

Symbol of Modernity: Ghana, African Americans, and the Eisenhower Administration

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Symbol of Modernity: Ghana, African Americans, and the Eisenhower Administration

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ABSTRACT

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Symbol of Modernity: Ghana, African Americans, and the Eisenhower Administration

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Throughout the 1950s African Americans believed the decolonizing nation of Ghana gave the world a potent symbol of black ability to wield power fairly, peacefully, and effectively in modern political, economic, and social systems. Black Americans therefore attempted to use Ghana as a symbol of black modernity in the civil rights movement to convince American whites they should abandon the racist assumption that racial and social chaos would erupt upon the granting of full black civil rights. Such transnational racial identifications with Ghana also led numerous African American intellectuals, journalists, leaders, and organizations to pressure, often successfully, the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to accord more attention and importance to Ghana, and to its leader Kwame Nkrumah. Among other events in the U.S.-Ghanaian relationship during the 1950s, African Americans played a role in causing Nkrumah's 1951 and 1958 visits to the United States and Vice President Richard Nixon's trip to the March 1957 independence ceremonies in Accra. Over the course of the decade African Americans also played a role in shifting American foreign policy in Africa toward at least a balance between European desires and African aspirations. Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles largely left policy development on Africa to assistant secretaries of state and desk officers until the very end of the decade. African American leaders were constantly in contact with these mid-level officials, who often took black American views into account when thinking about the American approach to

Africa. Exploring both the specific symbol of black ability to embrace modernity that African Americans saw in Ghana and African American influence on American foreign policy toward Africa during the 1950s reveals one of the ways race produced positive outcomes in the globalizing Cold War.

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To my wife, Jenn, for all her support

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACOA – American Committee on Africa

AFSAR – Americans For South African Resistance

AGUR – Accra, General USIS Records

AMSAC – American Society of African Culture

AWF – Ann Whitman File

BAA – Bureau of African Affairs

CDF – Central Decimal Files

CFBA – Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, British Africa

CPP – Convention People’s Party (Nkrumah’s party)

DDEL – Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

DDEP – Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President

FRUS – Foreign Relations of the United States

GCACCGR – Gold Coast, Accra Consulate, Classified General Records

GCGR – Ghana, Classified General Records

JFDP – John Foster Dulles Papers

MMNSC – Minutes and Meetings of the National Security Council

MMNSC3 – Minutes and Meetings of the National Security Council, 3rd Supplement

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NACP – National Archives at College Park

NEA – Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Division, State Department

NLM – National Liberation Movement (opposition party in Ghana)

NSC – National Security Council

OAA – Office of African Affairs, State Department

OCB – Operations Coordinating Board

OF – Official File

OSAA – Office of Southern African Affairs, State Department

OWAA – Office of West African Affairs, State Department

PSB – Psychological Strategy Board

RCOBIR – Records of Component Offices of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research

RDEP-WHCF – Records of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, White House Central Files

REFM – Records of E. Frederic Morrow

RG – Record Group

SCDCA – St. Clair Drake Collection of Africana

TC-JFDCH – Minutes of Telephone Conversations of John Foster Dulles and Christian Herter

UGCC – United Gold Coast Convention (conservative party in Ghana)

USCFEP – United States Council on Foreign Economic Policy

WHO – White House Office

INTRODUCTION

Main Arguments and Significance

In March 1957 Vice President Richard M. Nixon journeyed to Accra for Ghana's independence ceremonies. Nixon's presence and speeches in Ghana generated much goodwill for the United States in a nation increasingly becoming important as a symbol of a decolonizing non-white world. While meeting with the charismatic leader of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, Nixon "expressed his pleasure that he was able to be present" and later "reiterated his pleasure at being present at this historic occasion." Yet only a month earlier Nixon had been very reluctant to travel to Accra. Despite entreaties from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and members of Congress, Nixon only agreed to go after he asked for, and received, a formal written request from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In fact, African Americans, long enthusiastic over the symbol of black capability Ghana presented to the world, were primarily responsible for generating the official U.S. delegation to Ghana's independence ceremonies. Three years earlier a black American leader had proposed the Congressional resolution that created the delegation. Likewise, Eisenhower's highest level black official, E. Frederic Morrow, noted in early 1957 the "great pressures" black American leaders were placing on the administration to include an African American on the U.S. delegation. One official even told another, "We would be subject to much criticism, particularly in the negro [sic] press, if one of our outstanding colored officials did not go on this trip." Concern among U.S. officials over black American opinion thus contributed to the inclusion of an African American on the

U.S. delegation to Ghana's independence ceremonies. Black American enthusiasm for Ghana led directly to black American influence on U.S. foreign policy in Africa.¹

For African Americans during the 1950s, Ghana was the most powerful example of black African emancipation. Black professors, journalists, activists, politicians, and numerous others in the United States took inspiration from Ghana's progress towards freedom to continue to press their own claims for civil and political rights. Indeed, amidst ongoing South African apartheid, British repression of the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya, and the French war in Algeria, Nkrumah appeared as a symbol of black freedom, capability, and non-alignment in the globalizing Cold War. African Americans embraced Nkrumah and Ghana, and thus Africa, as part of a new self-identification as members of a black diasporic community. The color line at home was also collapsing during the 1950s, due especially to the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision desegregating public schools and the Montgomery bus boycott. African Americans therefore also used the symbol of Ghana in specific ways designed to bolster their claims for full participation in an integrated American society. Many black American leaders

¹ Memorandum of Conversation, March 4, 1957, p. 1, 4, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (hereafter RG 84), Ghana, Classified General Records, 1956-1958 (hereafter GCGR), Box 1, Folder "350 – Pol – Jan-June 1957," National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NACP); Telephone Call, Richard Nixon to John Foster Dulles, January 28, 1957, Telephone Call, John Foster Dulles to Richard Nixon, January 29, 1957, both on Reel 5, *Minutes of Telephone Conversations of John Foster Dulles and of Christian Herter (1953-1961)* [microform] (Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, 1980) (hereafter TC-JFDCH); E. Frederic Morrow, *Black Man in the White House: A Diary of the Eisenhower Years by the Administrative Officer for Special Projects, The White House, 1955-1961* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1963), 89; Memorandum, Bernard Shanley to Sherman Adams, February 7, 1957, Official File, Box 505, Folder 'OF-116-NN,' Records of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, White House Central Files (hereafter RDEP-WHCF), Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (hereafter DDEL). For the full discussion of Nixon's lack of centrality to the U.S. delegation and black American pressure on the administration concerning the makeup of the delegation, see chapter six.

took from Nkrumah and Ghana a usable symbol of black ability to wield power effectively, fairly, and safely in modern political, economic, and social systems. African Americans believed such positive images of Ghana would undermine racist arguments that social or racial chaos would ensue if blacks in the United States immediately gained full civil and political rights. Ghana therefore not only inspired African Americans as an image of black freedom. The new nation also became a usable symbol of black modernity.

African Americans also pressured the Eisenhower administration to accord more importance to Nkrumah, Ghana, and Africa. Black leaders were most often in direct contact with assistant secretaries of state for the Near East, South Asia, and Africa (NEA) division, and after August 1958 with the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, as well as with desk officers who worked on Africa within those divisions. These officials were often aware of the transnational racial identification of African Americans with Ghana and Africa. Policymakers also realized how American race relations appeared to overseas audiences. During the 1950s the Eisenhower administration sought to orient newly independent non-white populations toward the West. Yet an increasingly powerful non-aligned movement, evidenced especially by the 1955 Bandung Conference, challenged the primacy of the Cold War in international relations. In such an environment, mid-level U.S. officials in the State Department were at least willing to note African American concerns. Indeed, they often did more than listen to black voices. At times throughout the decade black public opinion and black suggestions to officials played a role in shifting U.S. foreign policy in Africa towards an approach that would at least balance the desires of Europeans and Africans.

While changes in U.S. policy did not result solely from black prodding and did not go nearly as far in embracing African aspirations as African Americans wanted, black American views played an understudied role in the changes that did occur. Since Eisenhower and Dulles paid little attention to Africa until the late 1950s, the assistant secretaries and desk officers in the State Department were the ones who wrote the first drafts of policy papers and who thus began to shift American policy on Africa during the mid-1950s. These were also the officials in contact with black leaders and they incorporated black thinking when considering changes in U.S. policy in Africa. In addition, black leaders were even more successful when prodding the State Department or the administration to take specific actions to demonstrate U.S. attention to Nkrumah and Ghana. Thus African American identification with Ghana played a central role in generating both Nixon's March 1957 trip to the independence celebrations in Accra and Nkrumah's widely publicized visit to the United States in July 1958. Although institutional and mass pressure by black Americans did not reach the level of later campaigns such as that against South African apartheid, enough black voices from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), from the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), and from individual leaders, journalists, professors, and activists reached the ears of U.S. officials as to have an effect on U.S. foreign policy towards Africa during the 1950s.

The influence of black Americans on U.S. officials was therefore one of the many ways non-governmental actors in the domestic arena affected American foreign policy during the Cold War. More importantly, this work will reveal the understudied role of African Americans in relations between the United States and an extremely important

decolonizing African nation during the 1950s. Such black agency indicates previous studies of black American attention to foreign affairs do not tell the full story. Neither do analyses that address the awareness by U.S. officials of the importance of race in the international arena. Some historians even explicitly deny the influence of African Americans on U.S. relations with Ghana and Africa during the 1950s. In fact, African Americans helped shift U.S. policy towards a “middle ground” and were even more influential in causing certain highly visible and important events in the American-Ghanaian relationship of the 1950s. The overt or latent racism of many American policymakers often limited official support for rapid African decolonization, to be sure. Yet race also worked in other ways and along other lines of transmission to cause some positive results during the decade, such as the trips by Nixon and Nkrumah. Race actually made Nkrumah and Ghana increasingly more important to American policymakers. There was a need for the United States to engage an important symbol of a decolonizing non-white Third World, of course, but constant and consistent contacts with African Americans also played a substantial role in convincing mid-level State Department officials of Ghana’s importance. Shifting the focus to such officials, and away from high-level figures such as Dulles and Nixon, reveals how black American fingerprints were all over U.S. relations with Ghana throughout the 1950s.

At the same time, the image of black modernity African Americans took from Ghana was both useful and problematic for the relationship between black Americans and Ghanaians. While a few African Americans went to work and live in Ghana, the vast majority of black Americans often spoke in terms of what the image of Ghana could do for their own struggle for civil rights. While an important element in the African

American rhetorical arsenal, such use of Ghana revealed the limits of transnational racial identification. That black American leaders so often talked about Ghana as benefiting their own campaign for racial equality indicated their underlying concern that such identification was to serve African American interests primarily. There was certainly no widespread discussion of any sort of return to Africa movement, as the black activist Marcus Garvey had called for during the early part of the twentieth century, and there were virtually no instances of any sustained unity of action between African Americans and Ghanaians. Partly these were, of course, the result of geography and the ongoing Jim Crow system in the American South. Yet no matter how important Ghana was as a symbol, it remained only a symbol, and only until 1960 when the independence of numerous other black African nations combined with the beginning of the domestic sit-in movement to draw black American attention away from a sole focus on Ghana. Transnational racial identifications between black Americans and Ghana thus carried both positive associations and inherent limits. Overall, this work will trace the image of black ability to embrace modernity that African Americans sought to take from Ghana for their own struggle for civil rights, analyze African American agency in American foreign relations with Ghana, explore one of the many ways actors in the domestic sphere exerted influence on international relations, and thus reveal one way race produced positive outcomes in the global Cold War.

This work will not, however, seek to draw any new conclusions about Nkrumah himself and will only focus on exploring what African Americans saw in him and his nation. On a related note, this work operates on the assumption that African Americans, as historian James Meriwether writes, “struggled to process the complexities of

independent Africa...African Americans generally did not disaggregate areas of Africa in their transatlantic thinking.” When black American journalists and others spoke of Ghana, they often drew conclusions regarding all of Africa, although they did point out the harsher conditions and bigger obstacles black Africans faced in areas under minority white control. In addition, African Americans rarely mentioned the deep political conflicts Nkrumah experienced with both the Ashanti of central Ghana and the Muslim populations of northern Ghana. To black Americans eager to see a symbol of black capability in the modern world, Ghana most often appeared as a united whole and as representative of all black Africa. Partly such perceptions were due to the fact Nkrumah appeared on the world stage before Africa experienced the numerous problems faced by post-colonial states in subsequent decades. African Americans therefore had legitimate reasons to hope all newly independent African nations would generally follow the course Ghana appeared to have traced by 1960. Despite such lack of discernment, exploring what Ghana meant to African Americans is still very useful in revealing how they thought about black capability to embrace modernity, about transnational racial identifications, and about the role of Africans and African nations in the domestic campaign for civil rights.²

Finally, this work will not extensively explore any implications such transnational racial identifications held for the African American ability to combat European colonialism and white supremacy in Africa amidst a repressive Cold War atmosphere. An extended discussion of such issues is beyond the scope of this analysis, although

² James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 4.

colonialism and the Cold War environment are certainly elements of the following narrative. Near the end of the final chapter, this work will only suggest Ghana's example seemed to encourage some African Americans to criticize Western imperialism more openly by 1960. In fact, Carol Anderson, in a new work tentatively titled *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941-1960*, is currently analyzing mainstream African American opposition to European colonialism throughout the early Cold War years. She finds black American actions against colonialism and minority white control in Africa continued after World War II despite a repressive domestic environment in which anti-colonial sentiments were often linked to sympathy for communism. This work will thus focus primarily on what African Americans saw in the symbol of Ghana as well as on their subsequent interactions with U.S. officials.³

Historiography

Historians of Eisenhower's policies toward Africa have not accounted for the influence of African Americans. Regarding African decolonization, Eisenhower and Dulles wanted a slow, gradual process under European control. Based in part on their racial beliefs, they also feared newly independent non-white nations would not be able to

³ Carol Anderson, *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). This author has read a chapter of Anderson's upcoming work while participating in the Americanist seminar at Vanderbilt University. She argues that despite accommodating itself to the Cold War environment domestically, the NAACP continued to challenge European and white control in Africa openly during the early years of the Cold War. Parts of this work have already appeared. See Carol Anderson, "Rethinking Radicalism: African Americans and the Liberation Struggles in Somalia, Libya, and Eritrea, 1945-1949," *Journal of the Historical Society* 11 (December 2011): 385-423; Carol Anderson, "International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid: The NAACP's Alliance with the Reverend Michael Scott for South West Africa's Liberation, 1946-1952," *Journal of World History* 19 (September 2008): 297-326; and Carol Anderson, "The Cold War in the Atlantic World: African Decolonization & U.S. Foreign Policy," in Toyin Falola and Kevin Roberts, eds., *The Atlantic World, 1450-2000* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

resist communist pressure. Thomas Borstelmann argues the racially based worldviews, either overt or latent, of successive American presidents and policymakers limited their ability to sympathize with non-whites abroad and, often, African Americans at home. For Borstelmann, race produced quite negative outcomes as “U.S. Cold War policies served primarily to slow down the process of ending white rule over people of color.” Thomas Noer even suggests, accurately, that compared to the prior administration of President Harry S. Truman many of the early actions regarding Africa taken by Eisenhower’s high-level officials “made the United States seem more conservative, more hostile to African aspirations, and more supportive of white rule than it actually was.” While Noer notes the “complex relationship between domestic considerations and pressure groups and foreign policy,” he nevertheless concludes, “Blacks and liberals were largely ineffective in shaping specific policies.” Regarding the administration’s policy in Africa, James Meriwether likewise argues, “As colonial governments fell, supporting the white regimes that remained or backing shifts to strongman rule seemed acceptable alternatives to the absence of ‘civilizing’ European rule and the potential of communist advances.”

Historians have thus accurately pointed out the lack of sympathy for African decolonization among top administration officials, but this work will discuss a previously unexplored aspect of the administration’s policymaking on Africa by focusing on the interactions between African Americans and mid-level State Department officials. As the 1950s progressed the latter became clearly aware of black American views of Ghana and acted in part based on such knowledge. In addition, Borstelmann, Noer, Meriwether, and other historians simply assume that Nixon traveled to Accra in March 1957 at the behest of Eisenhower and Dulles or that Nkrumah visited the United States in 1958 due only to

an invitation from Eisenhower. In fact, African American identification with Ghana actually caused both trips.⁴

Historians addressing the relationship between the United States and Ghana have likewise attributed no role to African Americans in either the formulation of U.S. policy towards Africa or in specific events in the U.S.-Ghanaian relationship. Ebere Nwaubani does note the control of policy development wielded by assistant secretaries in NEA or the African Affairs branch of the State Department throughout the decade. Thus the officials African Americans contacted affected policy directly. Nwaubani, however, argues he “saw no hint of any African-American input, lobby, or pressure in connection with Washington’s policies and behavior in Africa in the 1950s” and found no “indication of a letter or letters, a petition or petitions, a rally or rallies, a public lecture or lectures, a meeting or meetings with one African-American group or another” by U.S. officials involved in making policy for Africa. In fact, all the sorts of connections listed by Nwaubani did occur between African Americans and mid-level State officials throughout the 1950s. Likewise, Mary Montgomery claims, “As is true for Nwaubani’s study of Eisenhower in West Africa, my work presents policy formulation as the domain of bureaucrats. While nongovernmental agents and citizen lobbying groups increasingly participated in the discussion of US policy toward Africa...I have not found evidence that these groups impacted policy formulation related to Ghana.” Even if U.S. officials did not

⁴ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2, 86, 269; Thomas J. Noer, *The Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 34, 257; James H. Meriwether, “‘A Torrent Overrunning Everything’: Africa and the Eisenhower Administration,” in Kathryn C. Statler and Andrew L. Johns, eds., *The Eisenhower Administration, The Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 175-193.

often invoke African American influence when specifically discussing Ghana in policy papers, although this occurred occasionally, African Americans played a role in shifting overall policy towards Africa and exerted substantial influence on a number of specific episodes in the U.S. relationship with Ghana throughout the decade. Finally, George White mentions a “domestic root” of U.S. foreign policy in Africa, but then discusses only the civil rights events of the 1950s and gives no indication he meant black American actions directly influenced foreign policy other than contributing to the domestic context of heightened racial tensions. Yet African American views and actions mattered. Transnational racial identifications produced positive outcomes in U.S. relations with Ghana and Africa.⁵

Only a few historians have provided accounts of the connections between African Americans and U.S. officials regarding American foreign policy during the 1950s. Carol Anderson shows how the onset of a repressive Cold War environment in the domestic sphere discredited discussions of social and economic rights and channeled the nascent black civil rights movement into an emphasis on political and civil rights only. In analyses of the relationship between African American musicians and U.S. foreign policy, Penny Von Eschen and Lisa Davenport reveal the ways U.S. officials and African Americans competed with each other to emphasize different messages to communist and

⁵ Ebere Nwaubani, *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa, 1950-1960* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001), xviii, 234; Mary E. Montgomery, “The Eyes of the World Were Watching: Ghana, Great Britain, and the United States, 1957-1966” (University of Maryland, unpublished dissertation, 2004), 11; George White, Jr., *Holding the Line: Race, Racism, and American Foreign Policy Toward Africa, 1953-1960* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 10-17. There is currently only one work which includes a substantial treatment of the Soviet approach to Ghana. See Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). It is a good work, but does not include much discussion of race or African Americans, of course, since Mazov largely attempts to explore high level Soviet policy towards the region.

non-aligned audiences during jazz tours abroad. Michael Krenn's study of relations between African Americans and the State Department is more similar to this work, although he focuses almost exclusively on the issue of the number of blacks in the ranks of the Foreign Service. Arguing that both a "bureaucratic ideology" and an underlying racism in the State Department produced resistance to black inclusion, Krenn claims his work "examines how and why a specific interest group – African-Americans – tried, and generally failed, to influence U.S. foreign policy and State Department hiring practices." He is correct about their efforts regarding U.S. foreign policy, but not about their failures. Finally, Brenda Gayle Plummer focuses primarily on black American views of foreign affairs and on intra-black ideological differences. She does not fully explore contacts between African Americans and the Eisenhower administration concerning actual policy on Africa. Plummer mentions Nkrumah only a few times and incorrectly argues he "would not become well known until after Ghana's independence." While she claims that "black foreign affairs activism...yielded results," she usually indicates such victories were merely symbolic and she does not explicitly include Ghana in this conclusion. In fact, African Americans actually experienced concrete successes as they attempted to influence U.S. foreign policy towards Africa and Ghana during the 1950s.⁶

⁶ Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Michael L. Krenn, *Black Diplomacy: African Americans and the State Department, 1945-1969* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 6-7; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 258, 326-7. See also Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), although this work only mentions Nkrumah or Ghana four times.

Finally, three historians have examined the relationship between African Americans and Ghana, but they fail to note both black American influence on U.S. foreign policy and the specific symbol of modernity mainstream African Americans saw in Ghana. Penny Von Eschen incorrectly claims that even in 1957 “connections were weak” between African Americans and Ghana. She does not even address African American pressure on the State Department and the administration. Kevin Gaines provides a compelling account of African American activists, primarily radicals, who lived in Ghana during the 1950s and 1960s. Yet unlike mainstream black journalists, scholars, and activists, these émigrés had no influence on either general U.S. foreign policy in Africa or on specific events involving Ghana and the United States during the 1950s. This work will thus focus on mainstream black leaders in the United States who sought to use Ghana as a symbol in the struggle for domestic civil rights. In an excellent study of the African American relationship with Africa, James Meriwether argues Nkrumah and Ghana “became important symbols of independence and the ability to overcome...they overturned old stereotypes about African ‘primitiveness’ and ‘backwardness.’” Meriwether further notes the importance of Ghana both in helping “African Americans recast their images of contemporary Africa” and in making Africa “not only...a source of political encouragement but also of social and cultural inspiration.” Yet Meriwether largely settles on exploring how “Ghana reconfigured African Americans’ diasporic consciousness.” He does not analyze the specific way many African American leaders believed Ghana would be useful to them in the domestic struggle for civil rights. Certainly his claims of black American pride in, and inspiration from, Ghana and Nkrumah are accurate. He is also correct in arguing Ghana’s example

encouraged black Americans to abandon views of Africans as primitive. Yet this work will take these associations a step further to show how African Americans saw in Ghana a specific symbol of black ability to embrace modern political, economic, and social systems, which would influence the struggle for civil rights directly.⁷

Likewise, Meriwether does not discuss African American agency in American foreign policy towards Africa. He largely ascribes any pro-African shifts in policy to either the need to appear friendly to decolonizing African nations in order to win them for the West or to the general fact “the black freedom struggle continued to be a public relations nightmare for U.S. foreign policy.” The role African Americans played in shifting the attention of U.S. officials towards Africa does not appear in Meriwether’s work. While he portrays U.S. officials at all levels as primarily concerned with foreign audiences, this work will explore the awareness and consideration of the views of African American leaders by mid-level officials. In addition, he does not explore the roots of Nixon’s trip to Ghana and Nkrumah’s visit to the United States, both of which occurred due to African American enthusiasm for Ghana. While U.S. policy did not change drastically during the 1950s, black Americans played at least a role in the changes that did occur and exerted substantially more influence on a number of events in the American relationship with Ghana throughout the decade.⁸

⁷ Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 181-4; Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Meriwether, *Proudly*, 150-1, 180.

⁸Meriwether, *Proudly*, 150-180.

A Look Forward

The first chapter traces Nkrumah's personal life, his ideology, and Ghanaian history while also beginning to explore what African Americans saw in Ghana. Chapter two examines the continuing development of black American identification with Ghana as well as early African American efforts to press the federal government to accord more attention to Nkrumah. For instance, Lincoln University president Horace Mann Bond prodded the State Department to host a luncheon for Nkrumah when the latter visited the United States in 1951. The themes of African American identification with Ghana and black American pressure on the State Department continue in chapter three, which also discusses the Eisenhower administration's Cold War mindset regarding Africa. Further African American attempts to bring the importance of Ghana and Nkrumah to the attention of State Department officials during the first year of Eisenhower's tenure will show both heightening black American interest in Ghana and black influence on U.S. foreign relations, especially when U.S. officials worried about African American public opinion. Chapter four will explore the questions Ghana stimulated by 1954 among both American policymakers and the black community. Richard Wright's important book on Ghana, *Black Power*, appeared that year and reactions to the work within the African American community revealed debates over the different uses diverse black leaders envisioned for Ghana in the domestic struggle for civil rights. The chapter will also cover the development of the Congressional resolution, proposed by an African American leader, which authorized an official U.S. delegation to the independence ceremonies in Ghana.

Chapter five analyzes the role of African Americans in helping to shift U.S. policy on Africa towards a “middle ground” approach balancing European desires and African aspirations. African Americans made up a substantial portion of the domestic public opinion pressing for a more positive embrace of Africa and U.S. officials often mentioned such opinion among the factors they considered in policy assessments. At times, U.S. officials even explicitly noted how the views of African Americans influenced their thinking. This chapter also covers two episodes in the American relationship with Ghana, jazz artist Louis Armstrong’s visit to Ghana and Ghanaian journalist Mabel Dove’s trip to the United States, which revealed the complex issues U.S. officials faced when dealing with the racial connections between African Americans and Ghanaians. Ghana’s independence and African American pressure on the Eisenhower administration regarding the official U.S. delegation to Accra will be covered in chapter six. By early 1957 black Americans had developed a full portrait of Ghana as a symbol of black capability to embrace modernity. Chapter seven demonstrates how African American enthusiasm for Nkrumah helped cause his popular and widely publicized 1958 visit to the United States and led directly to his presence in Harlem and Chicago during the trip. The chapter will also cover the development of the first comprehensive policy paper on sub-Saharan Africa, National Security Council document 5719. The final chapter explores ongoing contacts between African Americans and U.S. officials, which were often based on the need of the latter for information about events taking place in Ghana. Black American enthusiasm for Ghana continued, but began to lessen as more black African nations achieved independence and as the domestic campaign for civil rights began in earnest with the onset of the sit-in movement. In addition, the limits to

black American transnational racial identification with Ghana are analyzed through the response of moderate African American women to the July 1960 Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent in Ghana.

During the 1950s, black American views affected the State Department to such an extent that by March 1961 President John F. Kennedy's Secretary of State Dean Rusk had to warn mid-level officers working on Africa to avoid accounting for "domestic political considerations" when making decisions. Such calculations were now to be left to "higher-ups...who were political appointees." Rooting the analysis in the very beginning of the 1950s, this work will explore the lengthy relationships between African Americans and Ghana and between black leaders and U.S. officials. Black Americans believed Nkrumah's nation would help undermine racist assumptions of social chaos upon the advent of full racial equality. African Americans sought to use Ghana to convince white audiences of a black ability to wield power effectively, safely, and peacefully in modern political, economic, and social systems. Ghana's example alone would not end racism and segregation in the United States, of course, but African Americans believed the new nation could be a powerful weapon in their rhetorical arsenal. Thus mainstream black Americans were not just proud of their black brethren in Ghana, they did not just take inspiration from Ghana's path towards freedom, and they did not just include Ghana and Africa in their self-identification. They also sought to use Ghana for their own domestic purposes. Simultaneously, black Americans were often successful when they pressured U.S. officials to accord more importance and attention to Nkrumah, Ghana, and Africa. Both the African American use of Ghana as a symbol of black ability to embrace modernity and the agency of black Americans in U.S. foreign policy towards Africa

during the 1950s reveal one of the ways race produced positive outcomes in the globalizing Cold War.⁹

⁹ Memorandum, Olcott Deming to James Penfield, "Proposal to Issue Michael Scott a C-2 Visa Restricting Him to UN Headquarters District," March 3, 1961, General Records of the Department of State (hereafter RG 59), Bureau of African Affairs, Staff Papers on Country Posts, 1956-1959, Box 12, Folder "GMW, JKF, HT Correspondence File, March 1961," NACP. The specific issue in this document was ACOA pressure on the State Department to obtain a visa for an anti-apartheid activist who wanted to enter the United States. Olcott Deming had been Director of the Office of East and South African Affairs since 1959 and James Penfield had been Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs since September 1958, so they were aware of African American views and were among the very officials to whom Rusk was issuing his warning. Information on Olcott's title came from *New York Times* Obituaries online, "Olcott Deming, 98, Ambassador to Newly Independent Uganda, Dies," April 7, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/07/obituaries/07deming.html?ref=obituaries>, accessed December 12, 2011.

CHAPTER 1: THE RISE OF GHANA

Introduction

In January 1950, Accra was in turmoil. Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP), working with the largest labor organization in the colony, had put into practice Nkrumah's ideology of Positive Action. They were demanding immediate self-government. Labor strikes and mass demonstrations had spread and the British governor had declared a state of emergency, attempting to crack down on the large anti-colonial protests sweeping through urban areas. American officials in the capital reported disturbing events including "many baton charges" and "two African policemen fatally knifed" as the government tried to maintain order. Shortly after the disorders started, however, the British began arresting and jailing CPP organizers. The party's leader, the already famous Nkrumah, was not immediately detained and requested a meeting with the American consul in Accra, Hyman Bloom, who thought Nkrumah might ask for a visa to the United States. Bloom asked the opinion of the State Department should Nkrumah do so and typical bureaucratic complications ensued. Before the British arrested Nkrumah five days later, Bloom attended a public speech given by E. C. Quist, the African President of the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast. Many in the opposition CPP viewed Quist as a collaborator with the British. A large crowd of about two hundred people, whom Bloom believed to be clearly organized since they stood in lines, "as though at a prearranged signal, began to hoot and make loud noises with various noise-producing instruments." Bloom commented, "There is little doubt that this exhibition of

hooliganism was engineered by followers of Kwame Nkrumah.” The police were unable to restore order and Quist had to leave the podium.¹⁰

The strikes and demonstrations of January 1950 in Ghana were both an end and a beginning. Although the British arrested and imprisoned many CPP leaders, the popularity of Nkrumah’s party soared, indicating a sort of final victory in the competition for the allegiance of the colony’s majority over the more moderate and conservative party, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). The latter had formed in 1947. Although Nkrumah had only split from the UGCC to form the CPP in June of 1949, a mere six months before the demonstrations, the CPP had expanded rapidly due to its consistent anti-colonial message as well as adept organizing on the part of its leaders. While smaller parties would periodically appear to challenge Nkrumah during the 1950s, the CPP always remained the majority party. The disturbances also marked the beginning of the end of British colonialism in Ghana. Despite successfully suppressing the disorders, the British allowed elections later in 1950 under a new constitution for the colony that not only included the previously existing Legislative Assembly, but also provided for an Executive Council of three British and eight African members. British Governor Sir Charles Arden-Clarke accurately perceived the strength of the CPP and allowed Nkrumah to run for office from jail. With the CPP overwhelmingly victorious in

¹⁰ Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, January 14, 1950, 745K.00/1-1450; Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, January 17, 1950, 745K.00/1-1750; Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, January 16, 1950, 745K.00/1-1650; Telegram, Visa Division to Hyman Bloom, February 1, 1950, 745K.00-1650; and Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, “Address by E.C. Quist, Legco President,” January 19, 1950, p. 1-3, 745K.00/1-1950 all in Gregory Murphy, project coordinator, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: British Africa, 1950-1954* [microform] (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1991) (hereafter CFBA 1950-54). Note: The author will use the term “Gold Coast” only when it appears in quotations from sources and will use Ghana everywhere else to refer to both the colony and the nation.

national elections under the new constitution in February 1951, the British released Nkrumah from jail and invited the CPP to form a government.¹¹

The disturbances of early 1950 and the CPP electoral victory in early 1951 constituted a culmination of Nkrumah's path to leadership as one of the most important African nationalists of the 1950s. His ideas and organizing techniques had formed over previous decades during his experiences in Ghana, the United States, and England. The different contexts in which he pursued his education exerted profound influences on him as he developed his ideology composed of African political and economic independence, state-directed modernization, and Pan-African unity. While teaching in Ghana he encountered the African nationalism of Ghanaian Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey and Nigerian Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. In the United States he witnessed American racism, but also experienced the international black community of Caribbean, African, and African American activists in late 1930s and early 1940s Harlem. Finally, he was present at the important Fifth Pan-African Conference in Manchester, England in 1945 which brought together a number of contemporary and future leaders of the black diaspora, many of them with radical leanings. In addition, as Nkrumah began his campaign against British colonialism, African American images of him as a symbol of black capability began to form, voiced especially by Horace Mann Bond of Lincoln University. As early as 1950 both mainstream and radical black leaders, as well as major African American newspapers, viewed Ghana and Nkrumah as important potential weapons in their own fight for racial equality.

¹¹ D.E.K. Amenumey, *Ghana: A Concise History from Pre-Colonial Times to the 20th Century* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2008), 207-209.

Nkrumah's Early Years and Education

Kwame Nkrumah was born in 1909 in the small village of Nkorful in the southwestern part of Ghana. His parents were part of the Akan people who had inhabited parts of the region for centuries. Nkrumah would later describe the place where he grew up as “a typical West African village composed of mud and wattle houses and bamboo compounds.” When he was still a boy, his mother became a Roman Catholic and Nkrumah therefore received most of his early education from a Catholic priest, even receiving baptism in the Catholic Church. He would later admit, however, “As I grew older, however, the strict discipline of Roman Catholicism stifled me...today [1957] I am a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist and I have not found any contradiction between the two.” In 1926 Nkrumah entered the Government Training College in Accra to become a teacher. At the College he encountered the Ghanaian nationalist Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, who had lived in the United States for twenty-two years and had recently returned to Ghana to teach at the College. Nkrumah would later write, “It was through him that my nationalism was first aroused.” Although Nkrumah did not leave Ghana until 1935, he remembered that when Aggrey died in 1927 “it was because of my great admiration for Aggrey, both as a man and a scholar, that I first formed the idea of furthering my studies in the United States of America.” Nkrumah therefore encountered African nationalism from his first days at a post-secondary institution in the mid-1920s, almost a quarter century before the riotous events described above.¹²

¹² Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: International Publishers, 1957), 1-4, 11-12, 14-15. Page numbers differ depending on the edition of *Ghana*. Despite numerous

Yet before this trip another experience also influenced his later career. After graduating, Nkrumah taught in Roman Catholic schools and for a while seriously contemplated becoming a Jesuit monk. In the end, he felt more strongly “the old desire to be up and doing, to further my education and to proceed to America” to pursue such education. In December 1934, Nkrumah traveled to Accra and heard lectures by the African nationalist, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who would later lead Nigeria to independence in 1960. Nkrumah’s “nationalism was...revived” by Azikiwe’s newspaper articles and speeches and Nkrumah remembered, “I had been greatly impressed by him and had been more determined than ever to go to America.” Azikiwe, like Aggrey, had studied in the United States and such a path seemed to Nkrumah the way to become an effective leader. In addition to revealing the apparent benefits of an American education, Azikiwe’s ideas appealed to Nkrumah. The former had recently become the lead editor of *The African Morning Post* and had launched a written campaign against British practices, especially the racial inequalities of British colonialism, for which he and fellow editors received charges of sedition. Although Nkrumah was in the United States by 1935, it is telling that he included in his 1957 autobiography an extended quotation from a 1936 *Morning Post* article entitled “Has the African a God?” A labor organizer named Wallace Johnson had

references to religion in Nkrumah’s speeches, there is little scholarship on his attitude towards religion and religious institutions. The sole full-length work is Ebenezer Obiri Addo, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1997). Addo’s main arguments stem from his belief that in Ghana political leadership was “tinged with sacredness” and that Nkrumah and his supporters used messianic language to present Nkrumah as an almost divine deliverer. He also argues that Nkrumah was a religious pluralist and blended elements of different faiths in order to pursue “two main tasks, national integration and modernization” (p. xi-xii). As the current author has searched Ghanaian newspapers for the 1950s, many examples of this trend surfaced in pro-Nkrumah periodicals. Also, the Government Training College was moved from Accra to Achimota, seven miles from Accra, in 1928.

penned the piece during the sedition trial of Azikiwe and his fellow editors. Johnson wrote mockingly of the British,

Ye strong, you must weaken the weak. Ye ‘civilised’ Europeans, you must ‘civilise’ the ‘barbarous’ Africans with machine guns. Ye Christian Europeans, you must ‘Christianize’ the pagan Africans with bombs, poison gases, etc.!...Ye Administrators, make Sedition Bill to keep the African gagged, make Deportation Ordinance to send the Africans to exile whenever they dare to question your authority. Make an Ordinance to grab his money so that he cannot stand economically...Send detectives to stay around the house of any African who is nationally conscious and who is agitating for national independence.

Nkrumah remembered the piece as “the first warning puff of smoke that a fire had been lit, a fire that would prove impossible to extinguish.” Elements of Nkrumah’s later thought, both the desire for political independence and the identification of neo-colonial economic control by the colonizer, were present in Johnson’s article. Although Nkrumah’s more fully developed beliefs in 1957 influenced his inclusion of the quotation in his autobiography, Johnson’s words no doubt struck a compelling note with the passionate, twenty-seven year old youth.¹³

In the spring of 1935 Nkrumah applied, and was accepted, to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, founded in 1854 as the first college for African Americans. During the late summer and fall of 1935 he obtained enough money from relatives to travel to the United States. While stopping in England on the way Nkrumah learned of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. He remembered, “At that moment it was almost as if the whole of

¹³ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 20-23; Bankole Timothy, *Kwame Nkrumah: His Rise to Power* (Great Britain: Northwestern University Press, 1963), 22; Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad, 1935-1947* (Legon, Ghana: Freedom Publications, 1996), 20. Sherwood has suggested that since Nkrumah was writing his autobiography in the climate of the Cold War, he downplayed the influence of the labor activist Johnson and emphasized Azikiwe’s role as a nationalist.

