who harshly criticized the Americo-Liberian elite, the African American population shunned any direct critique of the Liberian officials for the benefit of Liberian independence. In other words, Black Americans thought that opposing Liberian officials posed a serious threat to the republic's future which would inhibit the long-term goal of an independent Africa.

Accordingly, the responses to Liberia are not directly comparable to those following the Italian-Ethiopian crisis. Instead, I suggest that both events need to be regarded as a coherent development in African American politics. This explanation rejects the assumption that the Ethiopian war presented a watershed event in the history of Black American Nationalism. As the Ethiopian war superseded the Liberian affair, African American sensitivity towards the independence of Africa was already heightened and then intensified as both crises unfolded. The agitation surrounding the Liberian crisis set the stage for the later more forceful reactions to Ethiopia. In short, it "served as a pointer of black feelings in a world dominated by whites."[206]

In addition, the idea of unity within the African Diaspora which was first articulated by intellectuals in the scope of the Liberian affair was gradually absorbed by the wider community and therefore allowed for the formation of grassroots organizations such as the Pan-African Reconstruction Association. Against this backdrop, the emergence of Black American Nationalism and its emphatic manifestations in the responses to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia was the result of a series of events rather than of one isolated occurrence.

But what exactly were black America's perceptions of Africa in the 1920s and 1930? Apart from the traditional symbols associated with Africa - such as home, hope, and

[206] Esedebe, 95.

freedom - the most essential perception that African Americans had was that the African struggle for independence and sovereignty was closely linked to their struggle for racial equality in the United States. This perception strengthened racial consciousness in a white dominated world and emphasized the unifying forces much more than the differences of groups within the African Diaspora. The responses to both affairs thus resulted from the increased perception of unity and interdependence within the African Diaspora. While the 1920s and its movements already left a legacy in which Africa played a crucial role in the lives of African Americans, the 1930s and its neo-colonial threats to Africa reawakened and intensified this sentiment. The African consciousness that is so prominent in the responses to the Italian-Ethiopian war is consequently the result of an evolutionary process.

As African Americans saw their own struggle for civil rights and racial equality closely related to Africa, one question remains to be answered. Since African American efforts to save Liberia and Ethiopia from white imperialism were too little and to no avail, did black American involvement in these affairs advance their fight for equality at home? Black American involvement with international politics heightened their sensitivity to global inequality on a larger scale. In other words, with this increased consciousness of ties between different segments of the African Diaspora, African Americans did not sidetrack from their very unique struggle but instead began to view it within the larger context of the struggles of all disenfranchised people around the world. The fundraisings, protests, and recruitment efforts during the Ethiopian crisis strengthened the black population its ability to organize and unite for a common cause. This lesson, combined with the newly gained internationalism, created an African

American community that reacted to upcoming foreign issues like Nazism, Stalinism, the Cold War, and African liberation movements with an unprecedented demand for liberation at home and abroad.

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