London had declared war on me personally. For the next few minutes I could do nothing but glare at each impassive face wondering if those people could possibly realise the wickedness of colonialism, and praying that the day might come when I could play my part in bringing about the downfall of such a system. My nationalism surged to the fore.” Nkrumah’s racial identification with fellow Africans in Ethiopia was clearly evident.¹⁴

Nkrumah studied and worked in the United States between 1935 and 1945, obtaining both a bachelor of arts in economics and sociology and a bachelor of theology from Lincoln University as well as a master of science in education and master of arts in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania. By his account in his autobiography he participated often in the religious life of the African American community in Philadelphia, attending and even at times preaching in African American churches in the city. He also experienced the opposite of racial solidarity and encountered several minor forms of racism and segregation in the United States, with an episode in Baltimore during which he was refused a drink of water particularly perturbing him. As he explained, a waiter told him, “‘The place for you, my man, is the spittoon outside,’ he declared as he dismissed me from his sight. I was so shocked that I could not move. I just stood and stared at him for I could not bring myself to believe that anyone could refuse a man a drink of water because his skin happened to be a different colour.” In perhaps a concise summary of his larger relationship with the United States, Nkrumah wrote, “When I compared this racial segregation with the modernity and advancement of the country it

¹⁴ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 27. A more light-hearted episode from his voyage which also had racial undertones was when a Spanish prostitute attempted to obtain business from him in the Canary Islands. He stated, “I had only seen white women from a distance and the fact that one of them should approach me at such uncomfortable close quarters completely unnerved me.” He quickly left the saloon and returned to his ship (26).

made my heart sink.” In the minds of both African Americans and foreign non-whites alike the promises of educational and economic progress the United States offered appeared alongside and intertwined with its severe racial problems.¹⁵

In addition to racial segregation, while in the United States Nkrumah was more fully exposed to many of the ideas which would constitute his viewpoints over subsequent decades. First, at the University of Pennsylvania, he and fellow students formed the African Students’ Association of America and Canada, with Nkrumah calling it “the beginning of my political activities in the United States.” He acknowledged struggles with students from Nigeria who did not believe African solidarity would work due to different levels of development and different levels of dependency on respective colonial masters among the different colonies. Yet Nkrumah was insistent “that unless territorial freedom was ultimately linked with the Pan African movement for the liberation of the whole African continent, there would be no hope of freedom and equality for the African and for the people of African descent in any part of the world.” Along with this concept of African solidarity, he also rejected the view among some contemporary African American scholars that no cultural connections remained between African Americans and Africans. Nkrumah supported “the other school, represented by [Professor of Anthropology at Northwestern Dr. Melville J.] Herzkovits, [which] maintained that there were still survivals in the United States and that the Negro of America had in no way lost his cultural contact with the African continent.” Therefore, from early in his political career, Nkrumah clearly supported not only Pan-African

¹⁵ Ibid., 31-33, 41-43.

cooperation on the African continent, but also a transnational identity based on race between Africans and African Americans.¹⁶

While in the United States, Nkrumah explored a number of different ideologies because he wanted to concentrate “on finding a formula by which the whole colonial question and the problem of imperialism could be solved” back in Ghana. In his autobiography he related how the works of Georg W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and V. I. Lenin struck important chords with him. In the October 1956 introduction to his autobiography, for instance, Nkrumah wrote that after political freedom arrived “the economic independence that should follow and maintain political independence demands every effort from the people, a total mobilization of brain and manpower resources. What other countries have taken three hundred years or more to achieve, a once dependent territory must try to accomplish in a generation if it is to survive.” With such an abbreviated timescale in mind, Nkrumah believed socialist, and even authoritarian, economic models had to be employed to mobilize the resources and population of Ghana for rapid advance towards a level of economic development which would keep Ghana free from economic neo-colonialism. Indeed, he believed the key issue in “finding a formula by which the whole colonial question and the problem of imperialism could be solved” lay in the correct form of “organization adopted.” He therefore related in his autobiography how “Karl Marx and Lenin particularly impressed me as I felt that their philosophy was capable of solving these problems.” In addition, evidencing shades of the Marxist-Leninist model of a vanguard party and a dictatorship of the proletariat, he further argued, “Capitalism is too complicated a system for a newly

¹⁶ Ibid., 43-44.

independent nation. Hence the need for a socialistic society. But even a system based on social justice and a democratic constitution may need backing up, during the period following independence, by emergency measures of a totalitarian kind. Without discipline true freedom can not [sic] survive.” Overall, however, Nkrumah recalled, “Of all the literature that I studied, the book that did more than any other to fire my enthusiasm was *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*,” although he also claimed Dr. Kwegir Aggrey’s ideas concerning racial cooperation trumped Garvey’s “Back to Africa” calls for racial separation. Nkrumah took from Garvey’s writings the idea that Africa was the continent of the future which the black diaspora could look to for inspiration. Nkrumah also met the Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James and participated in meetings of the Council on African Affairs (CAA), a leftist African American organization founded in 1937 by one of the first African American professors at the City College of New York, Max Yergan. In the spring of 1944 the CAA even asked Nkrumah to help sponsor a conference on Africa in New York City and he eagerly participated in discussing issues of colonialism and race on the world stage.¹⁷

During this period of his life, Nkrumah visited Harlem often. He made a number of contacts among both African American leaders and the black intellectuals from the English Caribbean colonies who were migrating to Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s and helping to stimulate the Harlem Renaissance of the period. Most of these figures, similar to C.L.R. James and Marcus Garvey, were advocates of some form of communism, socialism, or international anti-colonial racial solidarity. Although Nkrumah

¹⁷ Ibid., xv-xvi, 14, 44-45; Sherwood, *The Years Abroad*, 84-85; David Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism*, Rev. Ed. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998), 4.

wrote little in his autobiography about this period, many of the things he heard most likely stimulated his young mind. Historian Marika Sherwood has pointed out how Nkrumah stayed for a short while (although their friendship lasted much longer than the stay) with Thomas Dosumu-Johnson, a graduate student at Columbia University in public law. Dosumu-Johnson was very active in the Congress of the African Peoples of the World, which sought to advance development and education in Africa as well as focus on more specific issues such as opposing the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Indeed, bringing the latter event to the world's attention was a cause célèbre for many African, West Indian, and African American leaders and organizations during the second half of the 1930s. Nkrumah's time in the United States therefore exposed him to a wide variety of ideas, provided him with experiences in both racial segregation and racial solidarity, and at moments placed him in the center of major intellectual trends in the international non-white community.¹⁸

In the spring of 1945, as World War II drew to a close, Nkrumah left the United States for Great Britain to study law and philosophy. One of the first people he met in London was George Padmore, another West Indian radical who would later become Nkrumah's official government advisor on African affairs. Their friendship further highlighted Nkrumah's connections with the radical diasporic black community. Indeed, as he later recalled, "It was only a matter of weeks before I got myself tangled up with political activities in London." He worked with activists such as Padmore to help

¹⁸ Sherwood, *The Years Abroad*, 38, 41; Jason Parker, in his book *Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) has provided a solid work on the connections between race, nationalism, and American foreign policy by exploring the growth and influence of Caribbean (or West Indian) intellectuals and political leaders in both their home nations and in a diasporic expatriate community in Harlem, beginning around the time Nkrumah was there.

organize the Fifth Pan-African Congress, which occurred in October 1945 in Manchester, England with the prominent African American author and activist W.E.B. Du Bois as one of the chairmen. The conference adopted relatively radical resolutions for the time.

Nkrumah remembered, “Both capitalist and reformist solutions to the African colonial problem were rejected. Instead, the Congress unanimously endorsed the doctrine of African socialism.” The Congress also criticized not only the existence of colonialism, but also “condemned the monopoly of capital and the use of private wealth and industry for personal profits alone.” Here were portions of Nkrumah’s later criticisms in which he argued the economic effects of colonialism bolstered white control of African peoples. He also warned against post-independence economic neo-colonialism by Europeans which would threaten African political freedom.¹⁹

Nkrumah was therefore present at a moment of great importance in the course of Pan-African activism. Historian David Birmingham has aptly commented, “The Manchester conference was seminal in fostering an international ground swell of black aspiration and solidarity.” Yet at the same time, as historian James Meriwether points out, “fundamental shifts in the pan-African movement took place, with Africans taking a leading role and African Americans in particular having a far reduced role.” Perhaps one of the troubling aspects of the conference for mainstream African American leaders was the more radical tone of the resolutions, calling not just for independence of colonial peoples, but also for “complete social, economic and political emancipation.” The final document of the conference even closed with a modified line of Karl Marx’s famous ending to the Communist Manifesto, “COLONIAL AND SUBJECT PEOPLES OF THE

¹⁹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 49, 51-3.

WORLD UNITE [emphasis in original].” Economic-based criticism of the Western political system would soon compare unfavorably to communist critiques of capitalism in the minds of Western, and especially American, officials. In fact, historians Mary Dudziak and Carol Anderson have shown how the fear of being labeled socialist or leftist steered most mainstream African American leaders away from pushing for broader changes in social and economic relations and into working for purely political and civil rights during the 1950s and 1960s. Subsequently, while Nkrumah was an important symbol of black activism and success to many African Americans, his radical and leftist political and economic views at times made black leaders in the United States uncomfortable. An underlying tension therefore existed between mainline African American leaders who wanted to find a place for blacks in mainstream American life and important radical leaders such as Nkrumah who espoused broader critiques of the liberal capitalist system in the United States.²⁰

Nkrumah’s Ideology

Nkrumah’s fully developed ideology contained three important facets. The first consisted of criticisms of imperialism, colonialism, and racism. He sought not only political independence, but also economic independence, with Africans free from oppressive economic ties to their former colonizers. As evidenced from the quotations above, he believed that even when official independence arrived, the economic power of

²⁰ Birmingham, *Father of African Nationalism*, 6-7; Meriwether, *Proudly*, 75; Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 44; Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 252; Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

capitalist nations such as Great Britain and the United States could still threaten the political freedom of Ghana and the rest of Africa. He feared Western nations would create unfair trading relationships and use the debt owed them by newly independent African states as leverage to influence the politics and economies of the smaller nations. Therefore, in part because of a need to escape potential Western entrapment in a neo-colonial relationship, the second part of Nkrumah's ideology envisioned modern economic and social progress for Ghana and other African nations. For instance, in the CPP's constitution a clause on membership lists as a requirement that an individual "not support Imperialism, Colonialism, Tribalism and Racialism." The inclusion of tribalism indicated Nkrumah's broad concern with modernizing Ghana in any way possible, which led to an increasing turn towards socialism in the later years of his power.²¹

A January 1957 letter from George Padmore to Richard Wright, a prominent African American author, indicated how Nkrumah thought about tribalism, modernization, and the use of state power. Padmore, who would become a close advisor to Nkrumah that year, confided, "I am trying to raise some cash so that I can take time off to do a book on Tribalism. Brother, it is as bad as religion. In fact, it is a form of religion – all mixed up. Only Stalinism can smash this mess and liberate these people. After that, it will be time for de-Stalinism and democracy. K [Nkrumah] feels the same way, but has to pay lip service to western clap-trap." Despite Padmore's implications, however, Nkrumah was not a true Stalinist willing to use every element of state power to ensure state security. When faced with opposition from groups in the central or northern regions of Ghana he occasionally censored newspapers and jailed a few opponents, violations of

²¹ Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*, 59.

individual rights to be sure, but he never conducted the sort of state-sanctioned purges and deportations enacted by the former Soviet premier. In a second letter to Wright in April 1957, Padmore more clearly revealed how Nkrumah thought of the use of state power when he wrote, “K.N. [Nkrumah] has endorsed our line that it will be necessary to impose a transition period of ‘benevolent dictatorship’ if Ghana is to get started on the road to civilization. There is so much to do at all levels, and so much mess to be cleaned up that no other way but strong govt. can even essay the task.” For Nkrumah, centralized state power was to be used for economic and social modernization. Only then could Ghana avoid being taken advantage of by foreign powers. The complete and utter physical security of the state and the leader Stalinism was ultimately concerned with, however, was not fundamental to Nkrumah’s approach despite Padmore’s use of the term.²²

The third important aspect of Nkrumah’s ideology centered on the unity of Africans and people of African descent to achieve political and economic independence and modernization. Nkrumah was, of course, generally against racism and its manifestations in colonialism and economic exploitation. His ideas concerning racial cooperation were also especially attractive to African Americans due to his vision of non-whites working together across national boundaries to overturn injustice. Not only was Nkrumah a symbol of black achievement, but his emphasis on unity also provided practical methods for non-whites to challenge inequality by joining together to combat

²² Letter, George Padmore to Richard Wright, January 29, 1957; Letter, George Padmore to Richard Wright, April 22, 1957, both in Box 103, Folder “1522”, Richard Wright Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereafter Wright Papers).

racial oppression wherever it appeared. The cause of Ethiopia and the history of his own area of West Africa exerted profound influence on Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism. Military victory over Italy in the mid-1890s allowed Ethiopia to remain a beacon of African independence during the high tide of European imperialism. Even when controlled by Italy between 1935 and 1941, Ethiopia remained a potent symbol of black African freedom and ability to resist foreign control. Nkrumah, as mentioned above, reacted with anger at the news of Ethiopia's capitulation in 1935. In 1942 he even delivered a speech entitled "Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands Unto God" in which, according to historian D. Zizwe Poe, Nkrumah claimed "Ethiopia and Liberia had particular roles to play in advancing the liberation of the rest of the continent." In addition, as Poe points out, Nkrumah's famous July 1953 "Motion of Destiny" speech to the Ghanaian Legislative Assembly "urged the audience to see the glory of that past [including West African kingdoms such as Ghana and the Asante] as an impetus of a glorious future based in social progress and peace." While Africa's former and current symbols of greatness inspired Nkrumah to advocate Pan-Africanism, he also recognized the realities of the geographical divisions created by European colonizers. He sought to overcome those arbitrary boundaries by, as historian Ama Biney points out, emphasizing that "no single African nation could progress without unifying politically and economically with other African countries in order to harness the economic potential and resources of the continent for the betterment of its people." For Nkrumah, Africans could not achieve true political and economic independence from Europe without working together.²³

²³ D. Zizwe Poe, *Kwame Nkrumah's Contribution to Pan-Africanism: An Afrocentric Analysis* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 74, 84; Ama Biney, "The Legacy of Kwame Nkrumah in Retrospect," *The Journal*

Nkrumah was thus active in a number of Pan-African activities even before he arrived back in Ghana to begin his political career. As mentioned above, he was at the 1945 Pan-African Conference in Manchester, England and even penned one of the final resolutions entitled “Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World.” He also became the General Secretary of the West African National Secretariat, an organization which was, as Poe describes, “to foster unity and solidarity throughout West Africa and to thwart dangerous and debilitating territorial divisions that might be artificially set up.” The Secretariat held two conferences during the late 1940s which brought together African students studying abroad to discuss Pan-African organization and unity and Nkrumah himself created the organization’s periodical *The New African*. Nkrumah also joined “The Circle,” a small group of West Africans in London committed to, as he put it in his autobiography, “West African unity and the destruction of colonialism.” Nkrumah later admitted that in the late 1940s “my ideas on African unity, important even as I considered them at that time, were limited to West African unity as a first step.” As he grew in power and prestige, he began to advocate the cooperation of all independent African nations, not just those in West Africa, in order to further challenge colonialism and neo-colonialism. The three cruxes of Nkrumah’s thought were thus the economic and political independence of Africans, a strong and centralized state to pursue modernization, and Pan-African unity. While African Americans often reacted to each of these aspects in different ways, they were virtually inseparable in the mind of Ghana’s future leader.²⁴

of *Pan African Studies* 2 (March 2008): 131.

²⁴Poe, *Nkrumah’s Contribution*, 87-89; Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 60-61; Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*, 14.

Unrest in Ghana

While Nkrumah studied and worked in London between 1945 and 1947, his host country was attempting to deal with its dire postwar situation. World War II had been costly to Great Britain, certainly in lives lost as with any conflict, but especially in economic terms. Due to wartime spending and immediate issues of postwar recovery, Britain's balance of payments was skewed. Vastly more imports came in than exports went out, resulting in a currency outflow. In addition, the rapid onset of the Cold War during late 1945 and early 1946 meant the Labor government of Prime Minister Clement Attlee would still have to maintain a viable defense establishment in the face of a perceived Soviet threat. The British had thus been forced to negotiate a \$3.75 billion loan from the United States in the fall of 1945. In exchange for the loan the United States demanded the convertibility of pounds into dollars, a major concession on the part of the British who had long sought to construct a global monetary system based on the pound sterling, with countries holding their national reserves in denominations of pounds in London banks. Historian Ronald Hyam aptly reveals the British position when he quotes "a secret memorandum from [Britain's leading economist] Lord [John Maynard] Keynes warning that Britain faced 'a financial Dunkirk.'" British officials, however, also believed the remaining empire, especially Africa, constituted part of the solution to the country's financial problems. As before World War II, Africa was to provide sources of

cheap raw materials and markets for British goods in order to help restore a favorable balance of payments.²⁵

Yet the renewed effort to extract wealth would combine with changes over the previous decade in the way the British ruled their colonies to produce unrest and opposition to British control. During the depths of the Great Depression in the 1930s, Britain and other European colonial powers came to doubt, in the apt words of historian John Hargreaves, “the beneficial effects of economic liberalism lightly supervised by paternal governments.” They thus began to increase investment in colonial development projects. Pure extraction of resources was certainly not benefiting the average African worker or farmer and even the limited promises of growth in social services had often proved hollow. Of course, if the British could also further economically develop their colonies, more wealth would, in the long run, accrue to the home country through trade since Africans would be better able to buy British products. A third reason for beginning to invest more heavily in African economies during the 1930s and early 1940s was to secure African loyalties in the event, and then in the actuality, of war with the Axis powers. When Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain named Malcolm Macdonald the new secretary of state for the colonies in May 1938, the policy of colonial development began to rapidly expand. Macdonald’s planning resulted in the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, in which Great Britain provided a £5 million infusion to begin modernizing the economies of British colonies. Promises of another £120 million followed in 1945. Such new imperatives also undermined the older British ideal of

²⁵ Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 130-1.

indirect rule, whereby local chiefs or headmen implemented British policy. White officials largely abstained from local matters as long as resources kept flowing. With a new emphasis on economic development, not just economic extraction, the central government of a colony expanded its realm of operations and became more involved in the daily lives of Africans.²⁶

As John Hargreaves aptly puts it, however, “the availability of British funds for development planning signaled a more active role for the colonial state, which could not fail to have political consequences.” The participation of larger numbers of Africans was required in order to implement the new development schemes. In addition, both international opinion and internal pressure for more self-governance from educated African intellectuals and former World War II enlistees also contributed to a change in British ideas concerning the internal political structures of their African colonies. The British believed the inclusion of Africans at a higher level of government was important in order to move colonies along the road towards eventual self-government, but, as Hyam writes, “very much as a controlled process, carefully prepared by the British government itself.” In fact, an important report on African policy in May 1947 by Sir Andrew Cohen, the head of the African Department of the Colonial Office, and Sir Sidney Caine, the deputy under secretary in the Colonial Office, declared that in Ghana “internal self-government is unlikely to be achieved in much less than a generation.” Other areas were deemed to need much longer. The British planned to grant independence, but only after a long period of economic and political development which would leave newly created

²⁶ John Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 2nd ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited), 44; Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 85-87.

nations with close ties to Britain and the British economic system. The British had not, however, fully accounted for the views of Africans themselves.²⁷

The Ghanaian leaders who formed the UGCC in August 1947 were largely upper class intellectuals, businessmen, lawyers, and chiefs, according to historian David Birmingham. While they presented no specific date for freedom to the British, they had created the first political party in the colony with the stated goal of pushing for independence earlier than the British timetable of another generation passing. Despite the elite character of the organization's leaders, the UGCC continued to expand due to a number of grievances among the general population of Ghana. The British had not provided enough education in technical skills in primary and secondary schools and the number of schools in general remained small. The British also denied a new modern university for Ghana and built one in Nigeria instead. Former soldiers who had joined British forces during World War II returned home and could not find jobs, even in the rapidly expanding cities. The British refused to give up price controls on cocoa, the dominant export of the colony, and foreign control of much of the colony's economy caused continued unrest. In addition, while a new 1946 constitution seemed to provide for eighteen out of thirty-one seats on the governing Legislative Council to be given to Ghanaians, only five were to be directly elected. Local councils of chiefs were to appoint the rest and were sure to return conservative, collaborationist members. In the words of historian D.E.K. Amenumey, the new constitution "meant a return to a period of 'indirect rule' and the supremacy of the chiefs in national affairs." With these problems coalescing into support for anyone who would oppose the British in any way, the UGCC publicly

²⁷ Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 49; Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 102, 140-1, 143.

challenged the 1946 constitution and began to grow. The UGCC needed a good organizer to help consolidate its gains and Ako Adjei, a prominent member who had known Nkrumah since their time as students together in the United States, recommended him for the position of party secretary. Nkrumah accepted and returned to Ghana in December 1947 after a twelve year absence, ready to organize and lead the push for Ghanaian independence.²⁸

Despite later labeling most UGCC leaders as “reactionaries” and claiming their “political philosophy was contrary to the political aspirations of the people of the Gold Coast,” Nkrumah at first worked within the structure of the UGCC to organize mass rallies and protests against the British. His excellent speaking skills, youth, and radical ideas attracted many Ghanaian youth to the anti-British movement. On February 26, 1948 a massive boycott of British goods began. Even though the boycott ended only two days later, the same morning police fired on former soldiers demonstrating for back pay and concerned over the lack of jobs, killing two. Riots rapidly spread in Accra and other cities and towns. By the time British troops restored order, twenty-nine people had died, over two hundred were injured, and property losses were estimated at over £2 million. Although the British blamed the UGCC for the riots and arrested six of its leaders, including Nkrumah, the party gained in popularity from the arrests.²⁹

²⁸ Amenumey, *A Concise History*, 202-204; Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 8.

²⁹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 62; Amenumey, *A Concise History*, 205.

Horace Mann Bond and Ghana

African Americans took note of the unrest. A major African American newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, in a front page article compared the events in Accra to the British suppression of Palestine. The piece announced, “The big fist of black Africa has struck a blow for freedom” and stated the riots were “in bold defiance of white supremacy.” The *Defender* closely followed events in the aftermath of the riots, including the British investigation and recommendations for reform which resulted. George Padmore penned a number of articles with an anti-imperial, anti-British bent. Similarly, Horace Cayton, who covered world affairs for most of the 1950s for the prominent African American periodical the *Pittsburgh Courier*, wrote a piece lambasting Britain’s colonial practices. He also criticized the United States for continuing to provide the British with money “so that she can enslave colonial people and ship arms to the Arabs to shoot against the Jews.” He targeted Britain’s African policy by stating, “The time is more than past when we should continue to give her money to suppress the Nigerians, the people of the Gold Coast, and give moral support to the color-caste system of Capetown, which is worse than Mississippi.” Although the editors of the newspaper included a disclaimer above Cayton’s article that his ideas did “not necessarily express the editorial opinion of the *Pittsburgh Courier*,” his views likening the British in Africa to racist whites in the American South still reached the periodical’s large audience, which had grown to approximately 202,000 in 1945. With the circulation of the *Defender* around 257,000 in the same year, these two newspapers alone had the potential to reach almost half a

million African American readers by the late 1940s with their stories covering the beginning of black advancement in Ghana.³⁰

Horace Mann Bond also began in the late 1940s to take a closer look at the connections between blacks in Africa and blacks in the United States. Bond often tried to establish links between the two groups and especially supported educational interaction and cultural exchange. Bond's biographer Wayne J. Urban has pointed out, however, that he advocated Western investment in Africa and "tended to pursue development of African natural resources that could benefit him personally as well as the American and other corporations that backed his activities." In addition, according to Urban, "Bond sometimes evinced a cold war mentality and a concern for only those African nations that fell in line with the American approach to issues." Bond was therefore one of the notable African Americans who adopted a transnational racial identification with Nkrumah, but at the same time differed in political and economic outlook from the Ghanaian leader, due in part to the domestic climate of hostile anti-communism. Bond did, however, consistently press the African American community, the U.S. government, and general public opinion to pay attention to Ghana as an example of non-white achievement. In 1952, for instance, when George Schuyler of the *Courier* printed anti-Nkrumah articles based on information from contacts in Kumasi, a city in the Ashanti region whose newspapers usually portrayed Nkrumah as an oppressive autocrat, Bond vigorously defended Nkrumah in letters with a mutual friend, Reverend Henry Mitchell. Bond even

³⁰ "Africans, Tired of British Rule, Riot for Freedom," *Chicago Defender*, March 13, 1948, p. 1; Horace Cayton, "On Her Knees: Cayton Says It's the Same Old England, But She's Run Out of Money", *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 5, 1948, p. 7; Clint C. Wilson, II, *Black Journalists in Paradox: Historical Perspectives and Current Dilemmas* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 62.

compared Nkrumah favorably to major figures in early American history. He claimed, for instance, the nasty language used by Nkrumah and his opponents within Ghana merely reflected the extreme rhetoric of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists and therefore actually marked Ghana as a democracy in its early stages. In addition, Mitchell had told Bond he was going to write a new article on Nkrumah and Bond was concerned, as will be discussed more fully later, with creating and shaping a positive public image of Nkrumah and Ghana. Overall for Bond, racial identification and racial issues often trumped political or economic differences when Ghana was involved.³¹

In mid-1949 Bond made his first of ten visits to Africa, stopping mainly in British colonies in West Africa. In a letter to Martin Sommers, the editor for pieces on foreign issues at the *Saturday Evening Post*, Bond discussed a possible article on his trip. After mentioning the potential for industry and raw material extraction, as highlighted by Urban above, Bond revealed his thinking about the place of Africans in the global Cold War. He wrote, “All Americans know that they live in a world where Western Democracy and Russian Communism are fighting for the souls of white, brown, and yellow men. Few count in the tremendous human resources represented in two hundred million black men just coming awake. Those erstwhile ‘sleepers’ might well tip the balance in the continuing struggle between East and West.” Bond worried “that Russia is missing no bets. Ignorant of the amazing awakening of the African, however, the American people may not yet realize how crucial this people will be in the next half-

³¹ Wayne J. Urban, *Black Scholar: Horace Mann Bond, 1904-1972* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 149. Letter, Henry Mitchell to Horace Mann Bond, July 7, 1952; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Henry Mitchell, July 16, 1952; Letter, Henry Mitchell to Horace Mann Bond, July 31, 1952; and Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Henry Mitchell, August 5, 1952, all located in Series III, Box 18, Folder “2B”, Horace Mann Bond Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst (hereafter Bond Papers).

century.” While noting the importance and potential strength of Africans, Bond’s comment that Africans were “just coming awake” and were “sleepers” indicated he did not just think they were simply coming out from under the yoke of colonialism. He also believed they were finally becoming modern. Thus, according to Bond, Africans had previously been stuck in a less desirable pre-modern community. He also called Africans “yet a simple folk” and at the end of his letter he wrote of the “astonishing awakening of a virile people to ‘Western civilization.’” He thus used language which carried a negative opinion of previous African social organizations and revealed his belief Africans had to adopt Western models in order to be civilized and modern. At the same time, as will be discussed later, Bond was often combative when others, such as mainstream American newspapers or magazines, would suggest the backwardness of Ghanaians. His thinking about the level of modernity of Africans thus appears to have been somewhat conflicted. Bond often held a private concern over the level of development of Africans, even criticizing the press in Ghana to his friend Mitchell as “unrestrained” and “not yet under the inhibitions of the American press.” Yet he realized public hints at black African inferiority threatened to undermine the racial advances about which he was so passionate.³²

As long as Ghana provided an example of racial advancement in terms of black self-governance and freedom, however, Bond remained a favorable observer. Bond also contacted the editor of one the other major African American newspapers, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, to discuss a similar potential article on his African trip. In that letter,

³² Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Martin Sommers, April 29, 1949, p. 1-2, Series III, Box 22, Folder “25A”, Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Henry Mitchell, July 16, 1952 and Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Henry Mitchell, August 5, 1952, both located in Series III, Box 18, Folder “2B”, Bond Papers.

Bond wrote, “Particularly in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, there is an entirely new kind of Africa; bustling, enterprising, intelligent, working feverishly for higher education and political freedom.” In an October 1949 open “Letter From Africa” Bond wrote from Lagos, Nigeria to Lincoln University trustees, faculty members, and friends on both the warm reception given him and on his views of the connections between Africans and African Americans. Bond claimed, “Here is black nationalism – the more astonishing to an American because of the low esteem in which the African American is held. But the American Negro enjoys that same tremendous prestige here that America does.” Bond also refuted charges that African nationalism was based on communism and emphasized the fact many leaders in West Africa, such as Nkrumah, his advisor Ako Adjei, and the Nigerian politician Azikiwe, had all studied at Lincoln. Bond even argued that at Lincoln “they learned Democracy [emphasis in original] – with a capital D” and were made “good Americans – with an immense admiration for American inventiveness, enterprise, and industry.” Yet passages such as “Africa is America’s – for the taking, - by education, - by industry” and “I do believe America has a historic mission, here in Africa” revealed Bond’s view of the central role he believed the United States was to play in Africa. Nkrumah and many other African leaders did not agree.³³

Overall, however, Bond’s 1949 trip solidified feelings of racial solidarity for a prominent African American leader. At the end of his “Letter to Africa” he closed with the statement, “Sincerely – (and with a great new pride that I am an American of African descent – that I am an American) [emphasis in original].” Conducting a sort of final

³³ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Carl Murphy, May 17, 1949, p. 1, Series III, Box 22, Folder “Africa, 1949 Trip (1/4),” Bond Papers; Horace Mann Bond, “Letter From Africa,” October 17, 1949, p. 1-3, Series III, Box 22, Folder “26B,” Bond Papers.

analysis of the trip, Bond wrote another piece to be distributed to the Lincoln University trustees in November 1949 entitled "My Trip Was Fantastic!" First, Bond believed himself to be "a symbol of the achievement possible of black men...the symbol of blood-brotherhood, reaching across oceans and continents in recognition of a common bond...a symbol of the African determination to assimilate Western Culture, and to govern his own affairs." Employing language displaying transnational racial identification, he found faulty the view "that there is not feeling of fellowship between the African and the American of African descent...that the African feels no affinity with the American Negro. My reception proved differently." Since he had not gone as an agent of a religious institution or a colonial government, but at the request of Africans themselves, he argued he was welcome in African eyes. He stated, "I was sponsored by Africans; I came avowedly as a person of African descent; and the people received me with the tremendous affection one has for a long-lost brother, now returned home." Bond had developed several "burning convictions," concerning among them the role of the Christian church in Africa and the "historic mission" of Lincoln University. The most important conviction for the larger audience of African Americans, including radicals such as Richard Wright who would disagree with Bond on many other points, was "that the key point for realizing the aspirations of the American Negro, lie in Africa, and not in the United States. It is the African who, I think, will dissipate forever the theories of racial inferiority that now prejudice the position of the American Negro." Bond and numerous other African Americans believed the success and achievement of political independence by Africans, particularly those closest to this goal in 1949 in Ghana, would demonstrate to the world that blacks could govern their own affairs on an equal par with

whites. Such examples would hopefully stimulate moves in the United States toward full racial equality. Indeed, Bond believed “the final recognition of the dignity of the human person as embodied in the colored American of African descent, will come, not from the minority in America; but from the marvelously awakened Africans of Africa itself. Their feeling of kinship and of a common destiny seem, to me, to be the greatest asset that American Negroes could cultivate.” As will be discussed more fully below, Bond deeply hoped blacks in Africa, especially those in the highly visible symbol of Ghana, could embrace modern political, economic, and social models successfully. Then racist arguments in the United States that full equality for African Americans would bring racial and social chaos would be severely undermined. Such sentiments provided a firm base from which the African American community would both continue to support Nkrumah’s strivings for independence and alert the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower that Africa, and especially Ghana, were important symbols of black achievement.³⁴

Nkrumah’s Victory

Troubled by the 1948 disturbances in what they considered their “model colony,” the British sought to understand why the riots had occurred. After a preliminary report noted many of the grievances voiced by the UGCC and its rank and file were valid, the British established a commission in Ghana under Justice J.H. Coussey to develop a new constitution which would provide a larger measure of self-government. Yet there was no

³⁴ Horace Mann Bond, “Letter From Africa,” October 17, 1949, p. 3, Series III, Box 22, Folder “26B,” Bond Papers; Horace Mann Bond, “My Trip Was Fantastic!” November 17, 1949, p. 1-2, Series III, Box 22, Folder “28A,” Bond Papers.

provision for independence. Nkrumah soon became fed up with both the slow pace of reform and the compromises agreed to by the more conservative and moderate leaders of the UGCC. In June 1949, he resigned from the party and formed the CPP, taking with him some of the best organizers and many younger members of the UGCC. At a speech launching the CPP on June 12, Nkrumah “reminded the people that we did not want to continue to live in slavery and under exploitation and oppression; that it was only under full self-government that we would be in a position to develop the country so that our people could enjoy the comforts and amenities of modern civilization.” With an official party slogan of “Self-Government Now,” Nkrumah’s desires for political and economic freedom, which he also tied to political and economic modernization, were abundantly clear. African Americans in the United States also recognized this important step. While the *Courier* article on the creation of the CPP merely reiterated the planks of the party’s platform, the title of the piece was “Africans Awakening” and thus gave an indication of the positive image Nkrumah’s separation from the UGCC presented to blacks in the United States.³⁵

When the British announced the proposals of the Coussey Committee in August 1949, Nkrumah and the CPP rejected the plan as not going far enough towards political independence. Although the British agreed to expand the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly, still only five were to be directly elected, with the rest chosen through electoral colleges or regional councils. The Committee proposed a voting age of twenty-five which would have deprived Nkrumah and the CPP of a large number of votes

³⁵ Amenumey, *Concise History*, 204-207; Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 103; “Africans Awakening,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 25, 1949, p. 17.

due to their popularity among younger Ghanaians. Finally, even though the Executive Council of the colony would now be made up of eight African members and only three British, the white governor still controlled the important arenas of finance, defense, and foreign policy, clear indications self-government would not be rapidly forthcoming. Meanwhile, Nkrumah had developed a plan for non-violent pressure on the British, which he called “Positive Action.” As he explained in a late 1949 document labeled “What I Mean By Positive Action,” such a course was to consist of “legitimate political agitation...newspaper and educational campaigns and...as a last resort, the constitutional application of strikes, boycotts, and non-co-operation based on the principle of absolute non-violence.” Whatever else may be said about Nkrumah’s views of a strong, centralized government and the charges both domestic and foreign critics later leveled at him for being a dictator, he did not embark on a course of large-scale violence to achieve his goals.³⁶

The Ghana People’s Representative Assembly called by Nkrumah on November 20, 1949 rejected the recommendations of the British commission. Nkrumah then sent a letter to the British in mid-December warning that if they did not allow a new elected assembly to propose amendments to the commission’s program, and possibly also construct a new constitution, then Positive Action would concretely go into effect. As Nkrumah later remembered, “In short, we were prepared for a showdown.” The British responded with silence as well as a crackdown on pro-CPP newspaper editors, which only stimulated support for the CPP. When the Trades Union Congress, the largest labor organization in Ghana, decided to go on strike on January 6, 1950, Nkrumah announced

³⁶ Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 125; Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*, 91, 94.

the formal beginning of Positive Action two days later. The combined operations virtually shut down the colony with strikes and demonstrations. The British responded by arresting Nkrumah and other CPP leaders, suppressing dissent, and forcing an end to the strikes. The British sentenced Nkrumah to three consecutive prison sentences of one year each. Yet his party continued to grow despite the jailing of its leaders, winning all the positions in the April 1950 municipal elections in Accra. To many Ghanaians, Nkrumah had been imprisoned for the cause of Ghanaian freedom. His popularity skyrocketed.³⁷

Due to these events, Nkrumah also gained more prestige in the eyes of African American leaders, who increasingly viewed him as a symbol of black achievement. J. D. Duah Agyeman Dickson, a Ghanaian studying at the University of Michigan, wrote to Horace Mann Bond “that the great works being done by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in the Gold Coast today should not escape our race in this great age.” In addition to noting the strength of the CPP, Dickson outlined Nkrumah’s success in establishing “industrial and manual schools and colleges” which likely demonstrated to Dickson the ability of African blacks to employ and operate modern methods of education. An even clearer indication of the importance Ghana and other African struggles for freedom held for African Americans appeared in a July 1950 letter to a friend from W. Alphaeus Hunton, the secretary for the Council on African Affairs during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Referring to a previous inquiry, Hunton wrote, “You asked why one should worry about racial conditions in Africa when we as a minority group catch Hell [sic] here in the U.S.A.” He answered from an international perspective with, “If you say that what goes on in the United States is one thing, quite different from what goes on in the West Indies

³⁷ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 113-122; Amenumey, *Concise History*, 208.

or Africa or anywhere else affecting black people, the answer is that you are wrong. Racial oppression and exploitation have a universal pattern....Jim-Crowism, colonialism, and imperialism are not separate enemies, but a single enemy with different faces and different forms.” Hunton then explicitly spelled out how the different campaigns for freedom in Africa and the United States would reinforce each other when he stated, “It is not a matter of helping the African people achieve freedom simply out of a spirit of humanitarian concern for their welfare. It is a matter of helping the African people because in doing this we further the possibility of their being able to help us in our struggles here in the United States. Can you not envision what a powerful influence a free West Indies or a free West Africa would be upon American democracy?” Black Africans successful in their demands for independence, freedom, and equality would enhance the prospect of similar achievements by African Americans by demonstrating the ability of blacks to successfully participate in political processes. Free black Africans would also add more voices to the increasingly global cry for both racial equality and an end to white domination.³⁸

³⁸ Letter, J. D. Duah Agyeman Dickson to Horace Mann Bond, Nov 14, 1950, Series III, Box 18, Folder “2E,” Bond Papers. Dickson signed the end of his letter as J.D. Duah Agyeman Dickson, but seemed to label himself J. G. G. A. Dickson in his personal mailing address to open the letter. He was most likely John de Graft Duah Agyeman-Dickson whose unpublished dissertation “Federation in West Africa – A Study in Political Geography,” another scholar named Edward Coleson noted in 1955. Coleson called Dickson “an African from the Gold Coast.” See Edward Coleson, “The Impact of European Education in West Africa,” *History of Education Journal* 6 (Winter, 1955): 177; Letter, William A. Hunton to A.A. Marks, Jr., July 6, 1950, p. 1, Box 1, Folder “16,” William Alphaeus Hunton Papers, MG 237, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library (hereafter Hunton Papers).

Conclusion

After the CPP won the Accra city elections in April 1950, the American consul Hyman Bloom told the State Department, “To say the least, this CPP victory has had a very sobering effect on the less radical elements. They can see the ‘hand-writing on the wall’ when the elections to the National Assembly are held in the future under the new constitution.” Bloom was quite prescient. When elections set up by the Coussey commission’s recommendations occurred the following February, the British, realizing Nkrumah’s popularity, allowed him to run. The CPP overwhelmed the smaller opposition parties, winning thirty-four of the thirty-eight elected positions in the Legislative Assembly. Governor Charles Arden-Clarke released Nkrumah from prison and allowed him to form a government to work with the British administration. The *Courier* recognized the election as “the first major step toward government of the Gold Coast by natives.” Nkrumah now headed a powerful and popular movement in a colony which seemed on the short track for self-government, although another six years would pass until that goal was achieved. Nkrumah had especially developed his ideas concerning politics, economics, Pan-African unity, and organizing techniques during his twelve years abroad moving among the intellectuals and events of the mid-twentieth century black diaspora.

After returning to Ghana, Nkrumah became especially visible to blacks in the United States. While African Americans differed among themselves over some aspects of Nkrumah’s political and economic views, they agreed on his importance in the struggle for racial equality in the United States. Black leaders as diverse as Horace Mann Bond, a pro-capitalist and ardently pro-American university president, and W. Alphaeus Hunton,

a member of the Council on African Affairs which at the time the U.S. government was targeting as an alleged communist-oriented organization, saw in Nkrumah and Ghana a symbol indicating the worth, equality, and capability of blacks. These sentiments formed as early as 1949 in some cases, grew in strength as Nkrumah and the CPP achieved electoral victories and began to wield actual power within Ghana, and were solidly in place by the time President Dwight D. Eisenhower took office. Before the latter occurred, however, Bond would invite the African leader to deliver the commencement address at his alma mater, Lincoln University, in the summer of 1951. Nkrumah's return to the United States would enhance his links to African Americans while at the same time directly involving the American government for the first time in the transnational connections being established between black Americans and black Africans.³⁹

³⁹ Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, "Resurgence of Convention Peoples Party Activities," April 6, 1950, p. 2, 745K.00/4-650, CFBA 1950-54; Amenumey, *A Concise History*, 208-9; "Africans Vote for Legislators," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 17, 1951, p. 28.

CHAPTER 2: FANTASTIC STAKES

Introduction

In October 1951 Rudolph Aggrey, an African American working for the United States Information Service in Nigeria, decided to visit Ghana. He was the son of Dr. Kwegir Aggrey, a Ghanaian who had studied in the United States and then returned to Ghana to teach at the institution Nkrumah attended. The elder Aggrey was widely considered to be one of the fathers of the education system in Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah had briefly been one of his students, claiming, “It was through him that my nationalism was first aroused.” Nkrumah also remembered his “sudden shock” at hearing of Aggrey’s death in 1927. One of Aggrey’s ideas which heavily influenced Nkrumah was a rejection of the principle behind Marcus Garvey’s idea of “Africa for the Africans.” Aggrey believed such a concept only reinforced racial separation. Alternatively, he preached racial harmony and cooperation. Both Nkrumah in his autobiography and a State Department official in a dispatch describing Rudolph’s visit noted the elder Aggrey’s famous saying, “You can play a tune of sorts on the white keys, and you can play a tune of sorts on the black keys, but for harmony you must use both the black and the white.” While Nkrumah generally spoke of liberating the African continent from white colonial and white minority rule and while he was very popular with African Americans who identified racially with him, he did not advocate racial separation. Due to Aggrey’s influence, Nkrumah generally believed all races could work together, provided there was absolutely no hint of colonialism or racism. Therefore, despite growing up in

the United States, when Rudolph Aggrey visited Ghana in 1951 he was already famous as the son of the late Dr. Aggrey.⁴⁰

The State Department decided to take advantage of Aggrey's visit in order to generate goodwill for the United States. Hyman Bloom, the American consul in Accra, reported, "As soon as it became known that Dr. Aggrey's son would be coming, USIE in Accra was deluged with inquiries, invitations, greetings, and all the rest...[and] a considerable entourage was at the airport to meet him." Aggrey visited the school his father had founded, dined with Nkrumah and other CPP officials, and delivered a speech to a crowd of over one thousand at the Accra Community Center. Aggrey praised the advances toward self-government in Ghana, but also highlighted a number of American efforts to provide aid and help develop the colony, revealing his goal of presenting the United States in a favorable light. Virtually half the speech described American actions in Nigeria and generally reiterated an American desire to help out developing peoples. Despite his somewhat condescending emphasis on how the West had benefited Africans, he was still apparently popular during his stay. In the end, Bloom related, "While this sort of razzle-dazzle is admittedly not quite routine for USIE in Accra, it does represent the kind of 'combined operation' that seems to work best in the Gold Coast" to bolster American prestige. U.S. officials had used the visit of an African American of near celebrity status to press pro-American themes and impressions, as indicated by the language and content of Aggrey's speech. Using the racial and historical connections

⁴⁰ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 14-15; Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, "Visit to Gold Coast of Rudolph Aggrey," October 5, 1951, p. 1, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (hereafter RG 84), Accra, General USIS Records (AGUR), 1951-58, Box 1, Folder "Aggrey, Rudolph, 1951-53," National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NACP).

between Aggrey, his father, Nkrumah, and Ghana, members of the United States Information Service (USIS) in Ghana emerged from Aggrey's visit satisfied the episode had improved the image of the United States as extending a helping hand to Africans. Such was one of the ways race and foreign policy could mix as the identification of African Americans and Ghanaians strengthened.⁴¹

Between the CPP's early 1951 electoral victories in Ghana and the beginning of the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration in early 1953, Nkrumah's prestige continued to rise among African Americans. An important event in bolstering his stature was his well-publicized visit to the United States in the summer of 1951 to receive an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Lincoln University. As Nkrumah achieved electoral victory in Ghana and later became Prime Minister, African Americans continued to develop views of Ghana as a symbol of black modernity. Black Americans also sought to convince both U.S. officials and the American public that Nkrumah and Ghana were modern. African American leaders prodded the State Department simultaneously to employ more black Americans in the nation's foreign service ranks and to accord recognition both to Nkrumah and to emerging African nations. Minor successes in these endeavors revealed the recognition by U.S. officials of transnational racial connections between African Americans and Ghana. In addition, black Americans realized they could exert influence at times on elements of American foreign policy towards Nkrumah and Ghana and such recognition bolstered their confidence that they could influence

⁴¹ Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, "Visit to Gold Coast of Rudolph Aggrey," October 5, 1951, p. 1-2; Rudolph Aggrey, Speech at Accra Community Center, "A Day of Dedication", October 3, 1951, p. 1-7, both in RG 84, AGUR, 1951-58, Box 1, Folder "Aggrey, Rudolph, 1951-53", NACP. The author has found no explanation for the USIE acronym used in the documents.

American foreign policy as the Eisenhower administration began. At the same time, American policymakers still balanced these entreaties by blacks in the United States with a desire to maintain a strong relationship with America's closest ally, Great Britain. As indicated in Nkrumah's rise to power through a mix of riots, arrests, and elections, the British were willing to grant independence one day, but not as rapidly as both Africans and African Americans wanted. For high-level policymakers in the United States during the early 1950s the eventual independence of non-whites in Africa could not be allowed to undermine ties with the nation's closest and strongest Cold War ally. All these trends were evident during 1951 and 1952 and would carry over into the Eisenhower years.

American Foreign Policy Towards Africa

Despite African American identification with Nkrumah, there would be little official support from the administration of President Harry Truman for the African leader's goals of self-government. In an address titled "Africa's Role in the Free World Today" at Northwestern University in the summer of 1951, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (NEA) George McGhee described the importance of Africa to the United States and its allies. He highlighted the raw materials the continent held and specifically noted how Europeans viewed Africa as very important to their postwar economic recovery. A large section of the talk appeared under the heading, "A Fertile Field for Communism," in which McGhee argued that although no communist inroads could yet be detected, "conditions exist in many parts of Africa which could well play into the hands of Communist agitators – low standards of living, attitudes of white supremacy, and disintegration of tribal authority." McGhee then spoke of how

the United States could cooperate in a tripartite partnership with both Europeans and Africans to the benefit of all. Overall, he clearly demonstrated the U.S. government's relative comfort with continuing European control in Africa when he warned "immediate independence is, however, not the cure for all colonial problems." He also used racist language to warn against "premature independence for primitive, uneducated peoples." According to an underlying racism among many American policymakers, rapid progress towards self-government in Africa would threaten the goal of keeping communism out of the continent because non-whites would likely succumb to communism unless politically and economically tutored at length by their white colonizers. Mutually reinforcing anti-communism and racism thus prevented enthusiasm for African decolonization among most U.S. officials during the early 1950s.⁴²

McGhee then went on to address the case of Nkrumah and Ghana specifically. He mentioned meeting Nkrumah while the latter was in the United States to receive his doctorate at Lincoln University. McGhee believed the progress of the colony demonstrated "the efficient manner with which the preliminary stages of this bold experiment had been worked out cooperatively between the British officials and the Africans, the moderation and the sense of responsibility." For McGhee, only with white tutelage and political and economic "moderation" were steps towards African independence acceptable. At one point he seemed to realize the racial implications of Nkrumah's successes as a symbol of black capability when he said Ghana "must succeed in order to prove that the African is capable of governing himself." Yet immediately after

⁴² George McGhee, "Africa's Role in the Free World Today," July 16, 1951, *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. XXV, No. 629, 97-98.

the latter statement, McGhee again warned the road to self-government would be long and full of potential roadblocks. Nkrumah and many African Americans did not agree with such sentiments. They wanted blacks in both Africa and the United States to achieve equality as rapidly as possible.⁴³

Other administration officials had similar attitudes. Almost two months earlier, E.M. Bourgerie, the Director of the Office of African Affairs (OAA) in the State Department, had sent to Bloom in Accra a long telegram on the benefits Europe and the United States accrued from Africa. Bourgerie both noted the importance of Africa's raw materials and strategically significant areas and expressed the usual worry over Soviet machinations and potential Soviet aggression. Overall, the goals of the United States were to convince Africans to cooperate with Europeans and "to insure the unwavering loyalty of the African to the cause of Freedom as we perceive it." Bourgerie then requested a detailed account of conditions in Ghana "with emphasis on measures which would help to create African loyalty toward the Free World." In ending, Bourgerie wrote, "Our main objective in the Gold Coast is to secure the maximum use of its resources and keep the territory firmly within the political orbit of the Free World." For State Department officials, Africa, and especially Ghana as a representative example, had to remain in the Free World camp for economic and strategic reasons. An equally strong motivation was denying Ghana to the Soviet Union, perceived as a sort of lion waiting along the fringes of the continent to pounce if weakness or instability appeared anywhere.

⁴³Ibid., 99. The rest of McGhee's speech outlined American and European economic aid to Africa and launched further diatribes against the Soviets.

American policymakers thus believed African independence should only progress slowly, orderly, and with a strong guiding hand from both Europeans and Americans.⁴⁴

American policymakers' views concerning African freedom also formed in the context of the Anglo-American alliance. During the summer of 1950 members of the U.S. State Department and the British Colonial Office met for a three day conference to discuss issues of British colonial policy and the atmosphere at the United Nations. U.S. officials were generally sympathetic to British claims they first needed to educate their colonial subjects and then move them slowly towards self-government in order to ensure a close economic and political advisory relationship with their former subjects once independence occurred. During the discussions U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for United Nations Affairs John Hickerson voiced the dilemma affecting the American stance on colonialism when he stated, "With reference to the 'time table' of the transfer of power to the indigenous inhabitants, the United States was concerned that power might be transferred to colonial people too rapidly. At the same time the United States had to reckon with the atmosphere of the 'practical hysteria' which existed in United Nations discussions of dependent area problems." Such an atmosphere was created in part by the consistently anti-colonial stance of India, independent after 1947. In addition, the issue of South African control of South-West Africa was generating an enormous amount of controversy at the time. In December 1949 the United Nations had turned to the International Court of Justice for advice to determine the status of the territory. The Court's ruling, critical of South Africa yet lacking any enforcement mechanism, would

⁴⁴ Telegram, E.M. Bourgerie to Hyman Bloom, April 23, 1951, p. 1-3, 6, RG 84, Gold Coast, Accra Consulate, Classified General Records (hereafter GCACCGR), 1942-1952, Box 5, Folder "Political", NACP.

not be issued until a few days after the British and American officials met. Overall, Hickerson tried to sooth apparent British animosity over U.S. actions in the U.N. when he said, "It was possible that the British might feel that we lend too much support to the forces which are attracted by the magic word 'independence'. He [Hickerson] wished to say immediately that we are not out to break up the British Empire. We considered it as a great force of stability." Even so, Hickerson would note a minute later that "the general feeling of the American public is against colonialism." He would even adopt an air of inevitability when he further claimed, "There are forces in the world today working for the abolition of colonialism which cannot be stopped. Realising this fact, we and the other democratic nations of the world should attempt to give wise direction to these forces along constructive lines." Such attitudes clearly displayed the "middle road" concept, identified by historian Thomas Noer, in which American policymakers sought to please both those in colonial areas yearning for freedom and America's European allies who seemed to provide stability and appeared to block feared Soviet encroachments.⁴⁵

Official policy statements during the Truman years contained these same dilemmas, but also identified racial issues which were growing in importance. In December 1950 the NEA prepared a lengthy policy paper entitled "General Policies of the United States Toward Africa." U.S. officials noted how "the rise of nationalism, particularly in British West Africa," created complications for European governments as well as the U.S. position on colonialism. Policymakers also stated, "The metropolitan powers need reassurance from the United States that we are not purposefully working to

⁴⁵ "Summary Record of Colonial Policy Talks with the United Kingdom," July 5, 1950, morning session, p. 2, 8, RG 84, GCACCGR, 1942-1952, Box 5, Folder "Political," NACP; Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 27.

bring about a premature according of political independence to the peoples of Africa.”

The need for African raw materials, geostrategic security, and Western investment, to prevent communist inroads, also appeared in the document. U.S. officials also noted the role of race. Under a heading labeled “U.S. Attitudes Affecting Implementation of Our Objectives” one of the “attitudes” included was the “sympathy on the part of American Negroes for the aspirations of the native peoples of Africa.” Officials dealing with Africa in the Truman administration had noticed the racial identification of African Americans with their counterparts overseas.⁴⁶

Officials on the ground in West Africa had an even clearer conception of the connections between Africans and African Americans. After a three week trip around the region to study the state of U.S. information programs, the American ambassador to Liberia provided recommendations to the State Department on the sort of content to include in USIS publications and Voice of America radio programs. Among other things, the ambassador emphasized, “Good color relations...Sports. American Negro and other Negro figures especially...interviews with people interested in Africa. Travelers, leading Negroes...Negro history and cultural research. This once neglected field is growing slowly. It would incidentally bring strong support to VOA-USIS from Negro newspapers and organizations in the U.S.” In addition to a general recognition of racial connections, the final recommendation demonstrated a clear realization of the benefit some U.S. officials believed American information programs in Africa would gain if black

⁴⁶ “General Policies of the United States Toward Africa,” December 29, 1950, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, vol. V: *The Near East and Africa*, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS> (hereafter *FRUS, 1951:5*), 1199-1202. For the ICJ’s ruling, see “International Status of South-West Africa: Advisory Opinion of 11 July 1950,” *International Court of Justice: Cases, International Status of South West Africa*, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/10/1893.pdf>, accessed January 24, 2012.

Americans approved of, and participated in, those programs. Here was an early instance of African American influence on the thinking of U.S. officials concerning policy in Africa.⁴⁷

At the same time any such influence would have to combat the latent racism of many American policymakers. The general attitude that Africans needed help to become civilized and to develop their nations immediately placed them in an inferior position compared to white, and even black, Westerners. In addition, some language was even more specific regarding the perceived inability of blacks in Africa to govern themselves. In a report on the situation in Ghana in late 1950, one of the members of the American consulate included a paragraph titled “The African,” which read, “The African himself has a very short political memory. He will follow any leader who tickles the imagination with any new and better promises and if these promises are not forthcoming in a short time he is very apt to change his allegiance to some new prophet that comes along with something new. The general attitude of the African is not ‘what can this do for my town or country, etc.’ but rather, and only, ‘what do I personally get out of it’.” The assumption of African political immaturity translated easily into a concern that Africans, if allowed to construct the means or timetable for independence themselves, would either purposefully or accidentally open doors to communists. Thus, went the faulty logic, Western whites needed to be the ones who guided gradual black progress towards self-government. Such was the context within which African Americans began to view Nkrumah positively and in which they attempted to pressure the U.S. government to

⁴⁷ Telegram, “Ambassador in Liberia (Dudley) to the Department of State”, June 3, 1952, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. XI, Part 1: *Africa and South Asia*, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS> (hereafter *FRUS, 1952-4:11, Part 1*), 16.

accord more recognition to Nkrumah and black Africans in general. An underlying racism and assumption of black ineptitude would come face to face with assertions of black capability and strength throughout the 1950s.⁴⁸

Nkrumah's 1951 U.S. Visit

One of the strongest proponents of black equality in the 1950s was Horace Mann Bond. As noted in the previous chapter, he sought to correct racist portrayals of Nkrumah and black Africans whenever he encountered them, especially in mainstream newspapers or magazines. Anything that made Nkrumah look primitive or uncivilized understandably irked Bond and he consistently sought to uphold Nkrumah's image in the United States as a modern leader. As seen above, the importance the symbols of Nkrumah and Ghana held for African Americans meant charges of Ghanaian or African backwardness had to be challenged in order to present positive public images of Africans which would undermine racist arguments in support of white dominance. When the *Philadelphia Tribune* ran an editorial in April 1951 highlighting the fact Nkrumah's followers had sacrificed a black lamb to celebrate Nkrumah leaving jail and further claimed "that the founders of Lincoln may be 'spinning in their graves' at this denouement," Bond wrote them to defend Nkrumah. Bond argued such a practice was not "magic" and "as a symbol it is not more heathenish [emphasis in original] than the incantation fertility rites invoked when we throw rice or old shoes at a wedding party." Bond was concerned that black Africans in Ghana not appear savage. Later that month Bond similarly criticized an article in the *London Observer* about Nkrumah, claiming, "The epithet 'detribalized African' is also a

⁴⁸ "The African", December 1950, RG 84, GCACCGR, 1942-1952, Box 5, Folder "Political", NACP.

filthy and vicious act of verbal arrogance.” He went on to point out how whites used condescending language to make Africans understandable and safe on white terms. He wrote, “So long as the African restricts himself to his village, he is ‘tribal’ and therefore thoroughly satisfactory to the European. When he lifts his eyes beyond the horizon of the village, however, to include the concept of the nation and of the world, he is thereby ‘detribalized’ and an ‘unsafe and insecure’ personality.” Such extensive horizons were exactly what would help Africans gain independence and African Americans gain racial equality. Thus, according to Bond, whites opposed to such goals considered such broader worldviews dangerous. For Bond, any indication of African primitiveness needed to be confronted in order to portray blacks as equal to whites in every possible way. Black Africans capable of embracing modern political, economic, and social systems would severely undermine racist arguments which emphasized black inferiority to predict social and racial chaos should full civil rights be granted.⁴⁹

Throughout his letters and writings Bond often emphasized that Nkrumah was a Lincoln alumnus. Thus when Nkrumah became the first black leader of an African colony, Bond and the Board of Trustees at Lincoln University invited him to receive an honorary degree in recognition of his achievements. On March 30, 1951 Bond notified the State Department of Nkrumah’s upcoming June visit. He stated, “Believing that this occasion will provide an opportunity to cement the relations existing between the people of the United States and the people of the Gold Coast, and, indeed, of other portions of Africa and of the World, we respectfully call this event to your attention and solicit any

⁴⁹ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Eustace Gay, April 4, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289B”, Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Edward Archer, April 18, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289C”, Bond Papers.

suggestions you may wish to make so that we may give more significance to the attainment of this purpose.” Before responding to Bond, OAA Director Bourgerie informed Assistant Secretary McGhee of Nkrumah’s trip and recommended holding a luncheon for Nkrumah sponsored by the State Department. He then responded to Bond, telling him, “The Department appreciates your thoughtfulness in bringing this matter to its attention.” Bourgerie’s language revealed the Department had not planned to do anything for Nkrumah’s visit. Bond’s letter was thus a clear, and successful, effort by an important African American leader to get U.S. officials to further recognize the significance of Nkrumah and to act on that knowledge. Thus the Department hosted an official government luncheon for the emerging African leader.⁵⁰

When Nkrumah arrived in the United States in June 1951, therefore, he came as a great example of black achievement and black ability to wield power effectively in modern political and economic systems. Both black and white Americans took notice. A mountain of requests to have Nkrumah speak at various institutions and functions flooded Bond’s office. Northwestern University’s Institute of African Culture, Atlanta University, the University of Michigan, and churches and other organizations in Philadelphia all desired Nkrumah’s presence. The city of Buffalo even wanted to give him a parade. Bond had also planned a public reception for Nkrumah in Chicago as well as a visit to the Tuskegee Institute, the prominent African American institution in Alabama, but Nkrumah’s abbreviated trip left only time for east coast locations. Even so,

⁵⁰ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Dean Acheson, March 30, 1951, 611.45K/3-3051, Reel 29, CF 1950-54; Memorandum, E.M. Bourgerie to George McGhee, “Visit to the United States of Kwame Nkrumah,” April 15, 1951, General Records of the Department of State(hereafter RG 59), Bureau of African Affairs (hereafter BAA), Office of West African Affairs (hereafter OWAA), Records Relating to Ghana, 1958-1963, Box 1, “Folder 22.7: Nkrumah Visit to the U.S. 1951,” NACP; Letter, E.M. Bourgerie to Horace Mann Bond, April 20, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289C,” Bond Papers.

Nkrumah was widely feted, with State Department officials meeting him when he landed. At a press conference shortly afterwards Nkrumah announced he was also in the country to seek American technical assistance and he later remembered there were “flash bulbs bursting on all sides.” Later that night, Nkrumah recalled, “various Negro pressmen came for an informal meeting with me and they were so enthusiastic about my appeal for technical aid and recruitment for the Gold Coast that they promised to give every assistance by way of publicity and propaganda.” The African American press admittedly carried limited articles on the trip, one each in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, and Kansas City’s *Plain Dealer*, a prominent African American paper in the Midwest. Yet the numerous requests Bond received for Nkrumah’s presence and the near royal treatment Nkrumah received everywhere he went meant both African Americans and whites recognized his importance. While in New York, Nkrumah also met other prominent African Americans such as associate editor of the *Courier* George Schuyler and United Nations Undersecretary for Political Affairs Ralph Bunche. Historian James Meriwether’s contention that “when Nkrumah came to the United States shortly thereafter [following his 1951 electoral victory], reaction also was lukewarm,” is thus hard to sustain.⁵¹

⁵¹ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Franklin Frazier, May 18, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289D,” Bond Papers; Horace Mann Bond to Colonel A.T. Walden, May 25, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289E,” Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Lewis Stevens, April 25, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289C,” Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Henry Goss, May 11, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289C,” Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Franklin Frazier, May 18, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder “289D,” Bond Papers; Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 158-9; “Minister of Africa’s Gold Coast Wins Plaudits of UN Officials,” *Chicago Defender*, June 16, 1951, p. 5; Harold L. Keith, “Who’s Who in Labor,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 9, 1951, p. 9; A.J. Siggins, “Along the Colonial Front,” *Plain Dealer* (Kansas City), June 22, 1951, p. 7; Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, “Gold Coast Officials Return from U.S.,” July 14, 1951, 745K.00/7-1451, CFBA 1950-54; Meriwether, *Proudly*, 153. The Tuskegee Institute is now Tuskegee University.

The mainstream American press covered Nkrumah's trip and at times noted the racial dimensions of his visit. The *New York Times* ran articles on Nkrumah which mentioned his importance for African self-government, with one story including the subheading "Could Lead All Africans." The article recognized Nkrumah's growing prestige in Africa when it began with the words, "Mr. Nkrumah occupies a position in West Africa such as Gandhi had in India." The majority of the article contained quotations by Nkrumah which were fair assessments of his outlook, including criticisms of the white apartheid regime in South Africa and his desire to organize a West African Congress. The *Philadelphia Tribune* similarly titled a front page article, "West African Leader Seeks end to Exploitation on Gold Coast: Lincoln Graduate Becomes Powerful in World Politics." The piece called him "one of the most powerful figures in Africa...Nkrumah is regarded as the symbol of the new Africa." A second *Times* story a few days later highlighted one of Nkrumah's official goals of gaining myriad forms of help for development in Ghana. The *Times* reported Nkrumah had "called upon Negro American educators, technicians, scientists and medical men yesterday to set up a cultural bridge between his countrymen and persons of African descent here." The paper labeled Nkrumah's message "a new 'back-to-Africa' movement in a cultural sense."⁵²

Indeed, Nkrumah's commencement address at Lincoln University contained significant racial overtones. He announced he sought help "from all sources especially that of American Universities and especially Negro personnel who would have an interest

⁵² "Gold Coast Leader Wields Big Power," *New York Times*, June 3, 1951, p. 25, Series III, Box 68, Folder "290," Bond Papers; "West African Leader Seeks end to Exploitation on Gold Coast: Lincoln Graduate Becomes Powerful in World Politics," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 5, 1951, p. 1 Series III, Box 68, Folder "290," Bond Papers; "Cultural Bridge to Africa Sought," *New York Times*, June 10, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder "290," Bond Papers.

in making the new Gold Coast Government a success.” Nkrumah was offering African Americans an active role in helping develop and modernize a symbol of black success and achievement. Nkrumah later recalled that specific part of his speech in even more racially connective terms when he wrote in his autobiography, “I said that there was much for the Negro people of America to do to help their ancestral country both then and in the future.” Nkrumah used racial language elsewhere in his original address when he asserted, “Freedom for the Gold Coast is a test case for Africa and for the peoples of African descent all over the world. It is therefore incumbent upon the Negro-world, upon all lovers of democracy and liberty irrespective of race...to give every moral and physical support to the struggling millions of Ghana.” Nkrumah further remembered that after his speech “many Negro graduates approached me and expressed a desire to go to the Gold Coast and do their bit,” but since Ghana was still a colony he apparently could not guarantee their travel for the mission which he had just asked them to undertake. In the end, few African Americans actually heeded this call for technical assistance. Yet the attention given Nkrumah during his visit and the racial identifications made during his trip enhanced the connections between Nkrumah and Ghana on the one hand and African Americans on the other during the early 1950s.⁵³

Among the numerous other events during Nkrumah’s visit, two held importance in racial terms. One was a large dinner party held by the mayor of New York City at which, according to Nkrumah, “all the leading Negro dignitaries and officials were present.” The other was the luncheon the State Department arranged for him, perhaps

⁵³ “Kwame Nkrumah’s Text : Commencement Exercises, Lincoln University,” June 5, 1951, p. 4-5, Series III, Box 68, Folder “290,” Bond Papers; Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 165.

Nkrumah's second most significant stop on his journey besides receiving an honorary doctorate from his alma mater. Assistant Secretary McGhee had contacted the Department's public relations office about the luncheon, writing, "The new Gold Coast Constitution marks an important milestone in colonial policy in Africa in that for the first time it gives Africans a wide area of control over government policy." McGhee then mentioned Nkrumah's visit to receive a degree and said, "It seems fitting, therefore, that the Department should take this occasion to accord some official recognition to these two [Nkrumah and Kojo Botsio, General Secretary of the CPP] prominent and influential officials of the Gold Coast Government." Here was recognition of the importance of Nkrumah by a mid-level U.S. official. While McGhee did not spell out that importance specifically in racial terms, he did mention Nkrumah's prestige lay in the fact Africans, read blacks, now held the reins of power in Ghana. In addition, although McGhee did not mention the influence of African Americans on the decision to host Nkrumah, the documentary record traced above clearly demonstrated Bond first suggested the luncheon. Finally, McGhee's language "that the Department should take this occasion" again indicated there had been no original plans to host Nkrumah before Bond contacted the Department. An African American leader enthralled with Nkrumah's growing image had convinced mid-level officials in the United States government, including Bourgerie and McGhee who were at the luncheon, to accord more value to an emerging African leader.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 166; Memorandum, George McGhee to Simmons [unidentified further], May 7, 1951, p. 1., RG 59, BAA, OWAA, Records Relating to Ghana, 1958-63, Box 1, Folder "22.7, Nkrumah Visit to the U.S., 1951," NACP; Letter, E.M. Bourgerie to Horace Mann Bond, April 20, 1951, Series III, Box 68, Folder "289C," Bond Papers.

African Americans and The Truman Administration

Despite some initial successes in the realm of domestic race relations during Truman's first term, African Americans experienced setbacks in their struggle for racial equality as the Cold War deepened. Black Americans believed they could influence the president in part because in late 1946 Truman had created the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights to investigate attacks on black veterans, a pattern which had become disturbingly prevalent, and to explore the possibility of using federal power in the realm of civil rights. Truman had also announced the desegregation of the American armed forces in 1948. His civil rights message to Congress in February of that year had included a proposal for a national anti-lynching law, which seemed to indicate a shift at the federal level towards a willingness to involve the federal government in race relations. Yet both the rise of the rabidly anti-communist Senator Joseph McCarthy and the beginning of the Korean War in 1950 had, in the apt words of historian Thomas Borstelmann, "brought a swift end to major efforts at social reform of any kind." In addition, as shown above, the international Cold War environment effectively limited U.S. government support for decolonization movements abroad.⁵⁵

Yet African Americans still sought to advance their standing in some small ways in the actual machinery of American foreign relations. In 1948 only five blacks held important positions in the State Department. While this number slowly rose during the 1950s, the issue remained a point of contention with many African Americans. For

⁵⁵ Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 19; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 60-61.

instance, black leaders and the black press would encourage the Eisenhower administration to send a black diplomat to the newly independent nation of Ghana, yet would be frustrated in their efforts. Historian Michael Krenn has closely analyzed the black campaign to place more African Americans in the ranks of the nation's foreign service. Concerning the Eisenhower years, Krenn argues, "There had been but a handful of African-American FSOs [Foreign Service Officers] and one African-American ambassador when Eisenhower took power; nothing had really changed by the time he left office eight years later." Yet during Truman's tenure in office, as Krenn relates, "Outside pressures from organizations such as the NAACP, groups such as the Committee of Negro Leaders, and individuals such as [Howard University professor] Rayford Logan, combined with the efforts of [African American ambassador to Liberia between 1948 and 1952 Edward] Dudley, [Assistant Secretary] McGhee, [Officer in Charge of West, Central, and East African Affairs Harold] Sims, and others within the Department of State, had, to some degree at least, forced a reevaluation of the department's hiring and placement practices." Therefore, African Americans later believed they could successfully pressure the Eisenhower administration concerning Ghana and Africa in part because during the Truman years they experienced minor successes.⁵⁶

Rayford Logan, a professor at the prestigious African American institution Howard University in Washington, D.C., was at the center of the campaign to place more African Americans in the State Department. During the spring of 1950 Logan was also an

⁵⁶ "U.S. Diplomacy, An Online Exploration of Diplomatic History and Foreign Affairs: A More Representative Foreign Service", Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, 2006-2011, <http://www.usdiplomacy.org/history/service/representative.php>, accessed January 24, 2011; Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, 46, 111, 64-65. See 9-65 on the Truman administration and 66-111 on the Eisenhower administration.

advisor on foreign affairs for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and wrote a series of articles lambasting the lack of African Americans in the State Department. In a front page article, Logan criticized “the lamentably small number of Negro professional workers in the domestic branch of the State and the sad picture of the thirty-three in the foreign service division.” Logan also called on Secretary of State Dean Acheson to conduct a review of hiring and placement policies he hoped would lead to more African Americans in the Department’s ranks. In a second article, Logan identified the exact placement of the African Americans then employed in the foreign service, noting that of the thirty-three, twenty-one worked at the embassy in Monrovia, Liberia. Others were assigned to “colored” countries and only two, “one in Paris and one in Berlin,” worked in Europe. Logan went on to call for more blacks in foreign affairs positions, especially for European posts, and claimed such practices would enhance the “total diplomacy” of the United States. Yet he also couched his demands in a Cold War framework to make them more palatable in the growing anti-communist environment of 1950. Despite the fact African Americans were underrepresented, Logan also wrote, “The Courier urges that Negroes be appointed because they are competent and loyal.” Emphasizing the loyalty of African Americans was one of the few rhetorical approaches left for those trying to advance the position of American blacks in the domestic Cold War environment.⁵⁷

When a third article ran a week after the second, Logan had good news. Truman had recently “announced a plan to draft the ‘best brains’ in the country for key posts in the Government,” which appeared to promise more consideration by federal officials for

⁵⁷ Rayford Logan, “Only 33 Negroes in State Department’s Foreign Service Division,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 15, 1950, p. 1; Rayford Logan, “Our State Department: Negroes in Foreign Service Assigned to ‘Colored’ Countries”, *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 22, 1950, p. 17.

African American candidates. Logan did not “wish to suggest that this series of articles in any way prompted the President’s decision,” but since a plan had been put in place, he would of course try to exert influence by naming prominent African Americans for potential positions. The State Department was apparently aware of these protestations and recommendations because in a fourth article the following week, Logan reported State officials had called him to explain that “the one reason why so few Negroes have been appointed is the fact that so few have applied.” Logan noted, “This conversation is only one of many indications that this series of articles is provoking some discussion in the State Department.” Logan did not completely accept such an explanation and continued to hint at racially based reasons for the lack of African Americans in the Department. Indeed, in a fifth and final article in the series, Logan wrote of the racial discrimination at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He claimed a prominent official there stated “that colored students were not wanted at the School of Foreign Service.” Overall, Logan’s accusations in the interest of expanding the African American presence in the State Department had caused consternation among policymakers in the Truman administration. While Krenn addresses these articles by Logan, he only analyzes Logan’s criticisms and not the apparent impact Logan’s efforts seem to have had. Logan’s success in at least generating discussion in the State Department indicated U.S. officials were aware of racial issues in foreign policy. Such results, however limited, would play a part in encouraging Logan and other African Americans to continue similar methods of pressuring the federal government concerning issues of race and foreign policy throughout the 1950s.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Rayford Logan, “President Shows Signs of Ending Government Bias,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 29,

During the rest of the Truman administration, attempts to place more African Americans in government service seemed to be making headway. In April 1951 A. Phillip Randolph, the leader of the African American union The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters wanted Logan to be “a technical consultant in the field of foreign service” and requested he “work out a sort of memorandum statement for presentation to [Secretary of State] Dean Acheson which we might discuss at the meeting of the Committee of Negro Leaders.” Another request from Randolph the following July revealed how extensive the contacts between Truman’s officials and African Americans had become. Randolph mentioned that Howard University professor John Davis had been named a part time consultant with the administration’s Personnel Bureau. To Randolph this appointment indicated “that progress has been made with officials of the State Department...numerous conferences were held with the Director of Personnel of the Department of State...Professor Davis is expected to aid in formulating hiring and recruiting policies in an effort to greater assure equality of opportunity to Negro applicants for positions in the domestic and foreign service of the State Department.” An African American had been placed in a position to provide advice concerning the inclusion of more blacks in an important area of American foreign policy. Randolph continued, “I am encouraged by Mr. Brown’s report that he feels there is evidence of a genuine desire on the part of the representatives of the Department to improve the hiring processes in light of our general observations to the President and the Secretary of State.

1950, p. 1; Rayford Logan, “Our State Department: It Employs Few Negroes, But Deserves Some Credit for Opening Some Doors to Us,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 6, 1950, p. 1; Rayford Logan, “Our State Department: School of Foreign Service at Georgetown U. Denies Negroes are not Wanted,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 13, 1950, p. 1; Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, 19-22

It was Secretary Acheson who arranged the meetings for our subcommittee with his Director of Personnel.” The meeting between Acheson and African Americans, including Logan, took place on April 13, 1951.⁵⁹

Michael Krenn has aptly covered the subsequent discussions between U.S. officials and African Americans as well as the resulting assessment titled, “Progress Report on the Employment of Colored Persons in the Department of State.” Krenn also correctly claims little overall progress had been made by the time the Eisenhower administration began. While placing more African Americans in the nation’s foreign service ranks did not directly involve Ghana, the issue was a way blacks in the United States sought to have an influence on an aspect of American foreign policy. Not only would more African Americans in the State Department demonstrate more racial equality in employment, but the process would signify to the world America’s governmental apparatus was colorblind. By 1952, according to Krenn, African Americans in the State Department still did not reach a proportion similar to their percentage in the overall population, numbering merely fifty-five out of 8,321 overseas employees. A mere handful reached even mid-level status at the Department’s offices in Washington. Yet the efforts by African American leaders to change State Department hiring policies would encourage those leaders to continue to try to influence government views and policies throughout the 1950s.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 42; Letter, A. Philip Randolph to Rayford Logan, April 5, 1951, Rayford Logan Papers, Box 166-19, Folder “16,” Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C (hereafter Logan Papers); Letter, A. Philip Randolph to Rayford Logan, July 16, 1952, Box 166-19, Folder “16,” Logan Papers. The “Mr. Brown” referred to is not identified further; Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, 59.

⁶⁰ Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, 59-64.

Nkrumah Becomes Prime Minister

When Nkrumah returned home in the summer of 1951, he found the press in Ghana had widely covered his visit to the United States. *The Daily Echo*, *The African Morning Post*, the *Ghana Daily Express*, *The Ashanti Pioneer*, *The Spectator Daily*, the *Accra Evening News*, and the *Daily Graphic* had all commented favorably on the good relations with the United States and on the potential gains in technical aid and cooperation to be had from such a relationship. Nkrumah also delivered a radio address declaring the trip a success. Yet Nkrumah had met only with mainstream African American leaders. Leftist black intellectuals had not been notified of his visit or allowed to participate. In a letter to George Padmore, the activist and increasingly leftist co-founder of the NAACP W.E.B. Du Bois complained, "I did not know of Nkrumah's visit to the United States until too late. Even if I had known, I doubt if I could have gotten in touch with him. Through British connivance, the State Department held him almost incommunicado while he was in this country. Many of his friends could not get in touch with him." Nkrumah was acceptable to U.S. officials as long as he met with relatively mainstream African American figures, merely asked for American aid, and did not interact with those who criticized the American political and social system apart from desiring civil and individual rights.⁶¹

⁶¹ Enclosures to Telegram, Hyman Bloom to State Department, "Gold Coast Officials Return from U.S.," July 14, 1951, 745K.00/7-1451, Reel 5, CFBA 1950-54; Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to George Padmore, October 27, 1951, Reel 67, *The Papers of W.E.B. Du Bois: 1803 (1877-1963) 1965* [microform] (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980) (hereafter Du Bois Papers); Meriwether, *Proudly*, 82; Charles W. Cheng, "The Cold War: Its Impact on the Black Liberation Struggle Within the United States," in Michael Krenn, ed., *The African American Voice in U.S. Foreign Policy since World War II* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 125.

After returning to Ghana, Nkrumah and the CPP continued to press the British for more constitutional reforms leading toward self-government. Nkrumah also sought a title different than that of “Leader of Government Business,” which had been his official label since the British governor had invited him to form a government in early 1951. Nkrumah believed “there was something in a name” and he thought the title of “Prime Minister” would enhance his standing, in addition to describing more accurately his status as leader of the majority party in a parliamentary system. On March 5, 1952, therefore, the British governor announced Nkrumah would be named prime minister. Nkrumah’s calculations as to the effect of the title were correct, both in Ghana and among African Americans in the United States. On the front page of its March 8 edition, the *Pittsburgh Courier* noted Nkrumah “thus becomes the first native African to be named to this important post.” A week later in another article titled “Africa’s First Black Premier”, the *Courier* claimed, “One of Queen Elizabeth’s first and certainly her most important acts has been to appoint a native black man the first Prime Minister of an African Commonwealth.” Nkrumah appeared as a leader “launching out with a vigor and brilliance that has been breathtaking.” While the *Chicago Defender* did not carry an article specifically focused on Nkrumah becoming Prime Minister, during the same month the paper did carry a front page article on a telephone conversation between Nkrumah and Bond. The former had asked the latter “to tell his ‘Negro brethren in the United States’ that they had been an ‘inspiration’ to him...the prime Minister said he was highly appreciative of the American Negro’s interest in Africa’s progress.” The unnamed *Defender* columnist seemed to feel the pride in racial identity and cooperation emanating from Nkrumah’s words as he ended with, “Dr. Nkruma’s [sic] appointment to the newly created position [prime minister]

marked an extremely important step in his long fight for self-government for Africans.”

The mutually reinforcing support between Africans and African Americans in their respective struggles for equality was growing as Nkrumah’s prestige rose.⁶²

Even the State Department took notice of the change in position and acted accordingly. Prompted by an article in the *New York Times* mentioning Nkrumah’s ascension to the Prime Minister position, Secretary of State Acheson sent a telegram to the consulate in Accra indicating the United States would congratulate Nkrumah when the Ghanaian Legislative Assembly officially elected him. Once this occurred and once standard diplomatic cables were exchanged, Nkrumah was “very much pleased with the message and highly appreciative of the good will which it represented toward himself and the people of the Gold Coast.” William Cole, the American consul in Accra by that time, reported, “The Secretary’s message, together with the fact of its transmission through the Consulate, appears to have enhanced perceptibly the esteem in which the latter is held by the Gold Coast officialdom. It should thus prove a useful step in building American prestige locally.” The message came directly through official U.S. government channels and Nkrumah enjoyed the recognition. Both African Americans and the State Department realized the rise of the first black African prime minister was a significant step in the journey towards African freedom.⁶³

⁶² Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 169; “Prime Minister,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 8, 1952, p. 1; “Africa’s First Black Premier,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 15, 1952, p. 8; “U.S. Interest Gratifies New African Leader,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 22, 1952, p. 1.

⁶³ Telegram, Dean Acheson to Accra, March 10, 1952, RG 84, GCACCGR, 1942-1952, Box 5, Folder “Political,” NACP; Telegram, William Cole to State Department, “Exchange of Messages Between the Secretary of State and Prime Minister of the Gold Coast,” April 4, 1952, RG 84, GCACCGR, 1942-1952, Box 5, Folder “Political,” NACP.

Official Policy Develops on Ghana

By the final year of the Truman administration, American policymakers had thus recognized the growing importance of Nkrumah and Ghana. Now they sought to keep Ghana oriented towards the West. In January 1952 the United States Information Service (USIS) revised the organization's country plan for Ghana, originally drafted two years earlier. The goals of orienting Ghana towards the West and exposing "Soviet imperialism" as an evil campaign appeared, although the USIS admitted that despite "some Communist-inspired news items in the local press," Ghanaian leaders were likely not in "direct communication with Russia and her satellites." Interestingly, one of the "unfavorable" factors listed was that such stories accepted from apparent communist sources often focused on the problems experienced by African Americans in the United States. In addition, the USIS noted "an extreme race consciousness" in Ghana. Therefore, U.S. officials were to emphasize how "the American Negro and other so-called minority groups are rapidly being integrated into all aspects of American life – the continuing American Revolution." The USIS also advised "send[ing] American negro articles" for placement in local Ghanaian newspapers as well as the visits by "American Negro athletes." Thus as early as 1952 U.S. officials recognized the importance of racial connections between African Americans and Ghana, although policymakers often sought to use these identifications to enhance U.S. prestige in a country quickly growing in importance as a symbol of a decolonizing non-white Africa. The visit of Rudolph Aggrey had been a clear example of such efforts.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Telegram, State Department to Accra, February 4, 1952, 611.45K/2-452, Reel 29, CFBA 1950-54.

Yet the Cold War and latent racism still predominated in the attitudes of many U.S. officials toward Nkrumah and Ghana. The USIS had noticed the importance of Ghana in May 1951 when conducting a lengthy survey of the colony. Unlike in early 1952, the USIS had originally worried communist infiltration of decolonized African nations would begin in Ghana, but gave no reason for such fear other than seeming to assume the USSR would automatically try to turn newly independent areas away from the West. Such a scenario was troubling because events in Ghana were “being watched by much of the rest of tropical Africa for a clue to its own future. What happens in the Gold Coast in the next few years will have a far-reaching effect throughout the rest of the continent.” Despite such recognition of Ghana’s importance, USIS officials used much racist language in the report. For instance, Ghanaians were a people “who began to come out of the jungle, figuratively and to some extent literally speaking, only two or three generations ago, and who are not ready to manage their own affairs in a modern society by any standards which heretofore have been considered reasonable.” According to the thinking of American policymakers, therefore, the British needed to lead Ghana into becoming a “peaceful, progressive, productive, and friendly” member of the British Commonwealth. At times USIS officials even displayed a serious misunderstanding of reality by claiming, “In essence what is happening here is this. A rapidly increasing measure of self-government is being given to an African people...who, on the whole, are very vague about what it is and may not even be too enthusiastic about getting it.” The throngs of Ghanaians attending Nkrumah’s speeches would have greatly disagreed with this assessment. Unfortunately, such were the ingrained attitudes many U.S. officials held

which African Americans would have to combat in their efforts to challenge racially biased viewpoints.⁶⁵

By the summer of 1952 American officials in Accra were less apt to label Nkrumah a communist, but still believed continuing British control was best. Evidencing a paternalistic outlook, American consul William Cole declared that order had returned to Ghana only after Nkrumah and other CPP officials had learned how to govern from the British. Cole did mention the British Communist Party had “denounced” Nkrumah, but he also noted Nkrumah had denied the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, a pro-Western umbrella labor organization, a branch in Ghana. Cole stated, “Thus, Nkrumah is apparently adopting an attitude of ‘neutralism’ with respect to the issue – a not uncommon attitude among prominent Africans, who in general have little understanding of the East-West conflict or of the aims of Russian Communism. In their view, another World War would merely involve them as cannon-fodder in a struggle alien to their own interests.” While the latter part of Cole’s statement was correct, Nkrumah and other African nationalist leaders were moving towards neutralism precisely because they understood only too well their interests would not be served by choosing either Cold War camp. Cole’s concluding remarks best evidenced the American view of Ghana at the end of Truman’s presidency, views which would carry over into the Eisenhower administration and remain entrenched for years. Cole ended with, “The first half of 1952 stands out as a period of substantial progress. During that time the Africans successfully accepted the increased responsibilities granted them in the new constitution.

⁶⁵ Telegram, Roger Ross (Political Action Officer) to State Department, “For USIE, A Review and Analysis of Post-war Developments in the Gold Coast,” May 31, 1951, p. 1-2, RG 84, GCACCGR, 1942-1952, Box 5, Folder “Political Affairs,” NACP.

However, their relatively impressive performance should not be allowed to obscure the fact that much of the road toward their goal of autonomy has still to be travelled and that their ultimate capacity for democratic self-government remains a matter for conjecture.” Many U.S. officials wanted to promote democracy in Ghana and Africa, but a latent racism which assumed black Africans could not steer their own course without the guiding hand of whites led to fears premature independence would open doors to communism. Such views demonstrated the ambivalence and consternation concerning African independence in official American circles as the Eisenhower administration began. In the eyes of many white Americans, African self-government some day would perhaps benefit the West, but only if decolonization unfolded slowly and in a way designed and led primarily by whites.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Throughout the Truman administration, Nkrumah’s star was on the rise and by late 1952 many black American views of him had solidified. He represented a symbol of black achievement which appeared headed towards full self-government. While legal segregation and unpunished violence against blacks continued in the southern United States and while unofficial racism still existed across much of the rest of the nation, the weakening of colonial chains in Ghana served as an inspiring example to African Americans during the early 1950s. Ghana’s challenge to white control demonstrated the struggle for political and civic equality could, in fact, be successful. African Americans

⁶⁶ Telegram, William Cole to State Department, “Current Political Trends in the Gold Coast,” July 30, 1952, p. 3, 5, RG 84, GCACCGR, 1942-1952, Box 5, Folder “Political Affairs,” NACP.

also believed Ghana provided a visible example of black capability to engage modern political and economic practices intelligently and thus disproved racist warnings of a descent into chaos should full equality arrive. While some African American leaders worried about Nkrumah's left-leaning ideologies, virtually all agreed on his importance in racial terms. Bond provided an excellent example of such views. He strongly supported stances Nkrumah himself readily disagreed with, such as the uplifting role of American investment in Ghana and the fundamental morality of overseas American activities, but he believed Nkrumah was very important for black Americans. Perhaps Bond's words in a July 1952 letter to Reverend Henry Mitchell best displayed African American enthusiasm about Nkrumah. Bond wrote, "My own opinion is that Nkrumah is doing a masterful job. Indeed, it is so masterful that the canny British, after damning him as a Communist and a Witch Doctor, now respectfully latch on to him as their last hope in maintaining a foothold in Black Africa. He is playing a tremendously involved game, with fantastic stakes." Above political ideology, racial identification mattered most to African Americans when viewing events unfolding in Ghana.⁶⁷

By extension, went the thinking of African American leaders, if U.S. officials could be convinced of the importance of Nkrumah and Ghana as symbols of black capability, perhaps policymakers would use federal power on behalf of black civil rights in the United States. To this end, African American leaders pressured policymakers to accord more attention both to Ghana and to their own plight at home. Such entreaties took the form of Bond's notification of the State Department concerning Nkrumah's 1951

⁶⁷ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Henry Mitchell, July 3, 1952, Series III, Box 18, Folder "2B," Bond Papers.

visit, Rayford Logan's series of articles pressuring the Department to include more blacks in its ranks, and the successful attempt to get the Truman administration to consult African American leaders concerning hiring policies. Bond also contacted the State Department about an official sponsorship when he was considering a second trip to Africa in 1952. Burton Berry, an acting Assistant Secretary of State, responded that Bond's "suggestion is a very interesting one which fits in closely with the Department's general desire to foster increased understanding between the peoples of Africa and the United States...I have discussed your letter with officers responsible for the administration of the Department's Information and Educational Exchange Program for Africa who agree that this program could be increased in effectiveness by more frequent visits to Africa by recognized American leaders." No money was available in this instance for Bond's trip, but his request and Berry's response demonstrated both the awareness by U.S. officials of transnational racial issues as early as 1952 and the influence African Americans could have at times on American policymakers. These small successes encouraged African Americans to act similarly during the Eisenhower years.⁶⁸

Yet the framework of the Cold War combined with an underlying racism among many American officials to limit the ability of African Americans to influence American foreign policy. Blacks in the United States who held Nkrumah up as a symbol of black

⁶⁸ Letter, Burton Berry to Horace Mann Bond, February 11, 1952, Series III, Box 22, Folder "29A," Bond Papers. Berry had held a number of diplomatic posts, including in Romania, Greece, and Iran. He seems to have been temporarily filling the position of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs after George McGhee resigned to become the U.S. ambassador to Turkey. See "The Administration: Through the Turnstile," *TIME*, December 17, 1951, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,859433,00.html>, accessed February 1, 2011; See also, "Burton Y. Berry, 83, is Dead; Career Diplomat for the U.S." *New York Times*, August 26, 1985, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/08/26/us/burton-y-berry-83-is-dead-career-diplomat-for-the-us.html>, accessed February 1, 2011.

success had to contend with a belief among many U.S. officials that non-whites in Africa were unable to govern themselves unless taught how to do so over lengthy periods of time by their white overlords. Otherwise, whether by accident or design, the Soviet Union would somehow exert influence, and perhaps full control, over a population who had been granted “premature” independence. In a climate of global competition with a powerful enemy, the United States was also wary of jeopardizing relations with its strongest European partner if that nation wanted to continue to use its colonies as protected markets or as sources of raw materials for economic recovery and growth. If the British spent a couple of decades ensuring that once independence came Ghana would be a willing and loyal ally of British trade and foreign policy, U.S. officials were not very willing to contest the point. The Eisenhower administration would have to balance the transnational racial identification of African Americans with Ghana and the desire for the United States to appear as a champion of decolonizing peoples on the one hand with its perceptions of British importance, black weakness, and Soviet machinations on the other.

CHAPTER 3: SHIFTING THE FOCUS

Introduction

As a new year began, African Americans took stock of their efforts to combat racial discrimination domestically and internationally. *Pittsburgh Courier* journalist Harold Keith wrote, “A new day has dawned for the Negro as a result of the tremendous happenings of the past twelve months. The year of 1952 saw the black man in ferment, both at home and abroad, meeting face to face new challenges, and matching strides toward a new era with the rest of humanity.” Keith went on, however, to list numerous problems still facing blacks in the United States, which ranged from continuing white violence to disputes among African Americans involved in major party politics. Yet Keith ended on a high note, with a brief description of Nkrumah as a leader “who spoke freely from his newly won position as Gold Coast Prime Minister for a Union of African peoples stretching across the continent. Nkrumah felt sure that the sun would rise in the East again, and shine upon the black man.” Keith also included a picture of Nkrumah shaking hands with African American internationalist Ralph Bunche, at the time an undersecretary for political affairs at the United Nations. The caption read in part, “The high regard of one great man for another.” The language of the piece thus connected the domestic and international arenas and revealed the extent of African American racial identification with Nkrumah. As the Eisenhower administration began in early 1953, African Americans had reason to hope events both at home and overseas were moving in the direction of racial equality.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Harold Keith, “1952: Year of Excitement; Racial Gains Noted,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 3, 1953, p. 16.

While both mainstream black American leaders and U.S. officials feared the loss of Africa to communism, the two groups disagreed on how exactly the United States could keep Africa a part of the Free World. For instance, *Chicago Defender* journalist Malcolm Johnson wrote in January 1953, “What is happening in Africa today is of vital interest to Americans and free peoples everywhere concerned with the dangers of the spread of communism....The Western powers, led by the United States, have a vital interest in Africa as a bastion against Communist aggression in one of the world’s last frontiers.” Johnson also noted the air bases and “strategic raw materials, including uranium,” available to the West in Africa. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his policymakers would have readily agreed with Johnson’s anti-communism and his statements on the strategic and economic importance of Africa to the West. At the beginning of Eisenhower’s tenure, officials in his administration largely held many of the same assumptions as their predecessors regarding the dangers to Western goals in Africa of “premature” independence for populations considered susceptible to communism. The wishes of Great Britain for a gradual, orderly move towards independence for its colonial possessions also heavily influenced an American administration concerned with maintaining close ties to important allies in the deepening Cold War. These would be the attitudes initially driving American foreign policy towards Ghana during the early years of the Eisenhower administration which African Americans would try to change.⁷⁰

Throughout 1953, American blacks continued to insist U.S. officials recognize the importance of Ghana’s struggle for independence. They often placed this need for attention in Cold War language indicating the benefits for the U.S. image abroad should

⁷⁰ Malcolm Johnson, “Africa in Turmoil,” *Chicago Defender*, January 17, 1953, p. 15.

Ghana be accorded more importance, but they also spoke of how a newly decolonized black nation would bolster the campaign for racial equality within the United States. African American leaders such as Horace Mann Bond, NAACP officials, A. Philip Randolph, and Rayford Logan continued to try to nudge policymakers toward a clearer focus on the advantages of embracing Ghana and Africa. In order to portray Nkrumah and Ghana as modern and civilized, African Americans also sought to affect the emerging public narrative on Ghana and Nkrumah as pieces appeared on them in major periodicals such as the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine. By the end of 1953, African American leaders and journalists had forced both U.S. officials and the American public to pay greater attention to Ghana.

African Americans v. *Time*

By early 1953 major American periodicals began to notice the advance of Ghana towards independence. The *New York Times* and the *Saturday Evening Post* produced stories on Nkrumah and the *Saturday Review* ran an edition with the title “America and the Challenge of Africa.” A mere three weeks after the inauguration of President Eisenhower, *Time* magazine ran a feature article on Ghana. Nkrumah’s portrait adorned the cover with an image of Africa shaded black in the background. The title read, “Gold Coast’s Kwame Nkrumah: In the Dark Continent, dawn’s early light?” The words clearly invoked the American national anthem and hinted at a coming independence. Yet the question mark was intentional, implying uncertainty about the ability of Nkrumah to create a viable state in Ghana after decolonization. The article began favorably with, “Through the streets of Accra, capital of the Gold Coast, Democracy [sic] ran joyously

wild.” The piece then went on to describe a procession celebrating the third anniversary of the 1950 strikes and protests which had marked Nkrumah’s Positive Action campaign. Much of the rest of the lengthy article was devoted to describing the ethnic groups and economy of Ghana as well as Nkrumah’s personal history and rise to power.⁷¹

Yet the language employed by the article continually suggested African backwardness. The writer, evidencing incredulousness, commented, “Seven out of ten are illiterate, more than half believe in witchcraft, yet the happy-go-lucky Gold Coasters have been chosen by Imperial Britain to pioneer its boldest experiment in African home rule.” The article claimed an “incongruous overlap of civilization and savagery, magic and machinery,” existed because a new hospital was being built on a site where a brass pan, “used to collect the blood from human sacrifices,” had been found in the 1890s. Despite the fifty years separating the two events, the writer’s language clearly implied “Gold Coasters have spanned centuries of progress” due only to the British presence in Ghana. Furthermore, after describing Nkrumah’s rise to power, the author wrote, “At first, the black man’s habit of deferring to the white impeded business: instead of making up their own minds, the black ministers looked to the governor for decisions. But [British Governor Sir Charles] Arden-Clarke soon put a stop to that. ‘That’s for you chaps to decide,’ he told Nkrumah. ‘After all, you are the government.’” Of course, British guns

⁷¹ “America and the Challenge of Africa, *Saturday Review*, May 2, 1953, Series III, Box 21, Folder “19A,” Bond Papers; C.L. Sulzberger, “Gold Coast Moves For Full Freedom,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1953, Series III, Box 68, Folder “293A,” Bond Papers; Wolfgang Langewiesche, “He Wants to Rule West Africa,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 7, 1953, Series III, Box 68, Folder “293B,” Bond Papers; “Africa: Sunrise on the Gold Coast,” *Time*, February 9, 1953, p. 16-22, Series III, Box 21, Folder “18B,” Bond Papers.

and jail cells had caused any such caution, not the assumed racial inferiority implied by the writer.⁷²

The article concluded by largely centering on the fear that black inferiority would open the door to communism. The piece briefly discussed white minority concerns in Africa, noting, “They fear – with good cause – that the Black Continent, so long the slave of other continents, is rediscovering a long-lost pride in being black.” Despite this realization of a race consciousness, the article ended with extremely racist language, claiming, “Black Africa’s awakening is spotty and inconclusive – more a blind, biological ferment than a self-conscious surge of nationalism. Africa is still a land of weirdness and surprise.” The writer also argued “that the educated few who climb from darkness to light are” were more susceptible to communism than “the jungle savages” because “often shunned because of their color, impulsive and impatient, they are likely to become dupes of Communism.” Thus some slight criticisms of whites emerged, but Africans primarily appeared as benefiting solely from white education and political example, as often still mired in a pre-civilized state, and as potential communist pawns. A prominent American periodical had brought attention to Nkrumah and Ghana, but in a way which stereotyped and demeaned black Africans.⁷³

African American leaders were understandably upset by the piece. Their concern demonstrated both their views of Ghana and their attempts to control the public narrative concerning Nkrumah’s nation. Albert J. Neely, who had been a student at Lincoln University during Nkrumah’s days at the institution, wrote to *Time* protesting the article.

⁷² “Africa: Sunrise on the Gold Coast,” *Time*, February 9, 1953, p. 16, 17, 19, Series III, Box 21, Folder “18B,” Bond Papers.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22.

He related his “initial reaction to seeing on the cover a former schoolmate...was one of pleasant agreement of the timeliness of the story and of Time’s [sic] reputation for being in the vanguard of enlightened news analysis and reporting.” Yet, upon further reading, Neely found the piece unacceptably critical and derogatory towards Nkrumah and Ghana. He lamented “the missed opportunity by Time [sic] to present a more interesting, intelligent and positively meaningful story.” The *Time* article had labeled Nkrumah “a histrionic radical,” called him “Kwame (‘Show Boy’) Nkrumah,” and implied his impropriety by describing him as “a 43-year-old bachelor who likes to say: ‘Every woman in the Gold Coast is my bride.’” Neely thus derided *Time*’s portrait of Nkrumah “as a combination rabble rouser grown lucky and Gold Coast ‘hepcat’ (Show Boy, Ace Boy, jigging his shoulders in rhythm).” Neely further argued, “Time’s Nkrumah is not the deeply religious, careful purposeful thinker, student of government and man of dignity many of us know him to be.” Neely even addressed American foreign policy when he suggested the magazine should have paid more attention to “the realistic outline of the domestic and foreign program of his government given by him to U.S. State Dept., United Nations and British officials during his 1951 trip as prime minister to this country.” Neely not only believed the article was factually unsound, but he feared it had presented Nkrumah in an unfavorable light which would damage his image as a modern, educated, and competent black African leader.⁷⁴

Other prominent African Americans felt similarly about *Time*’s treatment of Nkrumah and Ghana. Neely had sent a copy of his letter to Bond and asked his thoughts.

⁷⁴ Letter, Albert J. Neely to Editor of *Time*, February 7, 1953, Series III, Box 68, Folder “292C,” Bond Papers; “Africa: Sunrise on the Gold Coast,” *Time*, February 9, 1953, p. 17, Series III, Box 21, Folder “18B,” Bond Papers.

Bond's response clearly revealed some of the interactions between African Americans and the mainstream American press during the early 1950s. Bond initially commented, "I have just about decided that *Time* [sic] is utterly hopeless." He described how he had written to the magazine the previous year, pointing out seven clear errors about Nkrumah in another article. The magazine did not print his letter and apparently had written him back only "several weeks afterward that they had justification for this, for that, and the other; the most shameful kind of thing, never admitting error." Bond then told Neely a *Time* employee, Eldon Griffiths, had called him the day before the February 1953 article appeared in order to check some facts. Bond had "strongly advised him to change his 'slant,' but he spoke with the greatest assurance, that he was doing Nkrumah a favor, etc., etc. He spoke in a broad English accent, and one could feel the condescension dripping from his broad "A's." Whether Griffiths was a fact checker or the actual author, his contacting of Bond showed the direct relationship, however chilly, which existed between Bond and the periodical. The interaction also revealed Bond's attempts to affect the public image of Nkrumah by changing the "slant" of the article.⁷⁵

Bond launched into a further diatribe against *Time* and the possible negative implications of the article. He told Neely the magazine was "one of the most dangerous instruments of an irresponsible and truly ignorant 'master class and race' theory in existence. The tragedy is that the unsophisticated masses who read this poison, believe it implicitly; and will form their opinions as a basis of it. In turn, this will corrupt our entire national attitudes toward darker peoples; and in this procedure I see America on the way

⁷⁵ Letter, Albert J. Neely to Editor of *Time*, February 7, 1953, Series III, Box 68, Folder "292C," Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Albert Neely, February 10, 1953, Series III, Box 68, "Folder 293A," Bond Papers.

to lose Africa as irrevocably as we have already lost Asia to the Communists.” While some Cold War thinking seeped into Bond’s letter, he largely focused on racial issues. He even ended with the statement, “I think this article is only a symptom of the white man’s great disease, and can only regret that as an American, my own future is being destroyed with that of my white-fellow citizens by this poisonous rag.” As noted above, Bond was a supporter of capitalism and American anti-communist foreign policy in general. Yet he was quite antagonistic towards anyone who would portray as primitive those he considered his racial brethren. His language also revealed the dire consequences he attached to negative images of black Africans, including losing the non-white world to communism, a deepening of domestic racial strife, and an undermining of the struggle for racial equality within the United States. In addition, his actions, along with those of Neely, revealed African American attempts to influence the views of white Americans concerning Ghana and Africa. Bond also told Neely how the *New York Times* had run a story the previous year “on Nkrumah to which I took exception.” He had contacted the *Times* with his concerns and when a second *Times* article appeared the day before the *Time* magazine story, Bond believed the former was “quite balanced and fair.”⁷⁶

These types of reactions to the *Time* article on Nkrumah were not limited to private letters to editors or discussions among African American leaders. George Schuyler, a prominent contributor on foreign affairs to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, wrote a piece two weeks later titled “American Press ‘Discovers,’ Then Maligns Africa.” He

⁷⁶ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Albert Neely, February 10, 1953, Series III, Box 68, “Folder 293A,” Bond Papers; William S. White, “New World of Africa’s Gold Coast Arises From Ashes of Colonialism: Although Land is Still British, Black Men are Masters in Their Own House,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1952, p. 5; C. L. Sulzberger, “Gold Coast Moves for Full Freedom: British Colony’s Negro Chief, Elected While in Prison, Maps Bid by Year’s End,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1953, p. 16.

noted that many mainstream American newspapers and magazines had been giving more attention to Africa, yet “unfortunately the white press is giving the impression that black Africa (below the Sahara) is a land leaping suddenly from savagery to civilization; that culture was dead there before the Europeans barged in; that these ‘benighted’ blacks lived just a notch above the chimpanzee until white explorers, missionaries and soldiers awakened them.” Schuyler went on to heavily criticize the *Time* article on Ghana. He wrote, “Time, in its usual style, snickers at Gold Coast democracy and insinuates that Nkrumah is simply a tool of the clever British who have hit upon a new gimmick to cheaply control the blacks while continuing to fleece them.” Schuyler further contested the claims of illiteracy and charges of witchcraft in the *Time* piece, arguing, “Witchcraft is simply the other fellow’s definition of your religion.” Schuyler also suggested even if *Time*’s claim Ghanaians lived in “holes in the ground” was true, it was unclear how such conditions indicated an uncivilized population when there were “millions in Spain and Russia” who lived similarly. He ended by listing some of the major cultural and political achievements among the African peoples encountered by European explorers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Charges of African primitiveness and backwardness understandably struck a nerve with African American leaders and journalists during the early 1950s. If the achievements of blacks in Africa were to serve as both an example and an impetus toward a more racially equal society in the United States, suggestions that whites had actually provided all the political education for important African leaders and images of Africans as uncivilized and barbaric had to be contested. Through private

letters to editors as well as public newspaper articles, African Americans tried to influence and shape the public narrative concerning Ghana and Nkrumah.⁷⁷

Early Eisenhower Administration Views of Africa and Ghana

During the early years of the Eisenhower administration African Americans seeking to change the views of government officials concerning Africa faced a significant challenge. The president himself was generally uncomfortable around black Americans and often simply avoided addressing the issues of segregation and racial discrimination. As historian Thomas Borstelmann has noted, over the course of an eight year presidency Eisenhower met directly with African American leaders once for forty-five minutes. In his administration, only a few African Americans occupied mid-level positions such as Assistant Secretary of Labor, Assistant to the Undersecretary of Labor, and Chairman of the Federal Parole Board. Serious consideration of blacks for higher offices never really occurred. E. Frederic Morrow, who held the title of Administrative Officer for Special Projects, was the highest African American official in the Eisenhower administration. Despite numerous efforts, Morrow was unable to convince most American policymakers of the need for more rapid action on civil rights. In late 1955 he wrote in his diary that among Eisenhower's officials there was "some uncanny fear that to alienate the South on this matter of race will be disastrous as far as any southern support of prominent Administration matters in Congress." As historian Robert Frederick Burk summarizes, "Acutely aware of the political risks inherent in a public leadership role in civil rights

⁷⁷ George Schuyler, "American Press 'Discovers', Then Maligns Africa," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 21, 1953, p. 9.

[Eisenhower] preferred to limit his involvement in racial questions to the occasional assertion of general democratic principles. At the same time, the President carefully circumscribed his subordinates' activities to areas of clear federal jurisdiction, greatest international propaganda value, and minimum risk of political fallout or domestic unrest." Eisenhower disliked the deep passions aroused in racial matters and called for patience, understanding, and moderation on both sides.⁷⁸

Yet the turbulent American domestic scene of the 1950s would not allow the president to simply sit back and allow social change to unfold without conflict. African Americans had grown more assertive during the late 1940s and early 1950s in their demands for full political and civil rights. They sought to challenge both the system of segregation in southern states and the substantial discrimination in much of the rest of the country. While Eisenhower enacted some reforms, his actions were relatively minimal compared to the extent of both institutional and underlying racism in the United States. By 1955 Eisenhower would enforce desegregation in the public places of Washington, D.C. and would complete Truman's desegregation of the armed forces, but he only acted in spheres where the federal government held unquestioned authority. Outside of these realms, Eisenhower stuck to the principle of federalism. He largely allowed state and local authorities to continue to determine their own stances on, and enforcement of, racial equality. Eisenhower did not necessarily fear the use of federal power, since he would readily use it in instances where the law clearly supported him, but he sought to avoid

⁷⁸ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 86-92; E. Frederic Morrow, *Black Man in the White House: A Diary of the Eisenhower Years by the Administrative Officer for Special Projects, The White House, 1955-1961* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1963), 29-30; Burk, *Black Civil Rights*, 23-4. See 68-69 in Burk for Eisenhower's initial black appointees.

what he saw as stirring up both whites and blacks. In general, he wanted a calm domestic scene, although such apparent serenity merely reinforced the status quo pattern of racial discrimination.

Eisenhower also disliked the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared all forms of racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional. He believed the ruling would cause unrest. He also displayed his latent racism at times, such as when he told Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren southerners were “not bad people. All they are concerned about is to see that their sweet little girls are not required to sit in school alongside some big overgrown Negroes.” Yet when Arkansas governor Orval Faubus challenged federal power in September 1957 by using the state’s national guard to block black students from entering Little Rock’s Central High School, Eisenhower ordered the 101st Airborne Division to enforce the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Brown*. Eisenhower’s presidency would also witness the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott, which began when Rosa Parks famously refused to give her seat to a white man, and the beginning of the sit-in movement in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960 where both white and black students demanded to be served at segregated lunch counters. Despite trying, Eisenhower could not avoid issues of race during his presidency and he often failed to provide leadership towards full racial equality.⁷⁹

The Eisenhower administration also operated solidly within a Cold War framework, especially during its early years. In June 1953 a committee under C.D.

⁷⁹ Earl Warren, *The Memoirs of Earl Warren* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 291, quoted in Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 94; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 102-3.

Jackson, which Eisenhower had created in order to develop a program for overseas propaganda, began its report by asserting, “The policies of the United States are based on the assumption that the purpose of the Soviet rulers is world domination.” Truman’s strategy of containment continued under Eisenhower. Even foreign leaders who were believed to be cooperating with communists became targets of CIA overthrows, such as Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 and Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala in 1954. As a fiscal conservative, Eisenhower generally reduced the size of American ground forces, but increased the nation’s nuclear arsenal in a policy known as the “New Look.” The latter centered America’s potential military responses to overseas crises on the threat of launching an overwhelming nuclear strike against the Soviet Union. To most American policymakers who viewed the world through a Manichaeian lens during the 1950s, the Soviets seemed to provide evidence of global aspirations. Soviet leaders still hinted at a full takeover of the divided city of Berlin and suggested they might get involved directly in crises which erupted in the Middle East over the Suez Canal in 1956 and the fall of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958. African Americans tried either to combat directly, as did leftists such as Richard Wright and W.E.B. Du Bois, or at least soften, as did more pro-American leaders such as Horace Mann Bond or NAACP officials, such views of a bifurcated globe.⁸⁰

Regarding Africa, most U.S. officials believed white European control would prevent the continent from turning to communism. They thus feared the uncertainty of what might happen after non-whites achieved independence. In April 1951 President

⁸⁰ Report to the President by the President’s Committee on International Information Activities, June 30, 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, vol. 2, part 2: *National Security Affairs*, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/dl/FRUS>, 1797.

Truman had created the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), in the words of one of the best historians of American propaganda during the 1950s, to “produce unified planning for American psychological operations.” Under Eisenhower, the importance of global psychological warfare escalated. In 1953 the Jackson Committee, noted above, recommended a new organization known as the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) which would systematize the conduct of information programs. The OCB became a central hub for propaganda efforts for the rest of the decade. Before the OCB eclipsed the PSB in September 1953, however, the latter produced a report in April which provided a window into administration views on Africa. The PSB found “the danger of Communist activity in Africa is more potential than actual” and argued Americans themselves were to blame for any African antagonism towards the West because “such anti-American sentiment as is found among Africans is largely the product of African visitors’ experience with racial discrimination in the United States.” Much of the information on the present state of communist activity in Africa had apparently come from a CIA study of Africa conducted in February 1953. Thus as early as the first year of Eisenhower’s presidency numerous U.S. officials centrally responsible for conducting U.S. foreign policy had noted the way race complicated American relations with Africa.⁸¹

Yet the initial goals of the Eisenhower administration in Africa remained almost identical to those of the Truman presidency. For instance, in its April 1953 report the PSB listed U.S. objectives on the continent as “access to basic materials...[and] operating

⁸¹ Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 43; Psychological Strategy Board, “An Exploratory Study to Identify the Problems Incident to Africa South of the Sahara, to Define the Interest of the United States Therein and to Establish a Requirement for a Psychological Strategy Plan Therefor,” April 13, 1953, p. 1-3, White House Office (hereafter WHO), NSC Staff Papers, PSB Central Files, Box 14, Folder “PSB 091.4,” DDEL.

rights necessary in defense of the Free World.” The PSB also expressed a general wish for the “progressive development of the dependent peoples toward the goal of self-government.” Yet U.S. officials wanted economic ties to remain strong between Europeans and Africans, a relationship African nationalists such as Nkrumah believed dangerous to their own future political freedom. With racist undertones the PSB further suggested the verdict was still out on the ability of Ghana to govern itself since “some areas are further progressed politically than others and show an inclination for political independence, but no capacity.”⁸² The PSB then recommended a separate organization be formed to help produce policy papers on Africa, but the group never materialized. The reason for the failure to establish such a group became apparent when one official reviewed the PSB report and stated, “Primary consideration should be given to the consideration of methods which will...spare the sensitivities of those [European] allies and gradually encourage them to amend their conduct whenever required for the fulfillment of long-term American objectives.” By privileging “the sensitivities of those allies” American policy towards Africa would not favor nationalists such as Nkrumah.⁸³

The racial stereotyping of black Africans by U.S. officials also bolstered the European-centered approach of America’s Africa policy. A “Psychological Annex” added a month later to the above PSB report implied African political immaturity when it claimed, “It is not certain that the African Negro knows what nationalism is or, for that matter, whether as such it is good for him or not; nevertheless, having heard of its

⁸² Psychological Strategy Board, “An Exploratory Study to Identify the Problems Incident to Africa South of the Sahara, to Define the Interest of the United States Therein and to Establish a Requirement for a Psychological Strategy Plan Therefor,” April 13, 1953, p. 6-8, 14, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, PSB Central Files, Box 14, Folder “PSB 091.4,” DDEL.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 8; Memorandum, Charles Taquey to Dr. Craig, April 20, 1953, p. 2, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, PSB Central Files, Box 14, “Folder PSB 091.4,” DDEL.

medicinal powers to remedy all ills, he is now determined that this is the answer, and he must have it.” U.S. officials also doubted the “capability” of Africans for immediate self-government and warned premature independence would bring “chaotic failure most susceptible to Communist influence.” While recognizing that colonialism only turned Africans away from the West, the authors of the supplement arrogantly suggested, “In any event, it may become necessary for the U.S. to lead the free world in assisting this new-old continent in a determination as to what is the most acceptable doctrine and culture for the peoples of it.” Africans themselves were apparently to have little say in the granting of independence, the timetable towards that goal, or the forms their societies were to take afterward. During the 1950s African Americans would combat and attempt to change such predominant views suggesting white American policymakers knew best.⁸⁴

African Americans and Official Attitudes

Bond continued to be eager to undertake such a task based on his deepening belief Nkrumah and Ghana held one of the keys to racial equality in the United States. While privately confiding to a friend, “I am not ignorant of all of the faults of African nationalists, and nationalism, nor indeed of many merits of ‘colonialism’,” Bond also believed the foundations he was requesting funds from in order to create a new institute to connect Africans with African Americans “regard me as a raving maniac committed, without discrimination, to the cause of African nationalism.” Bond was quite aware his public image as an ardent proponent of nationalism masked his more balanced private

⁸⁴ “Psychological Annex,” May 29, 1953, p. 1-3, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, PSB Central Files, Box 14, Folder “PSB 091.4,” DDEL.

thoughts, but he thought the importance of Ghana as a symbol of black achievement to be so great that he continued to cultivate such pro-African stances in public. Bond's public advocacy of Ghana and Nkrumah as modern and civilized revealed one of the ways African Americans appropriated images of decolonizing Africans in their own struggle for racial equality and freedom.⁸⁵

Indeed, in a mid-February 1953 address at the George School prep academy in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Bond roundly challenged views of African backwardness and unabashedly portrayed Nkrumah as a hero. He actually held up the front page of the *Time* magazine edition about which he had been so chagrined and told the students, "This man is a very important fact in World History; a brand new fact, and one that will grow more important to you as you grow older...he is one of the most important people in the world. He is important because he represents nearly two hundred million black people in Africa who are on the high road to freedom and independence in this world." Later in his speech Bond tackled the issue of African primitiveness. He told a story of how he went to see a Tarzan movie while in Africa and asked the manager of the theater, "'Don't the Africans resent being known as a bunch of savages, with all of this mumbo-jumbo which is not the truth about them?' The movie manager answered, 'Oh, no; you see, these movies are so different from the way their life really is, that they just don't make the connection.' 'Say', he added; 'you don't have any Indians or cowboys in New York, do you?'" Bond's tale was, of course, a clever way to expose American misunderstandings of Africa. Bond admitted that some Africans did indeed play drums and that jungles

⁸⁵ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Robert Williams, September 29, 1953, Series III, Box 25, Folder "49A," Bond Papers.

obviously existed, but “there are also railroads and airplanes and highways and skyscrapers.” Once again, Bond was trying to shape the public narrative about Africans by revealing false assumptions and incomplete views concerning the reality of life in Africa. In addition, by listing elements of modern transportation and business networks, Bond was trying to portray an image of Africans as modern in order to demonstrate black capability.⁸⁶

Part of the evidence Bond could use to highlight black African modernity was Nkrumah’s search throughout the 1950s for outside funding to construct a massive dam on the Volta River which would generate electricity, create jobs, and bolster industry in Ghana. Commonly known as the Volta River Project (VRP), the financing of this goal would finally come to fruition during the early 1960s with the World Bank, the Export-Import Bank, and Eisenhower’s relatively new program to aid underdeveloped countries, the Development Loan Fund, providing around twenty percent of the \$168 million for the dam. Ghana contributed half the total itself and the rest of the outside funding came from a consortium of American companies known as the Volta Aluminum Company (VALCO), formed in November 1959 by corporations already negotiating with Ghana regarding the dam. The governments of Great Britain and the United States also acted as official guarantors of the agreements. The numerous and complicated details of Nkrumah’s search for funding, and the attendant negotiations, have been covered elsewhere. Here it is sufficient to say that in mid-1953 a group of Ghanaian officials,

⁸⁶ Speech, Horace Mann Bond at George School, Bucks County, Pa., February 15, 1953, p. 1, 7, Series VI, Box 171, Folder “8,” Bond Papers.

including Nkrumah's Minister of Commerce and Industry Komla Gbedemah, traveled to Canada to seek funding for the VRP.⁸⁷

As with Nkrumah's 1951 visit, in 1953 Bond also tried to get the State Department to meet with Ghanaian leaders. Bond notified OAA Director John Utter of the visit, suggested the Department bring the Ghanaians to the United States, and claimed, "A well conducted tour...would be of incalculable value in the furtherance of good relations between the United States and all of Africa." Bond explained such beneficial interactions were needed because in Ghana, "were it not for the resentment of the African toward America for alleged mistreatment of their Americo-African brethren, no other power in the world could compete in the African field either for the affections" of Africans. Bond certainly believed segregation and racism were severe issues. Yet his use of the word "alleged" and his further recommendations in the letter that part of the tour for Ghanaian officials should include "situations evidencing the remarkable progress in race relations attained in the United States during the last few years," show he was trying to couch his request in language to which U.S. officials would respond. Bond ended with the emphatic statement, "I must convey to you my impression that 'this is a world to win'...I regard the coming visit to North America of this Gold Coast contingent as one such opportunity." A major African American leader was pressuring the State Department to pay attention to, and indeed almost cater to, Ghanaian officials as symbols of a decolonizing Third World. The response from the State Department was unfortunately ambivalent. Utter thought the proximity of Ghanaians was "an excellent

⁸⁷ Nwaubani, *Decolonization in West Africa*, 198-203. Gbedemah would later become the Minister of Finance.

opportunity” and said he believed a tour of the United States “would be advantageous in helping to clear up certain misconceptions which some members of the group may have about the United States and also in further cementing relations between the Gold Coast and this country.” Yet funds were not available to sponsor the trip. Utter suggested if Bond could arrange the trip, the Department could set up “an appropriate official function in Washington,” but only if Bond got the Ghanaians there himself.⁸⁸

Even if Bond had been successful, the racism and ignorance of some U.S. officials would have complicated the visit. When the arrival of the Ghanaian officials neared in early September, the Acting Assistant Director for Plans on Eisenhower’s PSB, Colonel Bryon Enyart of the United States Air Force, contacted Dr. Edward Lilly, who was working on the PSB and would soon become the Deputy Executive Director of the new OCB. Enyart thought bringing the African officials to the United States was a good idea, but he also recognized the potentially negative racial aspects of such a visit. He admitted the Ghanaians would see “certain racial problems and attitudes in the U.S. that will be hard to swallow, particularly for an up-and-coming nationalist of the Gold Coast.” He thus recommended they also be given evidence “showing improvement of the circumstances.” Enyart further suggested, “One or more prominent Negro educators...could be used in this project to advantage.” Yet his racism shone through when he stated, “Of course, white members should handle the delegation, and under no circumstances should it be made an all-Negro affair.” Enyart further displayed his ignorance by noting the visit would be beneficial for the American image in “Central

⁸⁸ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to John Utley [Bond misspelled Utter’s name], April 21, 1953, p. 1-2, Series III, Box 18, Folder “4a,” Bond Papers; Letter, John Utter to Horace Mann Bond, April 29, 1951, 611.45K/4-2153, Reel 29, CFBA 1950-54.

Africa.” Finally, Enyart revealed how African American contacts with government officials often fell through the cracks of government bureaucracy and eventually went unheeded. He noted, “The African desk of the State Department had not been contacted.” Perhaps it should have been. Then coordinated and more sincere efforts to get the Ghanaian delegation to visit the United States may have occurred, with all the attendant benefits mentioned by the various individuals involved thus coming to fruition. In the end no official visit by Ghanaian statesmen to the United States took place in 1953. Yet the episode revealed both how African Americans were prodding the State Department to accord more importance to Ghana and how some officials clearly recognized the racial issues involved in relations between the two nations as early as the first half of 1953. The challenges African Americans faced in their efforts to shift the attention of U.S. officials were also apparent.⁸⁹

Yet African Americans would not abandon their efforts to influence the views and actions of U.S. officials toward Ghana. Leaders of The National Association of the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) also believed in the importance of Ghana from an early date. For instance, in July 1951 the Executive Director of the NAACP in New York, Julie Medlock, wrote to Dr. Channing Tobias, a prominent African American leader, on the importance of publicizing the struggles for freedom in Africa. She claimed that in Africa “there is a great new opportunity to build favorable public opinion and a genuine understanding of the adventure in democracy [emphasis in original] now

⁸⁹ Memorandum, Byron Enyart to Edward Lilly, “African Problems,” September 1, 1953, Papers of Edward P. Lilly, 1928-1992 (hereafter Lilly Papers), Box 58, Folder “Psychological Strategy Board – Planning 1953 (3),” DDEL. Info on Lilly’s title from finding aid to Lilly’s papers at Dwight D. Eisenhower Library website, http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/Finding_Aids/PDFs/Lilly_Edward_Papers.pdf, accessed March 25, 2011.

beginning against the background of Africa's long history of past and current oppression. The Gold Coast is an example. Indirectly the position and prestige of minority groups can be strengthened – and results can be won in terms of racial amity.” Medlock's language clearly revealed her belief that freedom in Ghana would rebound positively for African Americans in the United States. In addition, Walter White, the head of the NAACP, agreed with Bond on the problems inherent in an image of Africans as backwards. In an April 1953 article in the *Chicago Defender*, White wrote, “One of the most annoying habits of many persons, including some American Negroes, is believing that nearly all Africans are not too far away from primitive society...Many of them have been educated at some of the leading European and American universities and the number of those seeking education constantly grows...modern civilization is itself indebted to Africa in such respects as the discovery of iron.” Earlier in the article, White had encouraged people to read recent articles on Nkrumah in mainstream American periodicals such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and, interestingly, *Time*. Leading members of the NAACP were concerned, like Bond and other African Americans, with presenting Ghanaians and Africans as modern and civilized. Thus would the standing of black Africans, and by extension blacks in the United States, be enhanced in the eyes of all Americans.⁹⁰

Such views among NAACP officials also translated into efforts to convince U.S. officials to accord more importance to Nkrumah. In April 1953 the NAACP sought to bring Nkrumah to the United States to speak at their annual convention. The director of

⁹⁰ Letter, Julie Medlock to Channing Tobias, July 24, 1951, Reel 2, in John H. Bracey, Jr. and August Meier, eds., *Papers of the NAACP: Race Relations in the International Arena, 1940-1955* [microform], Part 14 (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1993) (hereafter NAACP 14); Walter White, “Africa And Its People Are Far From Being As Primitive As Some Think,” *Chicago Defender*, April 4, 1953, p. 11.

the Washington branch of the NAACP, Clarence Mitchell, called Nicholas Feld, the OAA Officer in Charge of West, Central, and East African Affairs, to discuss Nkrumah's potential visit. Pan American Airways had agreed to fly Nkrumah to the United States at no cost, but only if provided "a declaration from the State Department declaring that the trip is in 'the national interest of the United States.'" Feld replied the Department did not oppose the trip, but said he was unsure "why it is necessary to state that an unofficial trip of this nature is in the national interest." Mitchell tried to placate Feld with words that fit into a Cold War anti-communist framework when he "emphasized the great importance his organization attaches to cementing ties between the United States and the emerging African political leaders so as to minimize the chances of African nationalist movements being attracted to Communism." Feld remained adamant that the trip was fine, but no statement on the importance of the trip would be forthcoming. Yet Mitchell persisted and Feld "got the definite impression at the close of the conversation that the NAACP would write to the Department, probably to Assistant Secretary [of State for NEA Henry] Byroade." According to historian James Meriwether, in subsequent conversations OAA Director John Utter told Byroade there was "increasing pressure...from various quarters, including certain American Negroes in positions of some influence, to strengthen our ties with the Gold Coast." The State Department decided to provide the requested statement because officials recognized the request by African American leaders as a "test of the Department's attitude toward such African colonial areas as are approaching full self-government." Eventually, Nkrumah decided against the trip. Yet the NAACP's insistence not only on a statement of support from the State Department, but also on language declaring the potential visit as in the "national interest" of the United States, clearly

revealed the extreme importance Nkrumah held for African Americans. Furthermore, while U.S. officials believed the trip itself was a good idea, their vacillation over whether or not to include the language of “national interest” demonstrated how African Americans influenced aspects of American foreign policy. Black leaders had nudged some policymakers to take concrete, if still uncomfortable for them, stances on the worth of an emerging African leader.⁹¹

Roadblocks

Despite these successful attempts to obtain a sympathetic ear in federal government circles, African Americans were unable to change the fundamental outlook of American foreign policy concerning Africa during the first months of 1953. Before British, French, and American officials held a high-level conference at Bermuda later that year, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters sent a letter to Eisenhower emphasizing the importance of Africa and warning of the dangers of colonialism and racism. Randolph feared a “color war” in Africa and urged Eisenhower to pressure both European governments to end their repression of African nationalist movements and South Africa to end its system of institutional racial segregation. Focusing mainly on Kenya, South Africa, and the British-held territories constituting the Central African Federation at the time, Randolph wrote passionately that he hoped “some authentic voice of power and goodwill is raised in the interest of humanity, democracy

⁹¹ Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, “NAACP Invitation to Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast to Address NAACP Annual Convention in June 1953,” April 16, 1953, 745K.13-4-1653, Reel 6, CFBA 1950-54; Memorandum, John Utter to Henry Byroade, April 17, 1953, RG 59, Lot File 58D627, General Records of the Office of Southern African Affairs, 1950-56, Correspondence – Assistant Secretary and Deputy Assistant Secretary, NACP, quoted in Meriwether, *Proudly*, 154, 284n8.

and peace, which can give hope to the Africans for protection of their life, land, labor and liberty from the avarice, arrogance and attacks of armed bands of white settlers backed by the British government, police and military forces.” As so often happened with African American leaders, he also couched his pleas in a Cold War framework by arguing Africans “must be made to see and feel, by deed, that Russian Communists are not the only champions of revolutions for nationalism and revolt against landlordism, poverty, disease, illiteracy and tyranny, but that the leaders of the Western democracies and, especially, the United States...stand definitely against colonialism and all its evil works.” Despite Randolph’s eloquent and passionate appeal, officials in the State Department were not particularly impressed. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for NEA John Jernegan replied over a month later that since the Bermuda Conference had been postponed until December, Randolph’s letter had been sent to the State Department instead of Eisenhower. Jernegan claimed to welcome Randolph’s input, but also told him that “recent talks” among British, French, and American officials “did not deal with problems raised in your letter.” One imagines they probably did not want to discuss the troubling issues Randolph had addressed.⁹²

On July 9 Randolph apparently sent a second letter requesting that Eisenhower meet with a group of African American leaders, including himself and New York Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, at some point before the postponed Bermuda Conference would take place. Addressing both letters, OAA Director John Utter suggested a reply to Randolph in early September which was to claim, somewhat

⁹² Letter, A. Philip Randolph to Dwight D. Eisenhower, June 17, 1953, *FRUS, 1952-4:11, Part 1*, p. 1, p. 43, 46, and 43n1 for Jernegan’s reply.

disingenuously, “The attitude of the United States towards African issues is under continuing review by the Department of State.” The letter was also to state, “The President appreciates Mr. Randolph’s interest with regard to African affairs” and would suggest further letters would be welcome. Such language sounded nice, but was undermined by Utter’s candid thoughts to the protocol officer to whom he was writing his suggested reply. While describing black leaders such as Randolph and Powell as “influential citizens whom it is desirable not to offend,” Utter further commented, “It is the view of AF that the ideas of Mr. Randolph and his associates insofar as they can be understood from this...do not accord in a number of important respects with the Department’s understanding of the complex of factors underlying these issues.” Such “factors” most likely included the wishes of Europeans and the fears U.S. officials held of premature independence for ill-prepared non-whites. The statement was a metaphor for much of the relationship between African Americans and American policymakers in that the latter would try not to upset the former, but would rarely take their advice, at least during the early 1950s. While Utter accounted for black public opinion to a certain degree when he noted his wish not to offend an “influential citizen” such as Randolph, an attempt to influence American foreign policy discussions at the highest level had failed. When the Bermuda Conference finally occurred in early December 1953, topics revolving around Europe, Asia, and the Soviet Union dominated the discussion.⁹³

⁹³ Memorandum, John Utter to Simmons, September 4, 1953, Ibid., p. 51-52. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54*, Vol. 5, Part 2: *Western European Security* the extensive discussions and meetings of the Bermuda Conference covered between p. 1737-1837 contain barely any reference to Africa. <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/FRUS/Search.html>.

African American efforts to enhance the presence of blacks in American foreign policy also continued throughout 1953. In February a man named Howard Grubbs wrote to New York Governor Thomas Dewey, whom Grubbs might have believed would become a member of the new administration, and recommended “the appointment of a colored man as ambassador to Africa.” Grubbs named Reverend James Robinson and Ralph Bunche as possible candidates. Dewey’s office briefly replied that it was only responding to requests for recommendations from the federal government. Three months later a man named Winthrop Steele wrote to Sherman Adams, whom Eisenhower had appointed to a cabinet level position as Assistant to the President, suggesting that attention to Africa would be “a very valuable bulwark against the Soviet ‘termites,’” and “would also strengthen the confidence of the negroes in this [emphasis in handwritten original] country.” Steele thus made the racial connections between blacks in the United States and those in Africa explicit. Steele also told Adams that Eisenhower should read the recent *Life* magazine and *Saturday Evening Post* articles on Africa, the latter of which included a treatment of Nkrumah and Ghana. Finally, Steele recommended Ralph Bunche for “ambassador-at-large to Africa,” believing such an appointment would bring “goodwill” to the United States abroad. Steele closed with the following racially positive image, “The fact that his [Bunche’s] ancestors came from Africa as slaves and he returns as an ambassador would be very dramatic!” Unfortunately, Adams responded with language similar to that from Dewey’s office, stating his policy was to avoid writing “personal letters of recommendation or endorsement.” Despite defeat, the letters revealed

further attempts by African Americans to place prominent blacks in highly visible positions in the administration's foreign policy towards Africa.⁹⁴

African American leaders were also involved in the effort to include more blacks in visible State Department positions in 1953. In August Horace Mann Bond wrote to the director for minority affairs on the Republican National Committee to recommend a role for himself "in a consultative capacity to the State Department." Bond noted his friendships with Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe, who would become the first leader of Nigeria in 1960, stating, "I believe this acquaintanceship can be of great value to American Foreign Policy [sic]." Remarking, "Africans generally respect Lincoln University," he argued his position as president of that institution further enhanced his standing in the eyes of Africans. He further highlighted the significance of transnational racial identifications between African Americans and Africans for American foreign policy when he stated, "The point I would like to impress on all concerned is the vital importance of Africa to the future of America and to get across the idea that the new administration can achieve wonders if it properly utilizes American Negroes in whom Africans have confidence." Although no reply was forthcoming, the attempt to open administration eyes to the value of including American blacks in the State Department

⁹⁴ Letter, Howard Grubbs to Thomas Dewey, February 9, 1953 and Letter, Guy Graves to Howard Grubbs, February 13, 1953, both in Records of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President (hereafter RDEP), Central Files, General File, Box 194, Folder "9:B Africa Endorsements James Robinson," DDEL; Letter, Winthrop Steele to Sherman Adams, April 30, 1953, and Letter, Sherman Adams to Winthrop Steele, May 7, 1953, both in RDEP, Central Files, General File, Box 194, Folder "9:B Africa Endorsements, Ralph Bunche," DDEL; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President*, Vol. II (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 22; Wolfgang Langewiesche, "He Wants to Rule West Africa," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 7, 1953, p. 30, Series III, Box 68, Folder "293B," Bond Papers.

was yet another way African Americans tried to influence U.S. foreign policy concerning Ghana and Africa.⁹⁵

Unfortunately, some U.S. officials continued to believe African Americans were unprepared for the nation's foreign service. For instance, in August 1953 Edward Lilly of Eisenhower's PSB discussed with a friend a "suggestion" concerning "the development of a special group of Negro diplomats." Lilly noted some African Americans had been sent as representatives to Liberia, but apparently "they had to be recalled because of their arrogant treatment of Liberians." In any case, Lilly concluded, "If State is to have Negro diplomats, they will have to start now to get capable, reliable men who will be trained in the diplomatic corps for five or more years before they are available for use in Africa." Apparently Bunche, Bond, or other prominent African Americans with existing ties to leaders and places in Africa would not suffice for Lilly. In the end, American officials in 1953 usually evinced either indifference or downright condescension towards the possibility of African Americans as diplomats, blithely dismissing the attendant potential benefits for American foreign policy. Such an outlook was one more attitude African Americans would have to contend with, and would continue to seek to change, throughout the 1950s.⁹⁶

Pan-Africanism and African Americans

⁹⁵ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Val Washington, August 3, 1953, Series III, Box 18, Folder "4C," Bond Papers; Burk, *Black Civil Rights*, 69. Val Washington was the director.

⁹⁶ Edward Lilly, "Memorandum of Conversation of August 28, 'Psychological Problems in Africa,'" August 31, 1953, Lilly Papers, Box 58, Folder "Psychological Strategy Board – Planning 1953 (3)," DDEL.

Despite such letdowns, an event in late 1953 in Ghana further bolstered ties between African Americans and Nkrumah. Throughout the year, Nkrumah had been planning a Conference of West African Nationalists as a way to solidify anti-colonial sentiment in the region. Individuals from Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Togo came, including Nnamdi Azikiwe and Sylvanus Olympio who would lead the latter two nations to independence respectively. American officials in Accra dismissed the importance of the meeting, largely due to their conversations with British officials who told them no communist threat was imminent and who worried any British obstruction of the conference might encourage Nkrumah to attach “increased significance in his mind through the possibilities, for instance, of its [the conference’s] nuisance value.” British officials discounted both Nkrumah’s enthusiasm for the conference and the ability of the CPP to solidify any Pan-African sentiment when they told William Cole, the American consul in Accra, that “their [the CPP] viewpoint is too parochial to sustain any genuine enthusiasm for wider concepts like West Africa or Pan-Africa.” Reginald Saloway, the British Minister of Defense and External Affairs in Ghana, told Cole he believed, “Nkrumah does not take the proposed conference very seriously, but evidently considers it a useful way to build up his stature as a great leader in the eyes of African nationalists.” When the conference occurred in early December 1953, Saloway similarly remarked, “Nkrumah is not enthusiastic about the affair, but has to go through with it since there had been so much talk about a gathering and since his prestige as a nationalist leader depends to some extent upon his posing as the guiding spirit in the concept of West African federation.” In fact, Nkrumah had apparently become upset with Azikiwe, an African nationalist of almost equal standing with Nkrumah, when the former praised J.B.

Danquah as a great Ghanaian nationalist. The latter was one of Nkrumah's political adversaries in Ghana throughout the 1950s.⁹⁷

Despite the relaxed attitude of the British, for Nkrumah the conference was a first step in advancing his ideology of Pan-Africanism. The delegates at the conference proposed the creation of a West African Congress made up of the existing political parties in the region and announced the “‘objective of establishing a federal state,’” according to a consulate dispatch shortly after the conference. Perhaps Western officials had wanted to minimize the conference precisely because it signified a starting point for the development of a potential supranational organization. Of course, continuing European colonialism, the diverse personalities of African nationalist leaders, and geographic, economic, and political problems would all serve to limit the potential for true Pan-African cooperation. Yet contrary to statements by British officials, Nkrumah's enthusiasm for aspects of his own ideology is obviously not hard to imagine. Even if he felt pressure from his followers and others in the region to hold the conference, such sentiments thus revealed a growing desire for transnational organizing.⁹⁸

The conference made news outside Africa as well. The black Kansas City newspaper the *Kansas Whip* declared, “Nkrumah is rapidly rising to the stature of Africa's greatest Negro leader.” In a front page article the *Chicago Defender* announced Nkrumah was “bringing to life a spirit of West African nationalism that will be difficult

⁹⁷ Telegram, William Cole to State Department, “Conference of West African Nationalists,” May 22, 1953, 745G.00/5-2253, Reel 1, CFBA 1950-54; Telegram, William Cole to State Department, “Conference of West African Nationalists,” November 27, 1953, 745G.00/11-2753, Reel 1, CFBA 1950-54; Telegram, William Cole to State Department, “Conference of West African Nationalists,” December 9, 1953, 745G.00/12-953, Reel 1, CFBA 1950-54.

⁹⁸ Telegram, William Cole to State Department, December 8, 1953, 745G.00/12-853, Reel 1, CFBA 1950-54.

to stop once it starts spreading.” Utilizing Cold War terms, the *Defender* also noted Nkrumah’s desire to “crack the Iron Curtain around the Belgian Congo” in order to include it in a larger “Federation of West Africa.” The paper concluded with both a positive image that “all West Africa is alive to the new nationalism” and a warning that “if the colonial powers fail to help West Africans in their move to self-government, there may develop as much trouble as there is in Kenya.” The latter reference was to the British war against the Mau Mau insurgency at the time. The *Pittsburgh Courier* placed the conference in the larger context of racial problems in Africa by using the headline, “Lines Hardening in Africa.” The *Courier* forcefully stated that Nkrumah and Azikiwe “mean business” and that “the lines already drawn are hardening, each side is as determined as the other and the leaders are just as smart.” The paper was referring to deepening tensions between apartheid South Africa and other white settler groups on the one hand and black African nationalists on the other. In an even more direct connection between Ghana and African Americans, Bond attended the conference as a delegate from the newly created Institute of African-American Relations. According to what a French official in Dakar, Senegal told the U.S. consul there, Bond “appeared to occupy a position of respect among the delegates, [and] was rather active at the Conference, even to the point of indulging in frequent oratory more or less extolling nationalism.” For African Americans, enthusiasm for Ghana, African nationalism, and Pan-African solidarity coexisted with concern over whether or not colonial powers and white minority groups would peacefully cede power in Africa.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ “Negro Leader Plans to Unite W. Africa,” *Kansas Whip*, December 23, 1953, p. 8; “Nkrumah Out to United W. Africa,” *Chicago Defender*, December 26, 1953, p. 1; “Lines Hardening in Africa,” *Pittsburgh*

Conclusion

At the beginning of 1953 Bond wrote to his friend R. K. Gardiner, the Director of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University College in Ibadan, Nigeria, that “both [African American sociologist St. Clair] Drake and I are astonished to note the tremendous change in the climate of opinion among American Negroes regarding a feeling of sympathetic affiliation with their African brethren.” As the year progressed, organizations tying African Americans to Africa also appeared. Prominent African American leaders such as Rayford Logan and minister and activist Homer Jack helped create the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) out of the organization previously known as Americans for South African Resistance. The latter had formed in 1952 to support the campaign by black South Africans against the pass laws of apartheid. According to the ACOA’s initial prospectus, Africa was no longer “‘Tomorrow’s Continent’...it is time to stop calling her that, to stop thinking of her as moving toward the stream of history and not yet in it.” Indeed, the organizers wrote, “Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast is a prime minister, not only a prophet,” and was thus a symbol of modernity for all of Africa. Some of the main goals of the ACOA were to produce information on Africa for public consumption, supply news articles on Africa for mainstream publications, promote speakers on Africa, help African visitors and students get to the United States, provide “aid and development” to Africans, and even support African petitions at the United Nations. Finally, Bond himself helped form the Institute of

Courier, December 26, 1953, p. 8; Telegram, C. Vaughn Ferguson to State Department, December 18, 1953, *FRUS 1952-54:11, Part 1*, p. 70.

African-American Relations to facilitate educational exchange between Africans and the United States.¹⁰⁰

Other African Americans sought to work directly with the State Department in order to enhance ties between the United States and Africa. In March 1953 the managing editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, William Nunn, requested Rayford Logan's help with a project which involved contacting African nationalist leaders for their views on issues relating to the Cold War, on issues of U. S.-African relations, and on "a message to the Negro people of America as to how they can best help solidify their forces for the greatest good." Nunn noted the recent heavy coverage of Africa in the mainstream American press, including articles in *Life*, the *New York Times*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* on Nkrumah. He then stated emphatically, "To say that Negroes are not interested in Africa is a myth." He further explained he "wanted the questions posed in such a way that they would be a guide to our State department [sic]; that they would influence the thinking in the department for changing their emphasis to that part of the world to which we refer and that Negroes in America would get some idea of what Negroes in other countries are doing to free themselves from oppression and exploitation." Nunn thus spelled out two primary goals of African American leaders concerning Ghana and Africa during the 1950s. First, African Americans sought to get U.S. officials to recognize more fully the importance of Africa and to act in ways that demonstrated such understanding. Second, African Americans themselves needed to view the nationalist movements in

¹⁰⁰ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to R.K. Gardiner, January 27, 1953, Series III, Box 18, Folder "3E," Bond Papers; Meriwether, *Proudly*, 111-112; Letter, Homer Jack to Horace Mann Bond, "The American Committee on Africa," July 17, 1953, Series III, Box 18, Folder "4B," Bond Papers; "About-History," The Africa-America History Institute 2007, <http://www.aaonline.org/About/History.aspx>, accessed February 21, 2011.

Africa in a positive light and see them as an example, maybe even a road map, for how to pursue racial equality in the United States.¹⁰¹

Likely to Nunn's delight, Logan had already been working with the State Department. Logan congratulated Nunn on how the proposed project demonstrated that "the COURIER [in original] would be continuing to fulfill its recognized role and responsibility of the most far-sighted paper with respect to the implications of developments in the colored world." Logan himself would shortly take a second trip throughout West Africa on the State Department's dime. In the spring of 1952 Logan had traveled to North Africa and since he was, he told Nunn, "considered one of the few American academicians with some knowledge of the problems of African colonialism," he was thus "frequently invited by State Department middle-echelon officials, English colonial attaches, and French first secretaries" for return visits. Logan's second trip went well and in October 1953 Harold Howland of the Specialists Division in the State Department's International Educational Exchange Service wrote to Howard University President Mordecai Johnson describing the beneficial results of Logan's visit. Howland claimed the Department "consider[ed] his trip a success in every way" and said Logan both "did much to promote a better understanding of our country" and "gained through his personal attributes respect and prestige for us." Logan also played a role in American foreign policy in Africa by providing information to U.S. officials, with Howland noting, "The knowledge he gained of these areas of Africa and their peoples has been substantial; it has already been of no little assistance to the Department." A leading African American

¹⁰¹ Letter, William G. Nunn to Rayford Logan, March 11, 1953, Box 166-19, Folder "4: Pittsburgh Courier," Logan Papers.

figure had worked directly with the State Department regarding Africa. Such coordination revealed that even though African Americans did not often appear to influence the highest levels of American government, they certainly interacted with mid-level officials on a fairly regular basis. As seen so far regarding Ghana and Africa, contacts between African Americans and officials such as Bourgerie, McGhee, Berry, Utter, Feld, and Byroade were occurring both before and during the very first months of the Eisenhower administration. While these officials often sought to use these interactions for their own purposes of obtaining information or enhancing the American image abroad, African Americans simultaneously tried to push these policymakers into a greater recognition of the importance of Africa and Ghana.¹⁰²

Throughout the first year of the Eisenhower administration, therefore, African Americans explored numerous avenues in order to obtain a more prominent place for Africa, and often specifically Ghana, within the focus of both American foreign policymakers and the American public. The visit of Ghanaian officials to Canada and a potential trip to the United States by Nkrumah provided opportunities for blacks in the United States to engage U.S. officials. African Americans also continued to try to shape the public narrative surrounding Ghana in the United States by portraying Nkrumah and his nation as modern and civilized and as symbols of black capability. Yet not all

¹⁰² Letter, Rayford Logan to William Nunn, March 23, 1953, Box 166-19, Folder "4: Pittsburgh Courier," Logan Papers; Rayford Logan, "Africa", Box 166-30, Folder "3," Logan Papers; Kenneth Robert Janken, *Rayford W. Logan and the Dilemma of the African-American Intellectual* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 198. The fact that Logan's trip was partially sponsored by the State Department also appeared briefly in Stanley Roberts, "Washington Pipeline," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 11, 1953, p. 17. The respective titles of these officials at the time I discuss them were Director of the Office of African Affairs (E.M. Bourgerie), Assistant Secretary of State for NEA (George McGhee), acting Assistant Secretary of State (Burton Berry), Director of the Office of African Affairs (John Utter), Officer in Charge of West, Central, and East African Affairs (Nicholas Feld), and Assistant Secretary of State for NEA (Henry Byroade).

endeavors pursued by African Americans were successful. In 1953 American policy regarding Africa largely remained wedded to European colonial powers. Now that many government officials realized the importance of Ghana, however, differences would soon emerge over what exactly should be done regarding Ghana in terms of policy. Over the next few months, the African American community would likewise diverge over what type of political and economic path such an important symbol of black achievement should take.

CHAPTER 4: QUESTIONS AND SOME ANSWERS

Introduction

In 1954 George Houser, a white liberal, traveled to Ghana. He had been heavily involved in the organization Americans For South African Resistance (AFSAR), which had formed in 1952 to support the Defiance Campaign by black South Africans against apartheid pass laws. With Houser's leadership ASFAR had morphed into the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) in 1953. Attending a "big rally of the Convention People's Party," Houser was taking pictures when two men confronted him and asked, as Houser later remembered, "'What do you mean taking pictures of little children who are not too well dressed? Are you going back to Britain so show them that we're not ready for independence?'" ...I said, 'No, I'm not going back to Britain, I'm going back to America.' And they said, 'That's different. You people in America are in favor of freedom for us.'" While these Ghanaians clearly recognized the support of African Americans and some U.S. whites for African decolonization, not all Americans, especially not all U.S. officials, were comfortable with immediate freedom for Africans in 1954. That year would be one in which Ghana stimulated questions both in American policymaking circles and within the African American community concerning how the United States should engage Ghana and Africa.¹⁰³

By the end of Eisenhower's first year in office, African Americans had contacted a variety of officials to highlight the importance of Ghana. American policymakers,

¹⁰³ Lisa Brock Interview with George Houser, Rockland County, New York, July 19, 2004. On website "Interviews for No Easy Victories," Aluka.org, accessed November 3, 2011, http://www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int02_houser.php. The book the interview was conducted for is Charles Cobb, Jr., Gail Hovey, and William Minter, eds., *No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists Over a Half Century, 1950-2000* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008).

especially those in the State Department, were therefore beginning to take notice of Ghana's potential role as a leader of a decolonizing Third World. Thus between December 1953 and April 1954 the National Security Council, Eisenhower's top policymaking body, undertook a review of American policy towards Africa. The reassessment occurred especially due to both the urging of State Department officials and Ghana's rapid advance towards self-government. State officials usually held outlooks which at least balanced the interests of colonial powers with those of nationalists. In the end, however, no new policy developed due ultimately to the pro-European outlook of top NSC officials. Yet Ghana had prompted a sincere questioning of what U.S. interests in Africa truly were.

Likewise, the publication of Richard Wright's book *Black Power* stimulated conversation among African Americans over the particular path of development Ghana was to follow. While the vast majority of African American leaders desired Ghana to be a symbol of black modernity, Wright's call for a socialistic militarization of African societies exacerbated political divisions among black Americans and threatened to undermine the unity of African American transnational racial identification with Ghana. While these debates spread throughout 1954, African Americans also continued to attempt to shape the public narrative concerning Ghana. They would even experience one of their greatest successes to date when the U.S. Congress passed a resolution in the summer of 1954 officially congratulating Nkrumah's new all-African legislative assembly and authorizing a U.S. delegation to Ghana's independence ceremonies whenever they should occur. Thus throughout 1954 Ghana forced a variety of Americans

to wrestle with issues of African decolonization, African development, and the role the United States should play in Africa.

A Failed Start

By the summer of 1953 the U.S. government was taking more official notice of events in Ghana. On June 25 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for NEA John Jernegan proposed to Under Secretary of State for Administration Donald Lourie that the American consulate in Accra be upgraded to a Consulate General with an attendant increase in the level and number of officials. Jernegan mentioned an upcoming British White Paper which was expected to provide an outline and timetable over the next few years for Ghanaian independence within the structure of the Commonwealth. Jernegan clearly spelled out what many in the State Department thought about Ghana when he wrote,

“The Gold Coast is a bellwether among the African colonies and it is therefore of far-reaching importance to the U.S. that the nationalist movement be directed into constructive rather than destructive channels. The present Gold Coast Prime Minister is American-educated and entertains friendly feelings for the United States. There is every indication that he will look to the United States for guidance and assistance in getting an autonomous government firmly established. Appropriate United States representation at Accra is a very inexpensive way to assure close future relations with the Gold Coast Government and in orienting other new African states towards western democratic ideals and practices. *The future importance of this area to the U.S. cannot be overestimated* [emphasis added].”

Nicholas Feld, the Officer in Charge of West, Central, and East African Affairs,

likewise claimed the drive towards self-government in Ghana and Nigeria

“makes it important for the Office of African Affairs to pay much more attention

to these two countries in particular and to West Africa in general.” On September 1, Jernegan’s recommendation was followed and the diplomatic post in Accra became a Consulate General. A week later OAA Director John Utter noted Ghana was “exerting an important political influence on the whole of West Africa, and this will be accentuated in the next year or two if complete self-government is realized.” Both Feld and Utter believed the establishment of a full embassy in Accra was very likely once Ghana became independent. They believed such cordial diplomatic relations signifying American recognition of Ghana’s advance towards self-government would benefit the United States. Here were clear statements of the extreme importance of Ghana by the sort of mid-level State Department officials who had been in contact with African American leaders during 1953. Divided policymakers, however, would interpret that importance in different ways over the next several months.¹⁰⁴

Nkrumah’s rise to power and the apparent movement of Ghana towards eventual independence stimulated an outpouring of policy papers on sub-Saharan Africa during the second half of 1953 and the first half of 1954. Between the end of February and mid-June 1953 Robert Baum, the head of the African branch of the NEA’s Division of Research, led a group of officials on a trip throughout Africa. One of their goals was to “contact research groups and institutions concerned with Africans sociological, economic, and political problems; and...assess...the prospects for political, economic,

¹⁰⁴ “Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Jernegan) to the Under Secretary of State for Administration (Lourie),” June 25, 1953, *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 285-6; “Memorandum Prepared by the Officer in Charge of West, Central, and East African Affairs (Feld),” August 17, 1953, *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 48-9; “Memorandum by the Director, Office of African Affairs (Utter) to the Deputy Executive Director, Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Moore),” September 9, 1953, *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 52-4.

and social stability in the African areas.” Baum reported numerous limitations on the amount and quality of information American officials were able to obtain throughout the continent, which made him have to depend heavily on private organizations researching Africa. Although Baum did not indicate which organizations he conversed with, such reliance on information from private sources often constituted part of the State Department’s method of analysis concerning Africa during the 1950s and at times included the views of African American leaders. When speaking of Ghana, Baum evinced the usual official wariness of African decolonization movements when he said, “The pressure of political promises made to the electorate may force the country’s leaders to push for complete autonomy before it is in fact prepared for self-government.” Baum’s trip, along with the increasing importance of Ghana, helped produce the first high-level policy papers and discussions on sub-Saharan Africa in the Eisenhower administration.¹⁰⁵

Yet high-level U.S. officials continued to privilege European economic needs, employ an anti-communist outlook, and view Ghana through a racist lens. In late 1953 the CIA, the State Department, and the intelligence branches of the Army, Navy, and Air Force produced National Intelligence Estimate 83 (NIE-83), labeled “Conditions and Trends in Tropical Africa.” The paper largely discussed Africa in terms of available manpower, military bases, raw materials, and communist influence. The latter was often found to be relatively absent, but potentially just over the horizon. Despite warning of both the instability which might result from decolonization and an increase in the “influence and numerical strength” of communists in Africa, U.S. officials also clearly

¹⁰⁵ Robert D. Baum, “Report on NIS Trip to Africa and Europe, February 28 to June 19, 1953,” July 13, 1953, p. 1, 3, 4, RG 59, Records of Component Offices of Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 1947-1963 (hereafter RCOBIR), Box 12, Folder “Conferences on Africa, 1950-1959,” NACP.

recognized the importance, force, and probable outcome of African nationalism. NIE-83 noted the "economic, social, and political transformation[s]" occurring in Africa and stated there would eventually be an "uneven and uneasy transition from colonial to self-rule." The authors of the report even recognized African "countries increasingly will regard Western policies toward colonial problems as indicative of the Western attitude toward all underdeveloped nations." When settling on Ghana specifically, however, U.S. officials evidenced racist views of Africans' ability to govern themselves. Using condescending language, the authors claimed,

"In any case the British West African territories probably will attain self-government before their peoples acquire enough capable administrators and technicians, and funds for social and economic development....When the superficial unity created by nationalist demands disappears, African leaders probably will attempt to explain their difficulties by blaming 'foreign intervention'. This eventually will almost certainly result in efforts to eliminate the remnants of British influence...Eager to assert their independence, West Africans increasingly will attempt to develop and control their resources themselves, however incompetently."

Such a negative outlook concerning Africa and Ghana displayed the assumptions of U.S. officials concerning black Africans' inability to govern a modern nation. A primarily Cold War outlook focusing on the availability of African bases, manpower, and resources in the event of a global conflict with the Soviet Union remained in place.¹⁰⁶

Vice President Richard Nixon also helped produce discussion of U.S. policy in Africa in early 1954. On March 2 Harry Schwartz, the State Department official on the NSC's Planning Board, told other officials on the Board they were going to discuss Africa because Nixon had recently told National Security Advisor Robert Cutler, "he

¹⁰⁶ NIE-83, December 22, 1953, *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 71-72, 75, 78-79, 81-2, 87, 88.

was worried about the developments in that area.” Schwartz mentioned NIE-83 as a good starting point for analyzing problems in Africa and at the next day’s meeting of the Policy Planning Board, the members discussed “U.S. Security Interests in the continent of Africa.” The Board subsequently called for lists of such U.S. interests and recommendations for further study from each NSC member department. The resulting conflicting lists produced by the State Department and the NSC staff itself revealed the different stances toward Africa held by the two organizations. NSC officials listed only four items of importance to the United States, consisting of military bases, access to raw materials, “support for the colonial powers’ presence in the area,” and a general desire to keep Africa oriented towards the West. No mention of the aspirations of Africans themselves appeared. Meanwhile, the longer State Department list addressed the problems of European colonialism and African nationalism in addition to the usual issues of Africa’s strategic and economic importance. Other submissions from the CIA, the Foreign Operations Administration, the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff also contained a balance between material and military interests on the one hand and helping to solve racial and social conflicts within Africa on the other. These groups, however, often tied the latter concerns into the larger issues of ensuring stability and keeping communists out of Africa. These contrasting lists revealed that by early 1954 the branch of the U.S. government most in contact with Africa American leaders was the most willing to accord more importance to the problem of colonialism in Africa and to the desires of Africans themselves. While African Americans were not solely responsible

for such State Department views, they had certainly played a role in the development of such an outlook.¹⁰⁷

Yet the work of African Americans and mid-level State Department officials was far from complete as high-level officials still held Eurocentric, Cold War worldviews. On March 22 the NSC Planning Board discussed the above papers and requested “a consolidated statement of major U.S. security interests in Africa.” Not surprisingly, the resulting paper the NSC Staff submitted to the Planning Board on April 27 largely contained NSC views. The usual desire for bases, raw materials, manpower, and “political stability” were present, as were the goals of economic development and keeping out communists. The NSC Staff did recommend that the United States encourage efforts by European governments “designed to promote acceptable solutions of the problems of colonialism, nationalism and racial relationships.” Yet the suggested “reduction of the tensions and divisive differences between the U.S., the colonial powers and other nations which arise over African problems” implied American-European unity was more important than “African problems.” Even this openly pro-European, Cold War oriented paper was not discussed for several months. On September 2, the Board declared U.S. interests in Africa were not substantial enough for “treatment in a single policy

¹⁰⁷ “Memorandum by Harry H. Schwartz of the Policy Planning Staff to the Director, Policy Planning Staff (Bowie),” March 2, 1954, p. 97-98 and “Draft Policy Statement Prepared by the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs,” p. 98-101, both in *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, 97-101; “Editorial Note,” p. 101; “Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff for the National Security Council Planning Board,” p. 101-102; “Memorandum by Harry H. Schwartz of the Policy Planning Staff to the Executive Secretary, National Security Council (Lay), March 19, 1954, p. 102-203; “Paper Prepared in the Office of the Special Assistant to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Security Council Affairs,” March 19, 1954, p. 103-104; “Paper Prepared in the Foreign Operations Administration,” March 22, 1954, p. 104-105; “Paper Prepared in the Department of Defense,” March 22, 1954, p. 105-106; “Paper Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency,” March 22, 1954, p. 107-8; all in *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 101-108. General Robert Cutler was Eisenhower’s NSA between 1953-55 and 1957-58.

report” and finally dropped the idea of any sort of independent policy for Africa. For months State Department officials had argued for a new approach to Africa based in part on their recognition of the rapid progress toward self-government in Ghana and also in part on their contacts with African American leaders. Yet U.S. African policy would remain the same due to the intransigence and pro-European outlook of NSC officials.¹⁰⁸

Nkrumah's Increasing Triumphs

Even though U.S. officials failed to develop a significantly new high-level policy for Africa in early 1954, the African American community continued to watch events in Ghana with hope. American blacks also continued their efforts to bring Ghana to the attention of both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. In February 1954 African American leader Max Yergan met with U.S. officials at the American embassy in New Delhi, India because they “were primarily interested in his views on Africa.” Although Yergan had been a founding member of the left-leaning Council on African Affairs, by 1948 he had moved closer to a Cold War mentality as the anti-communist climate within the United States deepened. As his biographer David Henry Anthony III points out, “Until the loyalty oaths and then the advent of listing of subversive organizations such as the National Negro Congress, the Council on African Affairs, and a score more on whose letterhead Max’s name had been prominent, he had been one of the stalwarts, his identity inseparable from that of peoples’ struggles.” His turn towards a strident anti-communism caused a public battle within the ranks of the

¹⁰⁸ “Editorial Note,” p. 107; “Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff,” April 27, 1954, p. 118-9; “Editorial Note,” p. 119; all in *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 107, 118-9.

CAA and Yergan and his followers eventually left the organization. Yergan then worked with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, an umbrella organization formed in 1949 to organize the activities of pro-Western labor unions. He also became a member of the Congress of Cultural Freedom, an organization of “ex-communists and repentant socialists” funded in part by the CIA. As Anthony points out, the goal of a trip Yergan took to various African countries in the summer and fall of 1952 was “to dissuade Africans from being led astray by close cooperation with Communists.” In fact, during his travels his written “articles showed a willingness to be critical but an overwhelming acceptance of the authority of colonial and minority rule in Africa as something that still remained legitimate.” By the time American officials in New Delhi encountered Yergan, he was a reconstructed leftist turned cold warrior.¹⁰⁹

During his February 1954 conversation at the American embassy in New Delhi, Yergan evinced hardened Cold War viewpoints. U.S. officials found Yergan “of the opinion that the Mau Mau leaders in Kenya were being exploited by Communists.” He thus undermined the view that an indigenous African movement could oppose colonialism on its own. When the conversation turned to West Africa, however, Yergan was more positive. He “seemed to feel that both the British and the Belgians [presumably regarding the Congo] are following very enlightened policies and that African leaders increasingly are assuming positions of responsibility.” Yet regarding the intersection of American foreign policy and domestic race relations, Yergan “stated that the United States did not have to apologize to anyone at the present time on the question of race

¹⁰⁹ “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Minister-Counselor at Embassy in India (Mills),” February 11, 1954, *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 92; David Henry Anthony, III, *Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 230-1, 234, 236, 243, 246.

relations for very significant and steady progress is being made in this field.” The latter claim was quite contested by numerous other African American leaders. Some black leaders in contact with U.S. officials were thus so virulently anti-communist they threatened to undermine the goals of other African Americans who were trying to voice an anti-colonial viewpoint rather than an anti-communist one.¹¹⁰

Yergan’s views implicitly revealed the importance of race in international relations to black Americans during the 1950s. His claim the British were following an enlightened policy in West Africa was perhaps true when compared to other colonial powers, but less accurate when compared to the demands of Ghanaians themselves for, in the words of the CPP slogan, “Self-Government Now!” Yergan’s conversation in India therefore revealed the complex world African Americans faced when they extended their racial identifications beyond American borders. They often had to choose whether to embrace colonialism, transnational racial identification, non-alignment, anti-communism, communism, or some combination of these ideas. While Yergan was among the few who openly accepted the first and W.E.B. Du Bois represented those leaning heavily towards communism, most mainstream African American leaders combined some form of enthusiasm for African nationalism with a rejection of leftist ideas. Yet the very fact African Americans from such diverse political positions all embraced Nkrumah’s Ghana highlighted the central role race played during the 1950s in tying black Americans to Ghana and Africa.

¹¹⁰ “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Minister-Counselor at Embassy in India (Mills),” February 11, 1954, *FRUS 1952-54: 11, Part 1*, p. 92-94. Yergan espoused similar views, for example, in an interview with George Schuyler of the *Pittsburgh Courier* in July 1954. See George Schuyler, “Dr. Max Yergan Finds World Curious About American Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 3, 1954, p. 9.

In fact, such enthusiasm for Ghana deepened during the first half of 1954 as Nkrumah neared a culminating point in the struggle for Ghanaian independence. In mid-1952 British Secretary of State for the Colonies Oliver Lyttleton had visited Ghana and, realizing the desire for independence had only grown stronger, had asked Nkrumah's government to submit proposals to revise the 1950 constitution. The most important item the Ghanaians subsequently requested was an official British commitment to self-government on a very short time scale. The British agreed and said that during the next year they would announce a timeframe for independence, although a definitive date would end up being postponed until the announcement in 1956 that independence would officially come in 1957. Yet the British were at least beginning to think about a definite end for colonialism in Ghana. At the same time, Nkrumah publicly called for constitutional reform in order to place Africans in charge of the remaining British-led ministries and to help further reduce the power of traditional chiefs in the regions of Ghana where tribal social structures remained strong. A new constitution thus emerged in 1953 which expanded the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly to 104, necessitating a new general election in June 1954. Under the terms of the new constitution, Nkrumah's cabinet would be fully African, with Europeans holding advisory positions only. Election to the national legislature would be direct and based on almost universal suffrage, no longer on appointment or an election by a small council of local leaders as had been the case in many areas. On June 15, 1954 the CPP won almost three-quarters of the legislative positions. Despite the continuing presence of some regional opposition parties, Nkrumah remained firmly in control.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Nwaubani, *Decolonization in West Africa*, 14; Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 189, 207-8; David Rooney, *Kwame*

African American newspapers closely followed the election campaign in the weeks leading up to the vote and were very pleased with Nkrumah's second major electoral victory. A June 26 front page article in the *Pittsburgh Courier* announced, "The elections last week brought into force a new constitution of great importance to all Africa. Under it, the Gold Coast, formerly a British colony, will become the first self-government [sic] state in colonial Africa." Horace Cayton, a prominent contributor to the *Courier*, wrote an article in the same edition noting Nkrumah's increasing importance for the entire African continent. Cayton claimed that despite the British being a colonial power, "at least the United Kingdom knows enough to throw in the sponge when she is licked." The *Chicago Defender* cheered the fact that "for the first time, an All-African Government will be responsible to an entirely elected all-African legislature." A week later the editors of the *Defender* proclaimed, "The elections in the Gold Coast and the rising sentiments of nationalism are strong factors proving that colonialism in Africa is now getting its strongest test in history. The question is not how long will colonialism last but, rather, how soon will it be kicked out." Virtually every comment on Nkrumah's victory also contained claims that Ghana would be an example for the rest of the continent and would severely undermine any further rationale for the continuing presence of colonialism in Africa.¹¹²

Nkrumah: The Political Kingdom in the Third World (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 72-3.

¹¹² "Nkrumah Victory Hailed in Ghana," *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 26, 1954, p. 1; Horace Cayton, "Nkrumah Seen as African Leader of Continental Status in Ghana," *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 26, 1954, p. 23; "Gold Coast Becomes Self-Governing Colony," *Chicago Defender*, June 26, 1954, p. 6; "Our Opinion: Progress in Africa," *Chicago Defender*, July 3, 1954, p. 11.

The 1954 Congressional Resolution

African Americans would also bring Nkrumah's success to the attention of the United States Congress in a way which would eventually bring about Vice President Richard Nixon's trip to the independence ceremonies in March 1957. On July 15, 1954 Jacob Javits (R-NY) introduced in the House of Representatives a resolution calling for recognition of the new advances toward self-government occurring in Ghana and Nigeria. Javits was a liberal Republican who supported civil rights legislation during the 1950s. In fact, on the topic of Eisenhower's relationship to civil rights, Javits would later state, "He [Eisenhower] fumbled around with civil rights legislation on what his friends had convinced him was constitutional grounds [sic] and completely missed the ball and embarrassed the civil rights advocates in respect of any really effective civil rights legislation." When Javits brought up the issue of congratulating Ghana and Nigeria in the House in 1954, he mentioned that both Nkrumah and Nigerian leader Nnamdi Azikiwe had been educated at Lincoln University. In very idealistic terms Javits explained the need for greetings to be extended to the new nations, arguing "Our Nation's policy encourages legitimate efforts toward independence and self-government among those peoples who demonstrate a desire and capacity to establish and protect free institutions. This must be the strength of our position in former colonial and underdeveloped areas. Accordingly, Congress should take official cognizance of the momentous events that are now happening in western Africa." He went so far as to claim, "The significance of the recent developments in the Gold Coast and Nigeria looms very large for the free world's success. We should be sure not to repeat the mistakes in Africa which are costing the free world so dearly in southeast Asia [sic]." Among white leaders and politicians who

supported increased attention to Africa, at times there appeared a concern to avoid “losing” Africa as the West had “lost” China and seemed to be “losing” large parts of Indochina in the mid-1950s. Javits finished by requesting delegations be sent whenever Ghana and Nigeria achieved full independence. In sum, he believed the resolution would enhance “the friendship of the United States for the peoples of Africa.” When Senator Alexander Wiley (R-WI) introduced the same resolution in the Senate two weeks later, he generally used very similar language and claimed, “The Gold Coast and Nigeria...offer the world an opportunity to see how Africa can constructively shape things to come as all men of good will everywhere would have them.” Both resolutions would go on to pass unchanged within subsequent weeks. On September 3 the State Department officially delivered the greetings contained in the resolutions to Ghana.¹¹³

No recorded objection to the resolution occurred in either chamber, although the State Department suggested minor changes in the resolution’s language. Due to the way Javits framed the resolution and his supporting arguments, anyone in opposition would appear to be challenging American efforts to support democracy abroad. Yet since the resolution had originated in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee sent it to the State Department for approval. Three times the Department suggested inserting the word “revised” as an adjective to describe various new developments. State officials

¹¹³ Peter Corning, interviewer, *The Eisenhower Administration Project[microform]/Jacob Javits* (Microfilming Corporation of America, 1977 (interviews from 1968)), pt. 3, no. 50, p. 4-5; “Resolution of Greeting to Peoples and Legislative Bodies of the Gold Coast and Nigeria,” H.Res. 648, 83rd Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record* (Vol. 100, Pt. 8) (July 15, 1954): p. 10633; “Extension of Greetings to Legislatures of the Gold Coast and Nigeria,” S.Res. 299, 83rd Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record* (Vol. 100 Pt. 9) (July 29, 1954): 12492-3; Telegram, State Department to Smith (Accra), September 3, 1954, 845K.47411/9-354, Reel 20, CFBA 1950-54. President Eisenhower was routinely notified of the resolution by his Assistant Director for Legislative Reference. See Memo to President Eisenhower, August 19, 1954, WHO, Records Officer Reports to President on Pending Legislation, 1953-61 (Bill File), Box 38, Folder “8/27/54,” DDEL. On May 7, 1954 the French forces at Dien Bien Phu surrendered to the Vietnamese.

justified those changes by claiming, “The Resolution [sic] as presently drafted may give the erroneous impression that legislative bodies are being established in the Gold Coast and Nigeria for the first time. Both territories, of course, have had legislative bodies for many years and Africans have participated in them in varying degrees.” In the House, Javits had spoken of the new West African legislatures being entirely composed of Africans, but had thus implied Africans were only recently becoming involved in politics in Ghana and Nigeria. Indeed, when Javits personally telephoned the State Department a few days later to obtain official support for the resolution, part of the resulting statement provided by the Department read, “The movement in favor of more political responsibility for the indigenous inhabitants has made rapid strides in recent years.” By inserting the word “revised” in several places the State Department wanted to ensure the language of the resolution gave the impression that by 1954 Africans had already been part of Ghanaian and Nigerian governance for a number of years.¹¹⁴

Such a concern with having Africans portrayed as already capable political actors dovetailed with the views of African American leaders such as Bond. In fact, a lengthy friendship existed between Bond and Javits. In mid-June 1954 Bond sent a letter to Javits urging “a proposed delegation of United States citizens of African descent” for a tour of West Africa. Bond stated, “I fear that few people, even on the highest United States level, appreciate the depth of the ties that do bind Africans to America, through a sense of common kinship with persons in this country of African descent. I believe this feeling is

¹¹⁴ Letter, Thurston Morton to Robert Chipfield, July 20, 1954, 745K.02/7-2054, Reel 6, CFBA 1950-54; Telephone Call, Mrs. Osborne to Mr. Durnan, July 22, 1954, 745K.02/7-2254, Reel 7, CFBA 1950-54. There is no available record of any discussion about the resolution within the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

America's Number 1 ace-in-the-hole." In conclusion, Bond emphasized his "firm belief that America should use American Negroes as messengers of good will in Africa." As he had done numerous times elsewhere, Bond was highlighting the transnational racial identification of African Americans with West Africans, including, of course, Ghanaians. Bond was suggesting American government leaders could emphasize and utilize this identification to generate a deeper and more legitimate connection between the United States and Africa instead of simply using African Americans as propaganda mouthpieces to show gradual improvements in domestic race relations. When Javits was elected to the Senate in the fall of 1956, Bond likewise urged him to use his "weighty assistance" to support the sending of a U.S. delegation to the upcoming independence ceremonies in Ghana. Bond mentioned the 1954 resolution on Ghana and told Javits, "You have the right to regard yourself, - as you are regarded in West Africa - as one of the founding Fathers of this new State; the Resolution to [sic] sponsored came at a psychological moment, greatly accelerating the movement toward independence; and your name is gratefully remembered all over West Africa." Bond's enthusiasm demonstrated his warm relationship with Javits. The latter responded he was "deeply interested in continuing with the idea of a Resolution signaling [sic] our interest in the independence of Ghana and will certainly pursue this, you may be sure." In his 1956 letter, Bond did not mention he had suggested the 1954 resolution. Yet Javits would have had Bond's strong, clear, and eloquent words ringing in his ears from the June 1954 letter when he introduced the resolution in the House a month later.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Jacob Javits, November 15, 1956, Series III, Box 23, Folder "33A," Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Jacob Javits, June 18, 1954, Series III, Box 18, Folder "5A," Bond

Regardless of the extent of Horace Mann Bond's influence on Javits, Bond's brother Max was the original proponent of the resolution. On August 7 the *Chicago Defender* reported that during a celebration for Liberia's independence day at the Liberian Embassy, Javits "stopped to give a first hand announcement." After noting the content of the resolution on Ghana, the article revealed, "Javits said he proposed the resolution which was passed unanimously at the instance of Dr. Max Bond, president of the University of Liberia who is currently in this country." In this instance, the more famous Horace Mann Bond was not the African American who directly influenced an aspect of American relations with a foreign nation, but his brother was. The close relationship between the two brothers, Max's position as the president of the University of Liberia at the time, and his frequent travels around Africa left little doubt that, like Horace, he held similar transnational racial identifications with Africans. As will be discussed more fully in chapter six, Nixon's extreme reluctance to head the delegation, as well as the way U.S. officials constantly used the 1954 Congressional resolution on Ghana as justification to form and send the delegation, indicated any high-level official could have led the delegation. Therefore, the pressure of an African American leader on a U.S. representative helped cause the official U.S. delegation to the independence ceremonies in Ghana in early 1957.¹¹⁶

Papers. On African Americans and U.S. propaganda see Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 275-287; Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy*; and Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*; Letter, Jacob Javits to Horace Mann Bond, November 26, 1956, Series III, Box 19, Folder "7B," Bond Papers.

¹¹⁶ "The Weary Traveler," *Chicago Defender*, August 7, 1954, p. 2. On the relationship between Horace and Max see Urban, *Black Scholar*, 66, 71, 197, 200. For a brief biographical sketch of Max Bond see the description on the website of Columbia University Libraries: Archival Collections, "Max J. and Ruth

Like the *Defender*, Ghanaian newspapers praised the resolution. *The Spectator Daily* of Accra ran the text of the greeting on the front page of its July 19 edition under the headline, "U.S. Congress Resolves on Greetings to Ghana." On September 3, the day the State Department formally transmitted the greeting, Accra's *Ghana Daily Express* made the greeting seem more personal with the headline, "Eisenhower Congratulates Two West African Colonies." In early November the American Embassy in Accra notified the State Department that the Ghanaian legislature had unanimously approved a motion of thanks for the resolution to be delivered to the U.S. Congress. Vice Consul Richard Fischer reported, "All speeches delivered on the floor of the assembly praised the United States for its stand on racial questions and pointed to U.S. world leadership." Fischer further related, "It should also be noted that one member stated that the greetings had not come from 'Imperialist Britain,'" which perhaps indicated to Fischer that Ghanaians were able to notice differences between American and British foreign policy to the benefit of the U.S. image. More importantly, the boost to American prestige in Ghana had begun with the prodding of an African American leader. Yet while most African Americans could agree on the racial importance of Ghana, debates arose in the fall of 1954 over Ghana's future economic and political structures. Black leaders thus diverged at times over the form of black capability and modernity Ghana was to show the world.¹¹⁷

Clement Bond Papers, 1912-1995," http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_7031632/, accessed March 16, 2011.

¹¹⁷ "U.S. Congress Resolves on Greetings to Ghana," *The Spectator Daily* (Accra), July 19, 1954, p. 1, Reel 34, *St. Clair Drake Collection of Africana* [microform] (Chicago, IL: Department of Photoduplication, University of Chicago Libraries) (hereafter SCDCA); "Eisenhower Congratulates Two West African Colonies," *Ghana Daily Express* (Accra), September 3, 1954, p. 3, Reel 33, SCDCA; Telegram, Richard Fischer to State Department, "Accra Bi-Monthly No. 7," November 6, 1954, 745K.00/11-654, Reel 6,

Richard Wright's *Black Power*

By the early 1950s Richard Wright had become a widely popular writer on issues affecting the African American population. In 1940 he published *Native Son*, which told the story of a black chauffeur in Chicago named Bigger who accidentally kills a white woman for fear that he would, ironically, be accused of sexually assaulting her. When his communist lawyer defends him in court and argues that Bigger, in the words of historian Jennifer Jensen Wallach, “is a product of his bleak environment,” the court nevertheless sentences Bigger to death. The novel was quite violent and, as Wallach notes, “Wright realized his intention to shock his readers by forcing them to consider the impact of American racism not only on its direct victims but on society as a whole.” Despite such a dreary story, the novel quickly sold hundreds of thousands of copies and launched Wright into the public eye. In 1941, based largely on *Native Son*, the NAACP gave Wright its prestigious Spingarn Medal, an honor awarded to important African American scholars and activists. In early 1945 he published *Black Boy*, an autobiography emphasizing the racism he had encountered throughout his life in both the south and the north. The work was again wildly popular. After World War II, Wright moved to Paris to become part of the reinvigoration of the artistic scene in a city famous for its cultural heritage.¹¹⁸

CFBA 1950-54. Fischer also reported that one member of the assembly announced, regarding the thanks to be extended to the United States, “Well, I am against it,” and stormed out, but Fischer was unable to determine why he did this. See Telegram, Richard Fischer to State Department, “Resolution to the U.S. Congress by the Legislative Assembly of the Gold Coast,” October 28, 1954, 745K.00/10-2854, Reel 6, CFBA 1950-54.

¹¹⁸ Jennifer Jensen Wallach, *Richard Wright: From Black Boy to World Citizen* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), 75-79, 110, 121-4, 128, 130.

By 1953, as discussed earlier, Nkrumah had become prime minister of Ghana and the British seemed to be willing to grant self-government relatively soon. Wright's voyage to Ghana that summer originated from a suggestion by George Padmore's wife, Dorothy. Wright remembered his mind was instantly filled with race-based questions such as, "Being of African descent, would I be able to feel and know something about Africa on the basis of a common 'racial' heritage?...*But, am I African?* [emphasis in original]." After traveling throughout Ghana for ten weeks, Wright returned to Paris to write *Black Power*. The work consisted largely of his impressions of African culture and analyzed the impact of colonial rule in Ghana. Despite feelings of racial affinity with Ghanaians, Wright constantly criticized elements of African culture he disliked. According to Wallach, "He was horrified by indigenous tribal and religious customs" such as ancestor worship and the practice of magical juju rituals. He was aware of his own Western viewpoint and seemed to try to account for such an outlook when describing the events he witnessed. Yet he generally condemned what he considered to be uncivilized practices. Despite Wright's efforts to see the Ghanaian leader, Nkrumah largely avoided him and often treated Wright's questions with evasive vagueness. For instance, after Wright delivered a speech praising Ghana's progress towards independence, a reporter asked to print the speech. When Wright asked Nkrumah for permission, Nkrumah took his speech notes, looked them over, silently handed them back to Wright, and walked away without saying a word. Wright was left wondering, "Had I said something wrong in my speech?" During other interactions, Wright found Nkrumah "aloof, silent" and knew "his thoughts were far away," even while the two were talking.

Despite such treatment, *Black Power* still contained a generally positive viewpoint concerning Nkrumah's past successes and future potential victories.¹¹⁹

Wright had a purpose for *Black Power* beyond simply describing his travels. In the introduction to the book, Wright related that although he left the communist party in 1944 when he realized "international Communism was mainly an instrument of Russian foreign policy," he also believed "the Western world does not even yet quite know how hard and inhuman its face looks to those who live outside of its confines." He warned the moment had come in which "the Western world has one last opportunity in Africa to determine if its ideals can be generously shared, if it dares to act upon its deepest convictions...now has come Africa's turn to test the ideals that the West has preached but failed to practice." If the West did not shed racism, colonialism, and the exploitation of non-white areas of the world, Wright claimed, "the chances of a Communist global victory [would be] thereby immeasurably enhanced." While Wright thus placed his call for more attention to Africa partly within a Cold War framework, he also criticized British colonial practices and Western racism throughout the novel. He also spent comparatively little space talking about communism outside of the introduction. For instance, at one point Wright delved into the effects of Western racism on the minds of black Africans when he wrote, "The Western assumption of the inferiority of the African compels the Westerner to constrict the African's environment; so, in time, African psychological attitudes and conditions of life come to reflect the West's assumptions. And the African, anchored amidst such degrading conditions, cannot help but reinforce

¹¹⁹ Richard Wright, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (New York: Harper, 1954), 1-2, 62-63, 78-79; Wallach, *Richard Wright*, 154-6.

them by accepting them.” According to Wright, Africa was the West’s to win or lose. Yet he believed the latter more likely due to colonialism and racism.¹²⁰

The final ten pages of *Black Power* contained a letter Wright sent to Nkrumah concerning how the latter should develop and lead Ghana. These suggestions would become the most criticized part of the book, especially among other African Americans. Wright told Nkrumah, “I, an American Negro, was filled with consternation at what Europe had done to this Africa” and warned him to “have no illusions regarding Western attitudes. Westerners, high and low, feel that their codes, ideals, and conceptions of humanity do not apply to black men.” Yet Wright also criticized the mentality of many of the Africans he had encountered, claiming he had found “a kind of vagueness that makes for lack of confidence, an absence of focus that renders that mentality incapable of grasping the workaday world. And until that confidence is established at the center of African personality, until there is an inner reorganization of that personality, there can be no question of marching from the tribal order to the twentieth century.” In sum, Wright was asking, in his words, “Do the Africans possess the necessary hardness for the task ahead?” Should Ghana follow the traditional Western path to modernity, Wright believed, it would continue “at a snail’s pace.” Instead, Wright adamantly argued the “people must be made to walk, forced draft, into the twentieth century!...the duties that they must perform to overcome the stagnancy of tribalism, the sacrifices that must yet be made – all of this must be placed under firm social discipline! I say to you publicly and frankly: The burden of suffering that must be borne, impose it upon *one* [emphasis in

¹²⁰ Wright, *Black Power*, xi-xv, 117.

original] generation!” Unlike other black leaders such as Bond would have wished, Wright publicly admitted Ghana was a nation mired in primitive practices.¹²¹

At the same time, Wright’s solution was far more radical than Bond’s recommendations for education and Western investment. Instead, Wright openly claimed, “AFRICAN LIFE MUST BE MILITARIZED [emphasis in original]” in order to drag Ghana into modernity and “sweep out the tribal cobwebs.” Wright believed such a course would help solve the potential problems of neo-colonial influence, which ties to Western investment would bring, because “a military form of life will enable you to use people instead of money for many things...and if your people knew that this military regime was for their freedom, for their safety, for the sake of their children escaping the domination of foreigners, they will make all the sacrifices called for.” Wright’s call for a strict regimentation of society in order to follow “an *African* [emphasis in original] path” was a bold view of what Africa, and especially Ghana as the leader of a decolonizing continent, required in order to remain free of outside interference. Given Wright’s former membership in the communist party, such ideas were perhaps not surprising. In his introduction he even stated he would “openly use, to a limited degree, Marxist analysis.” He did argue, however, that his final recommendations emerged not from any party program, but from his “concern about human freedom, from what I know of the world, from what I saw and felt in Africa, and the concrete situation of the Convention People’s Party of the Gold Coast.” Yet his call for a militarization of African life would strike some of those who read *Black Power* as a dangerous embrace of dictatorship.¹²²

¹²¹ Ibid., xiii-xiv, 342-351.

¹²² Ibid., xiii-xiv, 347-350.

Writers from dozens of publications reviewed Wright's book when it appeared in print in September 1954, with nearly all noting he had written a powerful book. A sampling of some of the balanced opinions of reviewers will demonstrate how the book was received. Michael Clark of the *New York Times Book Review* wrote, "The reader of 'Black Power' will be grateful, no doubt, for many fascinating, and even illuminating, glimpses of primitive tribal life in a country marked out for precocious political development. But he will also get a mighty dose of Mr. Wright's own emotional processes." Robert Taylor of the *Library Journal* announced, "Whether one agrees with author's [sic] use of Marxist interpretation or not, this is a most important book about a most important subject – African self-government." Finally, Ted Poston at the *New York Post* said of Wright, "Although he is too prone to generalizations and as distrustful of most natives as they were of him, Wright does give a graphic picture of what British exploitation and tribal exploitation has meant to the people of the Gold Coast." Despite the criticisms of various reviewers, Wright brought Ghana squarely into the American public eye in the fall of 1954.¹²³

The response of the African American community to *Black Power* echoed the mixed reception among mainstream American periodicals by noting both the book's importance and its problems. A reviewer for *Jet Magazine* wrote that while Wright had "written a splendid report on the Gold Coast's new revolution," he remained "the impatient, impulsive radical." The reviewer believed Wright's call for the militarization

¹²³ Michael Clark, "A Struggle for the Black Man Alone?" *New York Times Book Review*, September 26, 1954, p. 3; Robert S. Taylor, *Library Journal*, 79 (October 1, 1954), p. 1831; Ted Poston, "Travelers Report on India, Africa." *New York Post*, October 3, 1954 all in John M. Reilly, ed., *Richard Wright: The Critical Reception* (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., Inc., 1978), 243, 246, 250. By this author's count, there are sixty-three reviews listed in Reilly's collection. There are also dozens of reviews in Box 28, Folders "405," "406," "407," and "409," Wright Papers.

of African life consisted of “strange words indeed for a man seeking freedom.” Writing for the *Baltimore Afro-American*, Saunders Redding, another African American novelist, called *Black Power* “a visceral book.” Yet Redding also saw Wright as torn “between the unfulfilled promises of Marxist politics and the unfulfilled principles of democratic dogma.” Walter White, then the president of the NAACP, wrote a review for the *New York Herald Tribune Book Review* in which he labeled *Black Power* “the most important, informative and infuriating firsthand account of what is happening in today’s Africa.” White, approvingly, believed Wright’s portrayal of the Ghanaian masses would frighten white supremacists since the former were “succeeding in disproving their longheld notions of African inferiority.” Yet White then criticized Wright for dismissing any positive American influence, in the form of education or democratic ideas, on West African leaders such as Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria. White also complained of Wright’s amalgamation of all Africans into a single identity despite the vastness and diversity of the continent. In the end, though, White praised the book because “for upon the success – or failure – of Africans like Nkrumah hangs the decision as to whether Africa explodes in violence, succumbs to communism, or finds an answer to the undeniable demand for freedom by Africans and other colonial peoples all over the earth.” In the main publication of the NAACP, *The Crisis*, Henry Winslow generally praised Wright, but also stated, “His report on their [Africans’] lives is no help to those who insist that the key to what Negroes *really are* [emphasis in original] is embedded somewhere in some lost sense of origin or some unfound tradition.” For Winslow, the

book did not serve to enhance racial solidarity between Africans and African Americans.¹²⁴

The most critical viewpoint came from Howard University professor Rayford Logan. Logan had left the CAA in the late 1940s when Max Yergan was unable to pull the organization in a more moderate direction and had worked on behalf of the NAACP at the United Nations between 1948 and 1951. Throughout this period and into the early 1950s, Logan developed more conservative views on African decolonization. According to his biographer Kenneth Janken, in 1949 “Logan was convinced that Africa still needed a period of years, perhaps even decades, of tutelage before it was ready for independence.” Logan even still held an “admiration of the French mission civilatrice” in Africa which Pan-Africanists and African nationalists had long criticized as a vehicle for French cultural imperialism. Logan therefore found much to dislike in the more radical Wright’s book. He called Wright’s claim that Ghana should avoid outside investment “nonsense. The United States was built in the nineteenth century in a very large measure by foreign capital and in a considerable degree by foreign brain and brawn. Industrialization is much more complex and costly today than it was in the nineteenth century.” Thus, argued Logan, Ghana’s chances to develop economically were slim unless foreign money or aid arrived. Logan also criticized “what amounts to a nation-wide system of temporary compulsory labor under civilian commissars.” In fact, Logan so disapproved of Wright’s final recommendations to Nkrumah that he wrote,

¹²⁴ B.B., *Jet Magazine*, October 7, 1954; Saunders Redding, *Baltimore Afro-American*, October 23, 1954; Walter White, *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, September 26, 1954, p. 1; Henry F. Winslow, “Beyond the Seas – An Uneasy World,” *The Crisis*, 62 (February 1955), 78-80, all in *Ibid.*, 241-3, 252, 258-9, 268-9.

“Militarization founded upon the exploitation of age-old emotionalism, the fusion of tribalism with modern politics and allegiance to a Fuehrer concept is a dangerous prescription for Africans in the second half of the twentieth century.” Logan suggested the book “would win more friends if it revealed greater evidence of intelligent participation by the people in the management of their own affairs.” He even claimed Wright’s treatment of Ghana might actually convince people of the dangers of African nationalism.¹²⁵

While Logan’s views were at the extreme end of a spectrum of critiques of *Black Power*, he most clearly voiced the wariness both white and black reviewers expressed when addressing Wright’s call for a strong, socialist government in Ghana. The reactions to *Black Power* revealed that despite an existing agreement on the importance of Africa and of racial affinity with Africans, the social and political views African Americans held concerning Ghana’s development differed markedly. Such divisions were usually subsumed amid realizations that racial solidarity between black Americans and black Africans was the most important goal in the climate of the 1950s. Yet the publication of Wright’s book revealed the fissures which sometimes prevented the adoption of a unified voice among the African American community concerning Ghana and Africa. The vast majority of African Americans agreed Ghana was useful as a symbol of black ability to embrace modernity. Yet the form such modernity, and thus the symbol, was to take generated heated debate when one black American intellectual so publicly recommended a specific course of development to Nkrumah. Similar openly public divisions concerning

¹²⁵ Janken, *Rayford W. Logan*, 191-4, 196, 199; “The Birth of African Nations,” Box 166-46, Folder “11 Richard Wright – Black Power,” Logan Papers.

Africa among African Americans during the mid-1950s were, however, rare. Thus the negative reactions to Wright's *Black Power* constituted one of the few exceptions to the rule that, publicly at least, most African Americans considered race the single most important factor when analyzing foreign affairs pertaining to Ghana and Africa. In addition, even many mainstream African Americans accepted Nkrumah's non-communist leftist ideas throughout the decade as long as Ghana continued to appear modern and thus symbolize black capability.

Conclusion

Throughout 1954 Bond and other African American leaders continued both to defend Nkrumah's image and to attempt to alter the predominant view of Africa as a backwards continent. When the *Journal* in Portland, Oregon ran a piece on Nkrumah in June, Bond told the editor the article's implication that Nkrumah was a communist was false. Claiming the *Journal* had used old British reports on Nkrumah, Bond stated, "The British had originally called him a 'Communist' to discredit him and his drive for self-government in the Gold Coast. Now, even Conservative Lord Lyttelton calls him a 'statesman.'" Bond believed the "AP [Associated Press] and your newspaper do the American people a great disservice by circulating such statements originally derived from the propaganda machine of the British Colonial Office." In conclusion, Bond sought to correct "misleading, inaccurate, and highly dangerous errors about one good friend the United States has in the troubled continent of Africa." As indicated by the words "highly dangerous," Bond believed the language surrounding Nkrumah's image held important implications for American relations with Africa as well as for domestic race relations. For

Bond, Nkrumah needed to be seen as a modern, capable leader in order to bolster the campaign for civil rights in the United States. In addition, Bond believed if too many Americans branded Nkrumah a communist, the Ghanaian leader might eventually turn to the Soviet Union. Conservative warnings about Nkrumah would thus become a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹²⁶

Other African Americans and Africans joined Bond in his efforts to shape the public narrative on Africa during 1954. Throughout the year, *New York Times* correspondent Albion Ross had traveled around Africa, reporting primarily from South Africa, Kenya, and the Belgian Congo. Even the titles of his articles demonstrated that he largely characterized Africans as uncivilized and backward. In one article with the subtitle “Primitive Subcontinent Today Has Much in Common With the Era of Livingstone,” Ross argued, “What you see in the halls and corridors of an anthropological museum lived intact until the last generation. Most of this is still intact, even if the African wears pants and rides in a bus.” When reporting on the Mau Mau uprising against the British in Kenya, one of Ross’s subtitles read, “Growth of Settlers’ Privilege Helps Stir Primitive Clash With Established Order.” A fully fair reading of the articles indicated Ross was not a defender of colonialism, often lamenting the violence and oppression conducted by whites in Africa. Yet he simultaneously held an extremely low opinion of Africans and their ability to advance into the modern world. Perhaps his most provocative and inaccurate piece ran with the headline, “Color Bar Absent in Belgian Congo: Colony a Profitable Business With Open Door Policy for All, Regardless

¹²⁶ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Editor of Portland, Oregon *Journal*, July 13, 1954, Series III, Box 18, Folder “5B,” Bond Papers.

of Race.” In general, Ross was very condescending toward the concept of black Africans’ ability to rule themselves and quite ignorant of the terrible conditions experienced by black Africans in many parts of the continent.¹²⁷

A month after Ross’s articles appeared, Reverend James Robinson lashed out at him. Robinson was a prominent African American minister at the Church of the Master in New York City. He would also found Operation Crossroads Africa in 1958 in order to send groups of Americans to Africa on educational and work exchanges. In November 1954 Robinson spoke at a dinner hosted by the National Council of Negro Women where, according to the *Chicago Defender*, he “denounced the series of articles in the New York Times [sic] written by Albion Ross on Africa as ‘complete distortion of the facts.’” The *Defender* reported, “Contrary to Ross’ assertion that Africans are backwards and there is no danger of Communism, Rev. Robinson said there is a wave of nationalism sweeping Africa from Capetown at the southern end to Algiers on the north end that Africans are of one mind in their quest for human dignity and respect.” Robinson challenged Ross’s claim of a lack of a “color bar” in the Congo and declared, “Colonialism is dead and unless the corpse is given a decent burial, the West will die with it.” The latter potential result stemmed from Robinson’s fear communists were waiting to take advantage of African nationalist movements if the West did not embrace them. The West African Students Committee of the United States and Canada also protested Ross’s articles by sending an open letter to the *Defender*. The students

¹²⁷ Albion Ross, “Africa’s Problem Viewed as Unique: Primitive Subcontinent Today Has Much in Common With the Era of Livingstone,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1954, p. 1; Albion Ross, “Mau Mau Incited By Claim to Land,” *New York Times*, October 26, 1954, p. 14; Albion Ross, “Color Bar Absent in Belgian Congo: Colony a Profitable Business With Open Door Policy for All, Regardless of Race,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1954, p. 13.

announced, “To everyone’s amazement West Africa, one of the regions where genuine political and social progress is being made was deliberately left out...we believe that this negligence is due in great part to the fact Mr. Ross could not fit West Africa into the distorted picture of Africa he has portrayed.” Indeed, for many Africans and African Americans, Nkrumah’s success undermined racial stereotypes of Africans as primitive or uncivilized. His image as a modern leader needed to be upheld.¹²⁸

Interactions between African Americans and government officials also continued throughout 1954. In May the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that Bond and Harold E. Stassen, the head of the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), spoke together at the fourth annual Pittsburgh World Affairs Forum. According to the *Courier*, both believed “the decisive battles of the ‘cold war’ in the undeveloped lands of the Far East and Africa” were an upcoming challenge all Americans would have to face. The *Courier* also voiced pride over African American participation in the FOA, claiming, “American Negroes are playing key roles in important jobs under this program and are performing excellently.” More revealing was a report on the first conference held by the ACOA in the summer of 1954. The newsletter of the ACOA, *Africa Today*, covered a panel discussion on the topic “Is Colonialism Dying in Africa?” and mentioned, “Mr. Curtis Strong of the State Department, who was also on the panel, stated that he welcomed the formation of a group like the American Committee on Africa because he felt it extremely important that American views on African issues be made articulate to the State Department.” A member of the American delegation to the United Nations, Strong may

¹²⁸ “Says Nationalism Not Reds Stirring Africans,” *Chicago Defender*, November 27, 1954, p. 4; West African Students Committee of the United States and Canada, “African Students Reply,” *Chicago Defender*, November 27, 1954, p. 9.

have regretted that statement because immediately afterwards another panel member “questioned Mr. Strong concerning the consistent support of the U.S. Delegation for the position of the Colonial Powers on issues in the U.N.” The ACOA newsletter did not mention a response from Strong, but his mere involvement in the panel revealed that State Department officials recognized and addressed African American views on Africa during 1954. His stated desire to have the organization’s input on Africa was likely sincere because he represented the type of mid-level officials in the State Department who were paying attention to African American views on Africa and who were attempting to at least balance America’s Africa policy between support for European colonial powers and African nationalists. As will be seen in the next chapter, by the mid-1950s mid-level State Department officials were beginning to incorporate the views of African Americans into their thinking about American foreign policy towards Africa.¹²⁹

During much of 1954 both American policymakers and African Americans dealt with questions of African decolonization, African development, and the U.S. relationship to Africa. Stimulated by Ghana’s continuing advance towards full self-government and independence, both groups asked themselves how they should respond to this decolonizing black African nation. Despite urgings from the sort of State Department officials who had been in contact with African American leaders, attempts to develop a new policy toward Africa failed. African Americans themselves were divided over the prescriptions for development in Richard Wright’s book *Black Power*. Thus policy

¹²⁹ ““Decisive Battles of Cold War To Be Fought in Asia, Africa,”” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 29, 1954, p. 2; Newsletter, American Committee on Africa, *Africa Today*, Vol. 1, No. 2, June-July 1954, p. 1, Series III, Box 18, Folder “5B,” Bond Papers. Information on Strong’s position comes from “Memorandum of Conversation, by Jerome R. Lavalley of the Office of African Affairs,” May 14, 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54*, Vol. III: *United Nations Affairs*, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/dl/FRUS>, p. 1381.

debates over the extent and content of American interests in Africa paralleled the debate within the African American community over the specific form of modernity Ghana was to take. Mainstream African American leaders, such as Rayford Logan and NAACP officials, disliked Wright's suggestions of heavy doses of militarization and dictatorship. *Black Power* thus threatened to undermine the unity of black Americans' embrace of the symbol of Ghana. Mainstream African American leaders, who had decided to operate according to a Cold War mentality, believed Ghana's increasingly potent symbol could not be overshadowed by a potential descent into an extreme socialism or even communism. Such a turn to the far left would devastate Ghana's reputation within the United States amidst the oppressive anti-communist atmosphere of the early 1950s. Despite political disagreements, however, most African Americans continued to view Ghana fundamentally in racial terms as a prominent example of a successful black embrace of modernity. Overall, African American efforts to influence American interactions with Ghana continued during 1954. Occasionally, as with the resolution sponsored by Congressman Javits, black Americans were spectacularly successful in their goal of persuading Americans to pay more attention to Ghana. Perhaps such gains, combined with Nkrumah's continuing political victories, prodded the *Chicago Defender* to predict in late 1954, "President Eisenhower will name a special mission to the new states of Nigeria and the Gold Coast." Conversations concerning Ghana would certainly heighten and intensify during 1955, but Eisenhower would not prove the paper true.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ "A Few Predictions," *Chicago Defender*, December 18, 1954, p. 2.

CHAPTER 5: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE MIDDLE GROUND

Introduction

At the beginning of 1955, the *Pittsburgh Courier* ran a front page article entitled, “‘Dark’ Nations Call Conference.” The headline referred to the upcoming April meeting in Bandung, Indonesia of non-white nations such as India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon (later Sri Lanka). As historian Cary Fraser has stated, Bandung “ushered in a new era of international relations as nations of color began a sustained campaign to end colonial rule in the non-European world and its corollary of white supremacy.” The conference also spawned the cooperation of a bloc of nations that would remain officially non-aligned in the global Cold War. Both Fraser and historian Brenda Gayle Plummer have traced African American enthusiasm for the Bandung Conference as well as the participation of major black leaders such as Richard Wright and U.S. Representative Adam Clayton Powell (D-NY). The international cooperation of non-white nations on colonial and racial issues attracted African American attention and encouraged American blacks to analyze the international arena in racial terms. On the contrary, American policymakers were wary the Bandung Conference would subvert the importance of what they considered to be the primary international issue, the global Cold War. In fact, as the above historians have demonstrated, the Eisenhower administration prodded delegations friendly to the United States to press for pro-Western resolutions at the meeting.¹³¹

¹³¹ “‘Dark’ Nations Call Conference,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 8, 1955, p. 1; Cary Fraser, “An American Dilemma: Race and Realpolitik in the American Response to the Bandung Conference, 1955,” in Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom*, 115-137; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 247-56. See also Jason C. Parker, “Small Victory, Missed Chance: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Turning of the Cold War,” in Andrew L. Johns and Kathryn C. Statler, eds., *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006).

Amidst this mix of anti-colonialism, race, and international relations, Ghana became a brighter blip on the radar of U.S. officials during 1955 and 1956 as it moved towards independence. In November 1955, Assistant Secretary of State for NEA George Allen told former American ambassador to Iran Loy Henderson that officially recognizing Ghana when it became independent would benefit U.S. prestige. Allen's thoughts are significant for a number of reasons. He led the NEA from January 1955 until August 1956, an eighteen-month period during which American foreign policy towards Africa began to shift from a staunchly pro-European outlook to a more balanced approach taking into account the aspirations of Africans. He was thus an important policymaker in the State Department who was largely in control of policy relating to Africa as long as crises did not develop. Even though he was responsible for other large areas such as the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, he argued for the symbolic importance of Ghana and of U.S. actions towards that nation. In addition, Allen was increasingly concerned with the effects of domestic public opinion on U.S. policy towards Africa. At times he even noted the transnational racial identification of African Americans with Ghana and Africa, comparing such sentiments to the relationship between the American Jewish population and Israel. Allen also enthusiastically supported conferences between African American leaders and State Department officials, thus strengthening the ties between the black community and policymakers.¹³²

¹³² Letter, George Allen to Loy Henderson, "Establishment of Diplomatic Relations with the Gold Coast," November 22, 1955, RG 59, BAA, Executive Director, Subject Files, 1955-1961, Box 1, Folder "Accra, 1A-1," NACP; "List of Persons," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-57*, Vol. 18, *Africa* <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/dl/FRUS> (hereafter *FRUS 1955-57: 18*), p. xvii.

Other U.S. officials in the State Department and at the United Nations also began to discuss the influence of domestic public opinion on U.S. actions and policy in Africa. During the mid-1950s, African Americans made up a substantial portion of the domestic audience advocating an embrace of African aspirations and U.S. officials therefore referenced them when speaking of domestic public opinion. Thus both explicitly and implicitly, the influence of African Americans appeared in internal government deliberations over the course of late 1955 and early 1956 as policymakers began to recommend shifting U.S. policy in Africa towards a “middle ground” which would balance the desires of Europeans and Africans. In fact, during these months, a second effort to develop a concrete, cohesive policy towards Africa took place. While this second attempt to create a comprehensive new African policy would fail, as the first one did in late 1953 and 1954, the discussions along the way indicated an increasing desire on the part of U.S. officials to seek a “middle ground” in American foreign policy towards Africa and Ghana. The deliberations also revealed African American influence on the redirection of that policy. Of course, other factors, including the international Cold War, European allies, and even southern Congressmen, also exerted pressure on U.S. officials. Yet historians have largely ignored the role black Americans played in helping to shift America’s Africa policy during the mid-1950s. In addition, events holding racial significance during 1956, such as jazz artist Louis Armstrong’s visit to Ghana and Ghanaian journalist Mabel Dove’s tour of the United States, caused satisfaction or concern, respectively, for American officials who dealt with the U.S.-Ghana relationship.

African Americans Make Themselves Known

Throughout 1955 African Americans were in constant contact with the State Department. During late February and March, Howard University held a series of four lectures with the theme, “Criteria for New Self-Governing Countries.” The flyer for the forum noted that the United Nations sought to develop such criteria and therefore “the present Forum Series is intended to be a definite contribution to the world-wide interest in such processes and investigations.” Rayford Logan and Horace Mann Bond, who spoke about Ghana, were the two African American presenters. The third participant was a Nigerian official and the fourth speaker, Dr. Weldemar Campbell, was a State Department Foreign Affairs Specialist on British Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs. His presentation on the British West Indies did not specifically address Africa, but his participation in the event revealed a moment when African American leaders professionally interacted with a State Department official.¹³³

Events in British West Africa presented another opportunity in early 1955 for contacts between U.S. officials and African Americans. After the First World War, the former German colony of Togoland officially became a League of Nations mandate, although the British and French shared governance of the region. After the Second World War the area became a United Nations Trust Territory, but European control continued. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the majority Ewe people, divided by arbitrary colonial boundaries drawn first by the Germans and then by the British and French, sought a unified Ewe state. By the mid 1950s, however, internal Ewe differences and Nkrumah’s

¹³³ Flyer, “1955 Howard University Forum: Feb. 28 – Mar. 21” and Schedule Outline, “1955 Forum Series: Howard University,” both in RG 59, RCOBIR, 1947-1963, Box 12, Folder “Conferences on Africa, 1950-1959,” NACP.

rising power forced the United Nations to decide what to do with the colony. Some Ewe supported Nkrumah's desire to incorporate the British-held part of Togoland into Ghana while others sought unification with their Ewe brethren in the larger colony of French Togoland, which would become the independent nation of Togo in 1960. When British Togoland elected eight CPP members and only five representatives who opposed Nkrumah during the 1954 Legislative Assembly elections in Ghana, the British submitted the issue of what to do with their holdings in Togoland to the United Nations. In August 1955 a UN delegation visited British Togoland and determined a plebiscite would be held in May 1956 to decide whether or not the area should permanently join Ghana. When the vote occurred, with Ghana clearly on its way to independence and French Togoland not yet advanced to that stage, British Togoland voted to unite itself to Ghana.¹³⁴

The United States, Australia, India, and Lebanon were the members of the UN Commission for Togoland which analyzed the colony's situation and conducted the August 1955 visit mentioned above. Speculating on whom to include in the American portion of the Commission's delegation to British Togoland, an American official named John MacDonald told Elmer Staats, the head of Eisenhower's Operations Coordinating Board, "This membership presents a minor opportunity for a favorable exercise of U.S. impact in West Africa....very few opportunities involving Africa come our way and it seems to me, therefore, that this one should be exploited." MacDonald also mentioned the Acting Assistant Director for Plans on the Psychological Strategy Board, Byron Enyart, agreed. Yet the exact way the United States could take advantage of membership in the

¹³⁴ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 259-262; Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 156-7; Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 54-55.

delegation took on racial overtones when MacDonald wrote, "Whether in fact it [the membership] would be favorable would depend to a large extent on the American representatives; ideally it would be desirable to have an American negro as the principal U.S. member and any other members should be thoroughly conversant with the problems of this area. The latter is particularly important because of the involvement with the Gold Coast where African political development has reached its highest point so far."

MacDonald was arguing for an African American to lead the team in order to demonstrate American sensitivity to the racial connections between African Americans and Ghanaians. Enyart's apparent support of MacDonald indicated that recognition of the importance of transnational racial identifications was not limited to only one policymaker. In the end, UN officials spearheaded the delegation, with only one representative from each nation on the Commission making the trip. MacDonald thus concluded, "The matter might as well be dropped." Yet the desire to include African Americans as leaders in a program connected to Ghana revealed the increasing recognition by numerous U.S. officials of the transnational racial connections between black Americans and Ghana.¹³⁵

African American desires to influence U.S. officials continued to strengthen during the early part of 1955. In an April newsletter, the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) worried, "The United States Delegation to the United Nations has shown an increasing tendency to join the colonial powers in their opposition to the demands of the

¹³⁵ Memorandum, John MacDonald to Elmer Staats, "U.S. Membership in Proposed UN Commission for Togoland," March 16, 1955," and Memorandum, John MacDonald to Elmer Staats, "UN Trusteeship Council Poll in Togoland," March 23, 1955," both in WHO, NSC Staff Papers, OCB Central Files Series, Box 61, Folder "OCB 091.4 Africa File # 1," DDEL. The author has been unable to identify John MacDonald further.

colonial peoples and their champions, for self-government and human rights.” Therefore, the ACOA argued, “We need to bring to our State Department and U.N. Delegation the clear-cut informed opinions of the American people who believe in self-government for colonial peoples.” To that end, the newsletter announced George Houser would be a full time ACOA representative attempting to get involved in UN affairs. Houser was a white liberal intimately involved with African American efforts to press U.S. officials to pay more attention to Ghana and Africa. In 1955, as historian James Meriwether points out, the ACOA also contained important African American leaders such as Rayford Logan, the *Pittsburgh Courier* columnist Marguerite Cartwright, A. Philip Randolph, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Channing Tobias. The specific goal outlined in the newsletter of influencing U.S. officials at the United Nations and in the State Department revealed how African Americans were adopting increasingly systematic organizing techniques by 1955 to try to affect American foreign policy towards Africa.¹³⁶

A few months later, African Americans had an opportunity to engage U.S. officials actively, just as the ACOA had recommended. In October, the State Department held a conference to discuss issues relating to sub-Saharan Africa. Representatives from the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and various private institutions such as the Ford Foundation attended. Religious figures and African American leaders such as Bond and the Director of African Studies at Howard University, E. Franklin Frazier, were also present. Even before the conference began, Office of African Affairs Deputy Director Fred Hadsel told State Department and USIA

¹³⁶ Newsletter, American Committee on Africa to Horace Mann Bond, April 9, 1955, p. 1, Series III, Box 19, Folder “6A,” Bond Papers; Meriwether, *Proudly*, 112, 170-1.

officials that Assistant Secretary of State for NEA George Allen was an eager proponent of the conference. Altogether, Hadsel, Allen, ten other State Department officials, and representatives from the Department of Commerce and the USIA all participated in the conference. The meeting opened with a panel addressing U.S. policy towards Africa, covered topics ranging from economic assistance to information programs to the problems of decolonization, and concluded with a discussion on “The Prospects of United States Policy.” While a record of the conversations at the conference appears to be unavailable, the very occurrence of the event indicated African Americans continued to be in remarkably close contact with State Department policymakers. The two groups had even directly discussed U.S. foreign policy towards Africa. Those U.S. officials present at the conference doubtless had the ideas, concerns, and recommendations of African Americans regarding Africa in mind when a new series of deliberations concerning the African policy of the United States began in the late summer and fall of 1955.¹³⁷

In fact, at times black leaders clearly described African American attention concerning foreign affairs to U.S. officials. Historian Michael Krenn relates how the head of the Associated Negro Press, Claude Barnett, told Assistant Secretary Allen in May 1956 that “interest in African affairs” was “increasing rapidly” among black Americans. Barnett then criticized the administration for usually siding with Europeans at the United Nations. He went on to declare, “Negroes in America are beginning to question the governmental links our country has forged with South Africa, with Belgian Congo and

¹³⁷ Memorandum, Fred Hadsel to William Moran, Virginia Robinson, et. al., “Informal Conference on Africa, October 28,” September 25, 1955 and List of Participants, “Informal Conference on Africa South of the Sahara, October 28, 1955,” October 28, 1955, both in RG 59, RCOBIR, 1947-1963, Box 12, Folder “Conferences on Africa, 1950-1959,” NACP.

East African [presumably Kenya] areas including, it is understood, even Portuguese East Africa [Mozambique].” Barnett was notifying an important mid-level official of increasing African American attention to numerous places in Africa where colonial or white minority control was especially harsh. He concluded by asking, “Just what is the position of the State Department upon the problems of the colonial areas?” Barnett was thus prodding a policymaker to develop a clear stance on problems in Africa, a stance Barnett hoped would side more firmly with African aspirations. Here was yet another example of the African American campaign to get their voices and views heard by Eisenhower’s State Department.¹³⁸

Finally, there were moments when U.S. officials actively sought the opinions of African American leaders. In mid-May 1956 State officials were concerned that black nationalist James Lawson, who led the United African Nationalist Movement, was “claiming that the U.S. government authorized him to be in the welcoming party for Haile Selassie during the emperor’s recent visit to this country.” Although he “never received U.S. authorizations to see Haile Selassie,” Lawson had met with the Ethiopian leader. When discussing Lawson, one official mentioned he had read a recent unconfirmed *Pittsburgh Courier* report describing how “Lawson had been ejected from a luncheon for Haile Selassie the previous day by two federal agents.” The official went on to describe Lawson’s past criminal record as well as his black nationalist activities, including his “Buy Black” viewpoint and his “race-conscious” attitude aimed at “the establishment of a world-wide fraternity of black people, an end to colonialism, a

¹³⁸Letter, Claude Barnett to George Allen, May 15, 1956, 611.075/5-1556, RG 59, NACP. See Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, 70, 186n8.

revision of racist textbooks, etc.” Much of this information came from the *National Guardian*, but the mention of the *Courier* indicated some U.S. officials read African American newspapers and knew much about the specifics of Lawson’s ideology. Over a month later, the Officer in Charge of Southern Africa Affairs, Donald Dumont, told Director of the Office of Northern Africa Affairs Leo Cyr, “Francis Hammond of USIA was kind enough to talk with two well-known American negro [sic] figures in searching for information regarding Mr. Lawson.” Dumont listed Henry Lee Moon of the public relations branch of the NAACP and George Schuyler of the *Pittsburgh Courier* as sources. The conversations with these African Americans indicated to Hammond and Dumont that while Lawson was not a communist and “the sincerity of his motives is probably not open to question,” he would likely not pass up a chance “to gain personal prestige.” Overall, State concern with Lawson both indicated that some officials read the black press and revealed more State and USIA contacts with African Americans. In fact, in this instance, U.S. officials had actively sought the opinions of black leaders. Such connections ensured American policymakers would be aware of the concerns and viewpoints of American blacks, both radical and mainstream, when exploring a new policy towards Africa.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Memorandum, Herbert Lattimore [?] to Bernard Harris, May 18, 1956 and Memorandum, Donald Dumont to Leo Cyr, “James R. Lawson and the United African Nationalist Movement,” July 28, 1956,” both in RG 59, RCOBIR, 1947-1963, Box 12, Folder “American Groups Interested in Africa, 1950-1958,” NACP.

African Americans in the Mind of Policymakers

In mid-August 1955, Assistant Secretary Allen decided American foreign policy towards Africa needed to change and sent a paper drafted by OAA Deputy Director Fred Hadsel, who had been in contact with African Americans, to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. When introducing the paper, Allen argued, "It is my conviction that within the next ten years we shall face in Africa South of the Sahara the same acute dilemma of colonialism that we are presently facing in Asia and North Africa." In the paper, Hadsel called for "the development of a more independent policy in Africa" rather than a simple position straddling the desires of European countries on the one hand and African nationalists on the other. Hadsel outlined the usual American economic and military interests on the continent, but he also included a section titled, "Change the Tone of American Policy." Under that heading Hadsel recommended that since "there is a broad political element in such a policy...which helps set the tone for the rest," the United States should move away from a "'me too' attitude in respect to the colonial powers." The most revealing recommendation for U.S. policy occurred when Hadsel argued, "We should set ourselves the task of supporting a multi-racial approach to the problems of Africa South of the Sahara. Any course of action would, in the long run, meet with such domestic opposition within the United States that it would be next to impossible to carry out." Some of the most vocal critics of ongoing white and colonial power in Africa during the mid-1950s were African Americans, who thus constituted a significant bloc of the "domestic opposition" which worried Hadsel. Although speaking in general terms in a policy paper only in draft form, a U.S. official recognized the importance of domestic opinion concerning race in American policy towards Africa and incorporated those

realizations into policy proposals. In fact, Hadsel deemed domestic opposition to pro-white and pro-European policies to be such an influential factor that any policy not sufficiently addressing domestic concerns regarding race “would be next to impossible to carry out.” In addition, Hadsel had originally written the paper for a Principal Officers Conference in sub-Saharan Africa which Allen had planned in response to the 1955 Bandung Conference. While the meeting never convened, such efforts revealed Allen’s desire to spread such views not only to his superiors, but also to all the officials below him. Unfortunately, after reading the paper, Dulles did not approve. High-level officials were not yet willing to alter established policy due to generally pro-European outlooks and fears of communist advances in Africa. Yet now, in part due to African American views, mid-level officials such as Allen and Hadsel clearly sought to shift U.S. policy towards at least a balance of European and African desires.¹⁴⁰

That November, other officials also noted domestic public opinion concerning Africa. After the 1955 Geneva Summit between the United States and the Soviet Union, a panel of officials and private individuals under the leadership of Special Assistant to the President Nelson Rockefeller produced a policy review titled, “Psychological Aspects of United States Strategy.” While the mere five pages on sub-Saharan Africa demonstrated the relative inattention given the continent, the discussion concerning Africa was still revealing. George Lincoln, at the time a social science professor at the U.S. Military Academy who had also been a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, authored the section covering the Middle East and Africa. Lincoln recognized the United States faced

¹⁴⁰ “Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Secretary of State,” August 12, 1955, *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 12-21. Dulles’ response is on p. 13n1.

troubling issues in Africa which had little to do with the Cold War. He even claimed, “It is very questionable that the U.S. should key its policy and objectives in the area primarily to the threat of Communism.” Lincoln further argued, “A middle course [between anti-colonialism and full support for European powers] is a better course.” He then suggested policy should “shift away from our comparative silence on specifics concerning colonialism and toward more of a middle ground.” Lincoln believed the need for this shift was partly due to domestic public opinion because when he listed the problems the United States faced when dealing with Africa, he noted “the possibility of internal political pressures within the United States.” Again, the attention and actions of African Americans disproportionately drove such public opinion as existed regarding Africa during the mid-1950s. Lincoln’s worry over “internal political pressures” thus indicated black American views played a role in the development of a “middle ground” policy regarding Africa.¹⁴¹

During late 1955 and early 1956, there were also explicit examples of African American influence on American relations with Africa. A few days after Christmas 1955, Assistant Secretary Allen wrote to Dulles concerning the creation of a program of technical aid to British-held Southern Rhodesia. Allen believed the United States needed to become much more active in Africa in order to prevent a future swing towards communism among decolonizing nations. He also wrote, “Moreover, American Negroes are beginning to look on Africa south of the Sahara with somewhat the same kind of

¹⁴¹ “Psychological Aspects of United States Strategy: Source Book of Individual Papers,” November 1955, p. 93-4, Reel 3 in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Minutes and Meetings of the National Security Council* [microform] (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1982) (hereafter MMNSC). On Lincoln’s former government title see *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951*, Volume 2: *The United Nations, The Western Hemisphere*, p. 1059, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS>, accessed May 24, 2011.

sympathy and interest as American Zionists look on Israel. We should capitalize on this sentiment, utilizing it to work towards evolution rather than revolution in Africa. American Negroes, who are our best hope of keeping Africa oriented towards the United States, are anxious for the Department to help in the improvement of economic conditions in Africa and would be very upset by a decision against any technical assistance programs there.” Allen not only recognized the existence of transnational racial identifications, but thought such connections important in pursuing U.S. goals in Africa. More importantly, his awareness that African Americans sought deeper U.S. involvement in Africa and his concern African Americans “would be very upset” if the United States did not extend economic aid indicated some American policymakers were clearly aware of, and took into account, the views of black Americans. By late 1955 Allen, the man in charge of the branch of the State Department which included policymaking on Africa, had enthusiastically supported contacts between U.S. officials and the ACOA, supported a paper which contained concerns about domestic public opinion and suggested the development of a new and clear policy towards Africa, and explicitly noted the influence of African Americans on his, and Department, thinking.¹⁴²

Mason Sears, the American member of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, also worried about the views of African Americans. In early 1956 Sears provided Dulles with some concrete ideas he believed would bolster U.S. prestige in Africa. He recommended black Africans be included in Fourth of July celebrations at American

¹⁴² “Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Secretary of State,” December 28, 1955, *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 22-23. On the Central African Federation see Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 213-219. In 1955 Southern Rhodesia was still under British control and did not yet hold the stigma of apartheid-like white rule it would develop after Ian Smith’s 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Southern Rhodesia would become Zimbabwe in 1980 after the collapse of white minority rule.

embassies in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Kenya, places where whites were either fully in control or where minority white settler populations were dominant economically and politically. Sears suggested the order to integrate the celebrations “should come as a clear and specific order from the Secretary of State, especially considering the recent disgraceful race riots in Alabama.” Sears realized the violent white protests in February 1956 which had forced the first African American to register at the University of Alabama, Autherine Lucy, to leave campus had damaged American prestige overseas. Sears also accounted for domestic public opinion when he wrote that the order from Dulles “would please many citizens of the United States, and a careful program should be worked out to see to it that American opinion be informed of this decision.” U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., agreed with Sears on this issue. Lodge told Dulles he worried Democrats “would certainly jump on the Fourth of July business if they knew about it. Per contra, we could get some credit at home if we ended this practice.” In subsequent conversations Dulles convinced Lodge to drop the matter. Yet both Lodge and Sears had recognized the importance of domestic public opinion concerning racial issues abroad and sought to placate that opinion by integrating Fourth of July celebrations at American embassies in Africa. Since African Americans disproportionately made up the domestic audience for U.S.-African relations during the mid-1950s, the concerns of Lodge and Sears revealed once again that U.S. officials included black American views when thinking about Africa.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ “Memorandum From the Representative at the Trusteeship Council (Sears) to the Secretary of State,” February 15, 1956, *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 37-38. See also the “Editorial Note” on p. 39 which describes Lodge’s thoughts and his conversations with Dulles; For the Autherine Lucy case, see, for example, Nora Sayre, *Previous Convictions: A Journey Through the 1950s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University

Lodge also mentioned domestic public opinion when considering visits to Africa by high-level U.S. officials. On March 28, 1956 Lodge told Eisenhower “close observation here and abroad” had shown him the image of the United States in Africa was one of being “willing to work with the ‘natives’, but...not willing to play with them and treat them as social equals.” He therefore recommended “trips by high-ranking American officials...the main point would be simply to be agreeable and to make them feel that we think they are attractive [emphasis in original].” A clear example of such interactions, Lodge wrote, was a recent visit to Khartoum during which he and his wife had stayed out late in a nightclub with the Sudanese Foreign Minister. Eisenhower approved the topic and at an April 27 cabinet meeting Dulles presented the recommendation for an uptick in visits to Africa by high-level officials, with Eisenhower and Lodge, of course, supporting the idea. The important point here is that, in addition to the role of foreign public opinion, Lodge had mentioned domestic public opinion, citing “observation here” as an influence on his idea. As noted above, those paying attention to Africa and those who had been arguing for more American representation and interaction with African nations were often African Americans. Domestic public opinion had played a part in convincing Lodge, Dulles, and Eisenhower to alter U.S. policy towards Africa slightly.¹⁴⁴

Press, 1995), 162-171 and Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 112-114. For a detailed account of how the USIA examined the impact of the Lucy case abroad, see Kevin Grimm, *Color and Credibility: Eisenhower, the U.S. Information Agency, and Race, 1955-57* (Ohio University, unpublished master’s thesis, 2008).

¹⁴⁴ Letter, Henry Cabot Lodge to Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Short good-will trips to Afro-Asian Countries by High-ranking American officials (and wives),” March 28, 1956, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President(hereafter DDEP, Ann Whitman File (hereafter AWF), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 6, Folder “March 1956,” DDEL; Memorandum, “Tentative Agenda for the coming Cabinet Meeting,” April 24, 1956, and Memorandum, “Summary of the Cabinet meeting of Friday, April 27, 1956,” April 28, 1956,

Finally, one of the most overt examples of African American influence on State Department thinking appeared in a March 1956 assessment of American foreign policy in Africa entitled, "Africa: Problems of United States Policy." The usual language addressing a potential communist threat to Africa and the need to orient the continent towards the West appeared. Yet U.S. officials were also quite aware of the way race complicated international relations when they wrote, "Any action we take elsewhere in the world, especially in questions affecting race, color and colonialism, will have repercussions in Africa." In addition to foreign public opinion, the officials went on to note, "Moreover, the rising concern and sympathy of American negroes (and whites) for Africans in conditions of poverty, ignorance and colonial dependency is beginning to emerge as an element of domestic politics." Here was a clear realization of the identification of African Americans with Africans accompanied by concern among U.S. officials that they would have to begin accounting for such connections when developing policy. The officials also declared that while African Americans "only incidentally feel any affinity with Africa, they could often reach the African better than anyone of white complexion." Black Americans could therefore "illustrate the fact that the United States has demonstrated that mixed societies can flourish" and thus "should be encouraged to take a constructive interest in Africa." While U.S. officials incorrectly minimized the level of "affinity with Africa" among African Americans, retold themselves the faulty official government narrative of how gradual progress in race relations demonstrated the strength of a democracy, and sought to use African Americans for the purposes of U.S.

both in Papers of Maxwell Rabb 1938-1958, 1989, Series II: Eisenhower Administration, Box 16, Folder "Cabinet Meeting, April 27, 1956," DDEL.

foreign policy, their emphasis on utilizing the connections between American blacks and Africans revealed that they were quite aware of how race operated in the international arena. More importantly, the earlier statement that the “concern and sympathy” of African Americans regarding Africans was “beginning to emerge as an element of domestic politics” revealed the increasing influence of transnational racial identifications in the minds of State Department officials.¹⁴⁵

Some members of Congress were also beginning to note the transnational racial identification of African Americans with Ghana and Africa. Between September and December of 1955, Representative Frances R. Bolton (R-OH) visited virtually every region of Africa. In a lengthy report on her trip submitted to Congress the following summer, she described many of her experiences and discussed U.S. policy towards Africa. While Bolton noted the increasing importance of the continent and recommended an assistant secretary of state for Africa, she also described at length the modernizing and civilizing benefits she believed the colonial powers had brought to Africa. She provided little mention of the ravages of colonial rule. While she argued “the colonial question” was “of vital interest to the United States,” her desire for “orderly” progress, meaning timetables set by the colonial powers, qualified her recognition of Africa’s importance. In addition, the Soviet Union appeared as America’s primary enemy in Africa. Despite the general pro-European, anti-communist outlook of the report, when discussing Ghana Bolton declared, “The consequent freedom that is so eagerly hoped for is being watched by every country in Africa as well as by American Negroes, many of whose forebears

¹⁴⁵ “Africa: Problems of United States Policy,” March 1956, p. 2, 11, 13, Material from 335th Meeting of NSC, August 22, 1957, Reel 2, in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Minutes of Meetings of the National Security Council*, 1st Supplement [microform] (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1988).

came from this area.” Bolton submitted her report to the House and contacted Eisenhower about sending him a copy, to which he replied, “I have had reports on some of your discussions of this trip and look forward to hearing of it directly from you.” Overall, Bolton’s report circulated widely.¹⁴⁶

Bolton’s trip also resonated with African Americans. In fact, when discussing Africa, Bolton had noted, “The African press is much stimulated by the Negro press in the United States, and the interchange of ideas is seen in all colonial areas.” Shortly after Bolton returned, the ACOA mentioned her trip in its early 1956 edition of *Africa Today*. The piece identified the ACOA with Bolton when it stated, “Miss Bolton believes that we are not giving enough attention to the views of the Africans themselves – a defect that this journal is striving to remedy.” The article used some Cold War language similar to that of Bolton, arguing the United States needed “to get ahead of the Communist bloc” in Africa. Yet the article also noted the ACOA “hoped that the State Department will encourage a greater export of Congressmen to Africa so that they may see for themselves what the people want.” Although there is no evidence an African American leader caused Bolton to undertake her visit to the continent, black leaders viewed her journey and subsequent report as counterparts to their own effort to pressure the State Department to embrace the aspirations of African peoples seeking freedom.¹⁴⁷

As in late 1953 and the first months of 1954, American policymakers again explored the idea of a new policy for Africa between the second half of 1955 and August

¹⁴⁶ Frances Bolton, *Report of the Special Study Mission to Africa, South and East of the Sahara*, 85th Cong., 1st Sess., H. Rep. 807, xv, 24, 136, 139, 147; Letter, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Frances Bolton, June 18, 1956, RDEP, Presidential Personal File, Box 939, Folder “PPF 269 Bolton, Frances,” DDEL.

¹⁴⁷ Bolton, *Report*, 150; American Committee on Africa, *Africa Today*, Vol. 3, No.1, January-February, 1956, p. 2.

1956. The re-evaluation of policy began in large part due to Allen's prodding in August 1955 and officials such as Hadsel and Lincoln subsequently argued for a shift in U.S. policy towards a more "middle ground" approach towards Africa. By late 1955, therefore, American policymakers were prying themselves away from a strictly pro-European outlook, but they realized the development of more balanced policies toward Africa would not be easy. For instance, two weeks after Allen had submitted Hadsel's paper to Dulles, the State Department sent the paper to consulates throughout Africa in order to gauge the opinions of U.S. officials on the ground. The ambiguous response of the American Consul General in the Belgian Congo, Robert McGregor, illustrated the difficulty in shifting U.S. policy in Africa. McGregor claimed Africans were not fooled by empty American pronouncements of anti-colonialism unaccompanied by action. Yet he also believed many Africans were not yet ready for self-government and he did not completely abandon the possibility of working with colonial powers on issues such as economic development. Like Allen and the National Security Council, however, McGregor was largely arguing for a new policy towards Africa.¹⁴⁸

Yet by early 1956 policymakers seemed unsure how to change the course of U.S. policy in Africa. In January the State Department's Office of Intelligence and Research surveyed conditions in Africa in a report titled, "Africa – A Special Assessment." U.S. officials described Ghana as led by "a modern, educated African elite, self-confident and predisposed toward Westernized forms of political expression and organization." Yet

¹⁴⁸ "Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) to the Secretary of State," August 12, 1955, *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 13, 19-22. "Psychological Aspects of United States Strategy: Source Book of Individual Papers," 93-94; "Memorandum by the Consul General at Leopoldville (McGregor)" December 28, 1955, *FRUS 1957-55: 18*, p. 24-28.

there were few actual recommendations for U.S. policy except for the final suggestion, “Without such expansion [of public and private American economic aid and investment] it is certain that extremist groups seeking shortcuts to security through violence will increasingly dominate the African scene.” Despite recognizing the need for policy changes, the State Department in January 1956 seemed to have more questions than answers regarding both Africa in general and American policy towards the continent.¹⁴⁹

Thus while recommendations for a new look at American foreign policy in Africa circulated in early 1956 and while NSC officials discussed the possibility of new policy deliberations, in the end no new policy appeared. In fact, no government agency provided a fresh assessment of Africa during the subsequent five months. Only in August 1956 did the CIA produce a new National Intelligence Estimate on sub-Saharan Africa, NIE 72-56, which balanced the usual economic and military concerns in U.S. policy on Africa with the realization, “It is unlikely that most Africans will identify themselves closely with either side in the East-West struggle.” The latter statement was an accurate and perceptive portrayal of how many Africans, especially Nkrumah, felt about the Cold War. By mid-1956 the Eisenhower administration had once again failed to develop a new official policy towards Ghana and Africa, despite realizations among a number of State Department officials that domestic public opinion concerning Africa, especially the segment constituted by African Americans, was growing in importance. Yet African Americans had been nominally successful in their attempts to shift the focus of State

¹⁴⁹Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, “Africa: A Special Assessment,” January 3, 1956, p.1-3 10-11, 16, 25, 36, from Reel 4 of Paul Kesaris, ed. *Africa, 1941-1961: O.S.S./State Department Intelligence and Research Reports*, Part 13 [microform] (Washington: University Publications of America, 1980).

officials toward Africa and during late 1955 and early 1956 a number of policymakers had noted domestic and black public opinion when discussing U.S. policies and actions in Africa. The views of black Americans thus played a role in the attempts, and later the success, of U.S. officials to alter U.S. policy in Africa by balancing an anti-communist worldview and European desires on the one hand with African aspirations on the other.¹⁵⁰

Race on a Personal Level

Throughout 1955 and 1956 African Americans continued to interact with Ghanaians in a number of ways which deepened racial identifications between the two groups. Numerous black Americans, ranging from university professors to musicians, visited Ghana to teach, work, or perform. Ghanaians also undertook trips to the United States for education or, as in the case of Nkrumah's Minister of Finance K.A. Gbedemah, to seek funding for the Volta River Project. Two contacts between African Americans and Ghanaians which occurred during the late spring and early summer of 1956 revealed both the advantages and challenges of transnational racial identifications for the State Department and American foreign policy. The visit to Ghana of the internationally famous jazz artist Louis Armstrong would demonstrate the potential benefits to the

¹⁵⁰Memorandum, Bromley Smith, "State Papers on Africa," March 13, 1956, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Special Staff File Series, Box 1, Folder "Africa South of the Sahara (3)," EL; Letter, Dillon Anderson to James Lay, "State Papers on Africa," March 13, 1956, WHO, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Special Assistant Series, Chronological Subseries, Box 3, Folder "March 1956 (3)," DDEL; NIE 72-56 "Conditions and Trends in Tropical Africa," August 14, 1956, *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 45-47. Only the overall summary from the beginning of the document is available in the FRUS collection, which does indicate that sections labeled "Introduction", "Over-All Problems and Trends", "Selected Regional Problems and Prospects," and "The Outlook for Western Interests," constituted the remainder of the document.

United States of race in the international arena, while the American experience of Ghanaian politician and writer Mabel Dove would reveal the pitfalls.

In 1956 Louis Armstrong was the most popular African American jazz musician in the United States, if not the world. According to historian Penny Von Eschen, by 1955 the State Department believed jazz would bolster U.S. prestige abroad, especially in non-white areas of the world. The Department therefore sponsored numerous overseas tours by jazz artists between the mid-1950s and the 1970s, including one in which Armstrong would participate during 1960 and 1961. Although Armstrong traveled to Ghana in May 1956 under private auspices, U.S. officials still believed the trip would enhance the U.S. image. Von Eschen relates that the prominent journalist Edward R. Murrow arranged the trip in order to film segments of Armstrong's concerts for a movie Murrow was putting together on Armstrong himself. When Donald Lamm, the American consul general in Accra, viewed the reaction of the Ghanaian press to the news of Armstrong's imminent arrival, he declared, "Beyond a doubt the most popular visitor from the United States who has ever come to the Gold Coast will be Louis Armstrong."¹⁵¹

Massive crowds greeted Armstrong when he arrived and Nkrumah invited him to an official lunch. Armstrong then gave an outdoor concert at the Old Polo Grounds in Accra, where less than a year later Nkrumah would speak to Ghanaians on the night of independence. An estimated one hundred thousand people came to listen. At another

¹⁵¹ Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 58-59; Telegram, Donald Lamm to State Department, "Current Developments in the Gold Coast: May 1-15, 1956," May 16, 1956, 745K.00/5-1656, Reel 9, in Gregory Murphy, project coordinator, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: British Africa, 1955-1959* [microform] (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1991) (hereafter CFBA 1955-59). Murrow's movie was called, "The Saga of Satchmo."

appearance, Armstrong evinced a newfound racial identification with Ghanaians, declaring, "I know it now. I came from here, way back. At least my people did. Now I know this is my country too." Armstrong stayed for only two days, but two weeks after the visit Lamm again commented, "Probably no foreign visitor to the Gold Coast has ever received the outpouring of press and public enthusiasm such as was accorded to Armstrong and his band. Perhaps the most significant evidence of this was the fact that the Government and many private firms in Accra gave their employees a half-holiday to attend his public outdoor performance." Lamm further related, "All the newspapers carried laudatory editorials." One of the main periodicals even included "an eight page special supplement dealing with the highlights of the visit." Lamm quoted the Accra *Daily Mail*'s statement that "it is encouraging to note the tendency of the American (both official and private) to give unbiased support to the African's course" as evidence of the goodwill generated for the United States by the visits of Armstrong and Assistant Secretary Allen, who was also in Ghana at the time. Despite being a privately sponsored trip, Armstrong's visit nevertheless bolstered the U.S. image because he was African American. U.S. officials, clearly aware of the racial connections between black Americans and black Africans, were pleased.¹⁵²

A more troubling episode in the interaction of race and American foreign policy regarding Ghana occurred shortly after Armstrong's trip. Mabel Dove, the only female member of the Ghanaian Legislative Assembly and a regular contributor to some of the major Ghanaian newspapers, toured the United States between May and July 1956. On

¹⁵² Von Eschen, *Satchmo*, 59-61; Telegram, Donald Lamm to State Department, "Current Developments in the Gold Coast: May 16-31, 1956," June 4, 1956, 745K.00/6-456, Reel 9, CFBA 1955-9.

May 9, the *Ghana Evening News* in Accra reported Dove was leaving for “a three month tour of the United States under the sponsorship of U.S. State Department’s Exchange of Persons Programme.” A week later the same newspaper reported that while in the United States, Dove declared “that she hoped the [State] Department would arrange for her to visit racially segregated Southern States ‘just to see why the people behave like that.’ She told Reuter when asked if she expected to be affected by segregation: ‘I would not be surprised if they behaved like that. I am expecting the worst.’” Dove held a realistic view of American race relations and from the beginning of her trip held no qualms about speaking out on the topic. The State Department quickly found her outlook and course of action alarming.¹⁵³

Dove’s remarks on racial issues increasingly caused problems for the State Department. When on June 4 Lamm read what Dove had said, he reported it to the Department under the heading, “Unfortunate Remark of Leader Grantee.” Almost two weeks later Lamm complained Dove was “continuing, with the aid of Reuters, to make rather controversial press statements.” Apparently, in an interview with the press, Dove said she “was shocked by the fact that there was only one woman and no negros [sic] in the ‘Hall of Fame’ at the Capitol. In Washington she stated that ‘I have see [sic] some very well-to-do Negros, also some who did not look so well off.’” In order to combat Dove’s focus on the problems of American race relations, the State Department suggested she visit Horace Mann Bond at Lincoln University. Bond later wrote to Nkrumah that Dove “was sent to us on June 19th by the State Department, who told us

¹⁵³ “Mabel Dove Leaves for US Tonight,” *Ghana Evening News*, May 9, 1956, p. 1, 3 and “Ghana Girl May Face Colour Bar,” *Ghana Evening News*, May 16, 1956, p. 1, both on Reel 19, SCDCA.

that Miss Dove would not be content until we showed her the University where her Prime Minister was educated.” Perhaps U.S. officials also sent her to Lincoln in order to show her an example of what they considered progress for African Americans. At the very least they seemed to be trying to please her so she would cease her criticism of the United States.¹⁵⁴

Unfortunately for both the State Department and Dove herself, she did not shy away from further attacks on American racism. On July 14, the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported Dove, with Congresswoman Bolton by then escorting her around the country, had visited Alabama. Unfortunately, nothing else about the visit appeared in the article. The same day, the *Chicago Defender* related that the State Department, “worried because Mabel Dove...was not reacting too well to her American tour,” had sent her to Bloomington, Illinois. The Department apparently considered that city “free of racial tensions.” The *Defender* noted her female hostesses had a tough time dealing with Dove due to her “temperamental moodiness,” which apparently meant nothing worse than cancelling a dinner due to fatigue. Finally, a week later, the *Defender* reported that “the State Department abruptly canceled the American tour of Gold Coast legislator Mabel Dove” and sent her home. The official explanation seems to have been that “Miss Dove left a trail of bewildered and disappointed hostesses with elaborate meals going to waste” and was “cynical and sullen and given to fits of depression.” The real reason for Dove’s departure most likely paralleled the concerns Lamm had outlined in late June, that Dove

¹⁵⁴ Telegram, Donald Lamm to State Department, “Current Developments in the Gold Coast: May 16-32, 1956,” June 4, 1956, 745K.00/6-456 and Telegram, Donald Lamm to State Department, “Current Developments in the Gold Coast: June 1-15, 1956,” June 15, 1956, 745K.00/6-1556, both on Reel 9, CFBA 1955-59; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Kwame Nkrumah, June 22, 1956, Series III, Box 68, Folder “294A,” Bond Papers.

was publicly and consistently critical of American race relations and was even willing to experience segregation in Alabama directly. While the privately organized trip of Louis Armstrong to Ghana pleased American officials, Mabel Dove's government-sponsored tour in the United States experienced disaster, ending with an abrupt trip home for the Ghanaian. The two episodes illustrated both the potential advantages and the potential pitfalls inherent in the racial identification between African Americans and Ghanaians which U.S. officials had to negotiate during the mid-1950s.¹⁵⁵

Conclusion

During the first half of 1956 Ghana proceeded towards a final concrete date of independence and African Americans paid close attention. Despite the British concession to independence after the June 1954 general election, during the second half of 1954 and most of 1955 Ghana witnessed political struggles between Nkrumah's CPP on the one hand and Ashanti opposition parties in the middle of the country and the National Liberation Movement in the north on the other. The latter two groups sought a federal structure in which power was dispersed, while Nkrumah wanted a more centralized nation. Thus one final test, a third general election, had to be passed before the British would grant full self-government to a Ghana under CPP control. On July 17 that election resulted in a CPP majority of 71 out of 104 seats in the Legislative Assembly. After numerous additional debates and meetings, in mid-September the British set the final date

¹⁵⁵ "Fight for Negro Rights Grows More Vicious: Subtle Propaganda Moves Discerned," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 14, 1956, p. 13; "Rambling Round Up," *Chicago Defender*, July 14, 1956, p. 2; "From the Diplomatic Pouch," *Chicago Defender*, July 21, 1956, p. 2.

of independence as March 6, 1957. Ghana would finally become a self-governing nation within the British Commonwealth.¹⁵⁶

Shortly after the elections in July, the *Chicago Defender* praised Nkrumah's victory and declared, "Freedom has triumphed on the dark continent." The latter two words sounded almost like those a European colonialist would use to describe Africa, but the paper then went on to state that Ghana's upcoming independence "serves to point up the obsolescence of the old standard type movies of African safaris with hunters and jibbering naked natives with spears. It will be refreshing to have some dignity for a change." For African Americans, Ghana's achievement of self-government undermined racist stereotypes of black Africans as barbaric, backwards, and incapable of governing themselves. Such a challenge to racist portraits of Africans would also bolster the struggle of black Americans for civil rights in the United States. Horace Cayton at the *Pittsburgh Courier* implied the extremely important racial issues involved in Ghana's independence when he warned, "South Africa and other white European dominated states of Africa view the event with alarm." The racial implications of Ghana's independence, for Africa, for the United States, and for the world, were apparent to African Americans.¹⁵⁷

Leaders of the black community did not just voice their views to their own constituency, but continued to try to affect the public narrative concerning Ghana. As usual, Bond was centrally involved in this endeavor. In the spring of 1955, Bond participated in a public forum on Africa sponsored by the Foreign Policy Association of

¹⁵⁶ Rooney, *Political Kingdom*, 113-127.

¹⁵⁷ "Dawn of Independence," *Chicago Defender*, August 11, 1956, p. 9; Horace Cayton, "World at Large," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 4, 1956, p. A4.

Pittsburgh. He also appeared on a television program on West Africa around the same time. In a March 1955 speech at Howard University, Bond listed the freedoms which Ghanaians held and stated, "These rights the Gold Coast citizen enjoys, although but recently. To the doubters of his capacity to enjoy them, I should like to appeal to the record, for this audience, an observation regarding the capacity of so-called 'backward peoples' to assimilate the forms, political, social and technical, of Western societies, that you may think runs counter to all of the accepted dogmas." Bond was emphasizing the "capacity" of blacks to exercise modern individual political and civil rights responsibly and fairly. He even poked fun at Europeans who, he said, told Africans that since it had taken Europeans themselves a thousand years to develop democracy, Africans must be patient and wait. Bond stated that he was "tempted to reply, impolitely: 'That only shows that you were not very bright to begin with!'" Speaking in St. Louis in May 1955, Bond ruminated on how the concept of biologically based racial characteristics had proved quite faulty. He said, "We think of the African as a 'primitive.' We think this because this is what we have been taught by 19th century racialism; by the first crude applications of science to the mysteries of human culture and mentality....we are not so sure now; indeed we know no correlations can be established [between physical appearance and a person's worth]; and we return to first principles. Among those first principles are those of the basic equality of man." In January 1956, Bond also provided a voiceover for a segment of the Voice of America production, "Salute to Ghana." Bond continued to highlight the modernity of Ghanaians in order to present the best possible portrait of black Africans'

ability to participate capably in twentieth century political and economic structures, which would demonstrate African Americans could do so as well.¹⁵⁸

The above excerpts from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Chicago Defender*, and the speeches of Horace Mann Bond all revealed how African Americans continued to focus on the importance of Ghana and its achievements in racial terms. While Nkrumah had his fair share of critics in Europe, in Africa, in Ghana itself, and among whites in the United States, very few African Americans openly criticized him for any reason. While George Schuyler at the *Courier* accused Nkrumah a few times of moving towards socialism and dictatorship, at others times he praised Ghana's advances. Regardless of Schuyler's criticisms, the vast majority of articles on Nkrumah in the black press lauded his achievements. More often, black Americans believed that despite the exact political and economic structure Ghana adopted, the latter's importance in racial terms was paramount. African Americans who continued to condemn Western capitalism and racism, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, became increasingly marginalized during the 1950s due to the perceived similarity of such arguments to communist critiques of the United States. Yet at the same time, African Americans could point to an individual on the international stage who declared himself in his speeches and his own autobiography to be "a Marxist socialist" and could still largely escape harsh anti-communist criticism from whites in the United States. Despite the way the Cold War channeled the protests of mainstream African American leaders and periodicals largely into a focus primarily on political and civil

¹⁵⁸ Letter, T.F.X. Higgins to Horace Mann Bond, March 21, 1955, and Letter, T.F.X. Higgins to A. Campbell, March 3, 1955, Series III, Box 52, Folder "210B," Bond Papers; Horace Mann Bond, "Criteria for Self-Governing Countries: The Gold Coast," March 7, 1955, p. 20-21, Series VI, Box 174, Folder "23," Bond Papers; Horace Mann Bond, "Africa – The Ancestral Continent," p. 6-7, Series IV, Box 171, Folder "9," Bond Papers; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Baldwin Harper, January 5, 1956, Series VI, Box 178, Folder "58," Bond Papers.

rights, the fact black Americans could still embrace an openly socialist African leader revealed the complexities of transnational racial identifications.¹⁵⁹

By mid-1956, American policymakers were still trying to figure out those complexities. During a second failed attempt to develop a new policy towards Africa, an attempt stimulated in many ways by the increasing importance of Ghana, the influence of African Americans was apparent. While U.S. officials were quite aware of the importance of Ghana in the eyes of non-white, non-aligned nations, they were also becoming increasingly cognizant of African American identification with Ghana and Africa. Assistant Secretary of State Allen, OAA Deputy Director Hadsel, other State officials, and members of Congress such as Frances Bolton all realized African Americans viewed Africa as American Jews viewed Israel, to use Allen's analogy. These officials thus included statements in policy deliberations that the American approach towards Africa would soon likely have to account for, and indeed was already influenced by, domestic public opinion. In addition to African Americans making up a substantial portion of the domestic audience which supported African nationalism, U.S. officials also explicitly worried at times about upsetting black public opinion. Realizations of the growing importance of domestic public opinion and ongoing personal contacts between African American leaders and State Department officials thus both contributed to efforts by American policymakers to explore a more "middle ground" approach towards Africa in which the United States would at least balance the desires of European colonial powers with the aspirations of African nationalists. While the State Department and American policy towards Africa as a whole would not fully escape a Cold War mindset or an

¹⁵⁹ Nkrumah, *Ghana*, 12; Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*.

adherence to the wants and desires of European allies, the domestic, and largely African American, public opinion which other historians have discounted did play a role. In fact, such sentiments actually nudged American policymakers toward a more active embrace of African needs. The very fact a “middle ground” even developed in American policy towards Africa during the 1950s was due in part to the views and actions of African Americans. While not solely responsible for this shifting of priorities, African Americans did play an important part. They would become even more heavily involved in international issues regarding Africa as Ghana’s independence finally arrived.

CHAPTER 6: THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF INDEPENDENCE

Introduction

In March 1957 a story about an incident concerning Richard Nixon circulated among the non-white delegates at Ghana's independence ceremonies. According to the account, at an official dinner the vice president asked the black man seated next to him, "How does it feel to be free?" The curt response was, "I wouldn't know. I am from Alabama." If true, the episode would have been a significant public embarrassment for Nixon and the United States, highlighting both American racism and official American ignorance of the ways racial issues crossed national boundaries. Even if apocryphal, the story revealed how non-whites from other nations recognized the hypocrisy of Americans claiming to be a nation of freedom and democracy while simultaneously oppressing a sizeable minority at home. Nixon therefore stepped into a maelstrom of transnational racial issues upon arriving in Ghana. Neither he nor other American officials could control the narrative of rapid and immediate non-white freedom which people from all over the world celebrated in Accra during the first week of March 1957. African Americans would try to tap into that narrative both to participate in the celebration of their racial brethren and to utilize the narrative for their own purposes within the United States.¹⁶⁰

In the months before, during, and immediately after its independence, Ghana appeared to African Americans as a symbol of black modernity, a nation of non-whites aptly wielding power in twentieth century political and economic structures. Regardless

¹⁶⁰ Hugh Tinker, *Race, Conflict and the International Order: From Empire to United Nations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 84.

of the fact Nkrumah's government employed a brand of state-centered socialism which at the time would have been quite taboo in the United States, African Americans hoped the participation of black Africans in any sort of modern political framework would demonstrate that blacks obviously possessed the capability to participate fairly and equally in the modern world. Therefore, went the argument, it was time to grant political participation to blacks in the American South. Ghana also appeared to the black community specifically as an example of non-violent, persevering resistance to oppression which was victorious in the end. Nkrumah's struggle thus inspired African Americans to continue on the long road towards full racial equality. In addition, numerous interactions occurred between African Americans and U.S. officials regarding both the composition of the official U.S. delegation to Accra and the issue of who would be the first American ambassador to Ghana. Black public opinion forced U.S. officials to include an African American in the official delegation and American policymakers mentioned that opinion in numerous other internal deliberations. Finally, Nixon's extreme reluctance to travel to Ghana indicated he did not initially embrace a heightened level of attention to Ghana and Africa, as other historians argue or assume. The source of the actual existence of the delegation, and thus of subsequent American policy developed in part from the visit, lay in the actions of African Americans.

Who to Send?

By the spring and summer of 1956, Eisenhower's State Department had realized the significance of Ghana's upcoming decolonization as a symbol of an emerging non-white world. While the interactions between U.S. officials and African Americans

leading up to the ceremonies in Accra highlighted the importance of Ghana's independence in racial terms, American policy towards Ghana would never fully escape a Cold War mindset. Even before Nkrumah's final electoral victory in July 1956, American officials were very concerned with both which nations would attend the independence celebrations and who would represent them. The latter point became one of heated contention between the United States on the one hand and Great Britain and Ghana on the other regarding a delegation from the People's Republic of China (PRC). Although U.S. officials realized they could do nothing to prevent Soviet representatives from traveling to Accra, they believed they could affect which Chinese government was to appear. In the mid-1950s American policymakers were wary of doing anything to undermine their own claims that the government of Chiang Kai-Shek on Taiwan was the sole legitimate representative of the Chinese people. In April 1956, the State Department told the embassy in Accra, "The Department would like to discourage the issuance of this invitation to the Chinese Communists. Also, the Department realizes that the British official position is one of recognizing the Chinese Communists and that it might be difficult to influence the Gold Coast authorities to invite only the GRC [Goumingdang Republic of China, the Nationalists]." Deliberations between U.S. officials, the British, and Nkrumah's government commenced and lasted virtually up until the very week of the independence ceremonies. In the end, however, the British would not push Nkrumah very far because they sought to keep him as a loyal member of the Commonwealth after decolonization. Mary Montgomery, in her useful and extensive analysis of the relations between the United States, Great Britain, and Ghana during the 1950s, writes, "By reaffirming its colonial power, Britain refused to allow the United States to dictate

protocol to the Gold Coast. In so doing, it shielded the Gold Coast from US demands that, if met, would have created a ‘made-to-order [anti-imperialist] propaganda theme for the Communists.’” Officials at the British Embassy in Washington had uttered the latter words. In the end, delegates from both the PRC and the Soviet Union attended the independence ceremonies. Nkrumah was thus able to obstruct the imposition of a Cold War framework on Ghana’s celebration of freedom.¹⁶¹

Some historians have argued, or at least assumed, that only with Nixon’s prodding did Africa gain more importance in the minds of American policymakers. Historians also have often attributed the primary stimulus for the creation of a new Bureau of African Affairs in the State Department to Nixon. Regarding Nixon’s centrality, for instance, James Meriwether writes, “Yet perhaps the most significant measure of symbolic and substantive change was sending Vice President Nixon to represent the United States at the independence celebrations of the new nation of Ghana.” In addition, Thomas Borstelmann is representative of the general attitude among most historians of U.S.-African relations concerning the role of Nixon in shifting U.S. policy towards Africa, claiming he “came home to promote greater U.S. attention to that continent.” Likewise, Thomas Noer claims, “It was Nixon who led the push for a more active African policy.” Recently, George White has argued that in part due to legitimate concerns for Africans and in part due to bureaucratic desires for additional funding and more authority, mid-level State Department officials were largely responsible both for creating the Bureau of

¹⁶¹ Telegram, John Foster Dulles to Accra, “Invitations to the 1957 Gold Coast Independence Day Celebrations,” April 18, 1956, 845K.42/2-1056, Reel 28, CFBA 1955-59; Mary Montgomery, *The Eyes of the World Were Watching*, 36-48, quote on 42-43. She is quoting “Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Counselor of the British Embassy (de la Mare) and the Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs (McConaughy), Department of State, Washington, February 6, 1957,” of *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 367-8, but she forgot to include the word “anti-imperialist” from the document.

African Affairs and for moving U.S. policy towards firmer support of African aspirations. Therefore, White concludes, Nixon “was not instrumental in creating the African Bureau and was only one of the many who shaped the administration’s Africa diplomacy.” While true, White does not extensively examine the constant contact between those mid-level officials and African American leaders. In addition, as will be traced below, whatever one argues about Nixon’s role in policy formation, the trip which launched him into the center of debates over U.S. foreign policy towards Africa occurred due to African Americans.¹⁶²

The use of the 1954 Congressional resolution by members of Congress and U.S. officials to note or justify the existence of the U.S. delegation to Ghana’s independence ceremonies indicated any high-level official could have been inserted into the delegation. In October 1955 Bond asked Nkrumah if he knew when independence would officially occur because “the original sponsors” of the resolution needed to be able to pass other legislation in order to fund the delegation. The fact that the passage of legislation which would fund the delegation was the sole concern indicated the actual sending of a delegation was assumed from 1954 onwards. Likewise, when suggesting members for the delegation in mid-January 1957, Fred Hadsel, now the Director of the Office of South African Affairs (OSAA), told the new Assistant Secretary of State for NEA William Rountree the “Joint Resolution, August 27, 1954, authorized [the] Secretary to send a delegation.” During his efforts to convince Nixon to go to Ghana, Secretary of State

¹⁶² Meriwether, ““A Torrent Overrunning Everything,”” 182; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 223; Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, 49; George White, Jr., “‘Big Ballin’!?: Vice President Nixon and the Creation of the Bureau of African Affairs in the U.S. Department of State,” *Passport* 41 (September 2010): 5-11. White mentions only the NAACP effort to get Nkrumah to visit the United States in 1953 and when “Bond...contacted the State Department seeking funds to establish an Institute of African Studies on his campus.”

Dulles likewise mentioned the resolution “authorizing the Secretary of State to send a special delegation to the ceremonies.” Dulles even noted that the United States had not yet received a formal invitation from Ghana to attend the celebrations. Yet planning for a delegation was obviously already under way. From the point the resolution passed, therefore, U.S. officials assumed a delegation would inevitably go to Ghana. Nixon was thus not very crucial to the existence or even to the make-up of the delegation. Any high-level official would have indicated to the world America’s increasing recognition of Ghana’s importance.¹⁶³

Nixon was extremely reluctant to go to Ghana in early 1957. In late December 1956, Dulles told U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge that the State Department would recommend Nixon to lead the U.S. delegation. Yet when Dulles called Nixon to ask, Nixon waffled and “said he thought it might be a little difficult to get away at that particular time because of the Congressional situation.” Dulles replied that “from our standpoint he [Dulles] would be delighted if he [Nixon] were to go to Africa since it was the coming continent and we were anxious to do all we could.” Nixon, however, promised nothing. He certainly did not make Africa an immediate priority. A week later Congresswoman Frances Bolton warned Eisenhower about “the seriousness of these delegation appointments” since “what we do towards this emerging country of Ghana on March 6th can well decide our influence in that great awakening continent for a century or more. If we slight them at any point I feel it is not too much to say that we

¹⁶³ Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Kwame Nkrumah, October 12, 1955, Series III, Box 68, Folder ‘293D,’ Bond Papers; Memorandum, Fred Hadsel to William Rountree, ‘Conversation with Mrs. Bolton,’ January 14, 1957, 745J.00/1-1457, Reel 7, CFBA 1955-59. Information on Hadsel comes from *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, Volume VIII: *South Asia*, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/FRUS>, p. xv; Memorandum, John Foster Dulles to Richard Nixon, January 24, 1957, 745K.02/1-2457, Reel 10, CFBA 1955-59.

shall have lost our opportunity.” With such high stakes in mind, she urged Eisenhower to press Nixon to head the delegation. Bolton explained, “I talked with the Vice President in an effort to give him my sense of the far reaching importance to us of having him head our delegation. He told me he had expressed himself to the Secretary of State as being unready to go – but that my arguments would make it necessary to him to reconsider the matter.” Nixon seems to have decided against going and then only began to rethink the trip to Ghana after his discussion with Bolton. Eisenhower responded to Bolton, “Africa’s importance is already great and steadily increases. Our relations with the peoples and the nationality, racial and religious groupings there must be handled with great sensitivity and care. We agree, too, that significant values would accrue from a visit by the Vice President... Yet his burdens are heavy and may prevent his going. The decision must rest with him and Secretary Dulles.” In addition to demonstrating Eisenhower’s recognition of, and concern over, the growing importance of Africa, the letter also revealed Nixon had still not agreed to be on the official U.S. delegation.¹⁶⁴

After yet another week, Dulles decided to press Nixon again and sent him a two page letter urging him to go to Accra. Dulles argued, “The import of what takes place in Accra next March should be clear to the whole world...the other emergent peoples of Africa will follow with particular attention the degree of interest and sympathy which the United States accords these developments.” Dulles then noted that the 1954 Congressional resolution authorized him to send a “special delegation” and told Nixon he

¹⁶⁴ Letter, John Foster Dulles to Henry Cabot Lodge, December 20, 1956, John Foster Dulles Papers (hereafter JFDP), Personnel Series, Box 17, Folder “Chronological, December 1956 (1),” DDEL; Telephone Call, John Foster Dulles to Richard Nixon, January 8, 1957, JFDP, Telephone Conversations Series, Box 6, Folder “general, Jan 1957 to Feb 28, 1957 (5),” DDEL; Letter, Frances Bolton to Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 15, 1957, and Letter, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Frances Bolton, January 18, 1957, both in RDEP, WHCF, Official File, Box 929, Folder “OF-320 Ghana,” DDEL.

should go because “I believe it to be of signal importance that our Delegation should be led by a person of highest official rank in the nation and because I know you feel deeply about the significance of Africa.” Dulles clearly believed the independence of Ghana to be a momentous event, one that would be watched closely, and wanted the United States to send the best delegation possible. His language of using “a person of the highest official rank” also echoed the early 1956 discussions among Eisenhower’s officials concerning the usefulness of sending high ranking U.S. officials on well-publicized trips to Africa. Interestingly, during those discussions, Lodge had noted the role of domestic public opinion in his assessment of the importance of such trips.¹⁶⁵

Despite Dulles’s plea, an official request from Eisenhower would be required to make Nixon finally agree to go to Ghana. Four days later, in language which seemed to indicate he had finally resigned himself to the trip, Nixon told Dulles over the phone “if the Pres[ident] asked him to go to Africa, he will.” Nixon’s desire for a direct request from the president, after two enthusiastic entreaties from Dulles, is confusing. Perhaps he wanted to feel more involved in the affairs of the administration, due to the fact Eisenhower often kept his Vice President at a distance and seemed to personally dislike him. Or perhaps he had still not made up his mind and a direct order from the president would obviously clear the matter up for him. The next day Dulles called back and told Nixon “the Pres has written about going to the Gold Coast – he thinks N should and asks him to.” The memorandum of the phone call does not indicate a reply from Nixon, but

¹⁶⁵ Memorandum, John Foster Dulles to Richard Nixon, January 24, 1957, 745K.02/1-2457, CFBA 1955-59.

two days later Dulles told Lodge that Nixon was going. In total, three weeks passed before Nixon reluctantly agreed to travel to Accra.¹⁶⁶

For a man whom Dulles believed felt “deeply about the significance of Africa,” Nixon’s delay and unusual insistence on a direct presidential request for his presence on the delegation indicated he did not share the views of Eisenhower and Dulles concerning the importance of Ghana. In January 1957 Nixon certainly did not press the administration to send a delegation to Accra. In fact, African Americans were the loudest voices advocating such a delegation. In addition, the mere fact American policymakers assumed a delegation was going to Accra must be traced back to Max Bond’s suggestion to Congressman Javits in 1954 to press for a Congressional resolution congratulating Ghana and authorizing an official U.S. delegation to the independence ceremonies. Therefore, any high ranking official, not necessarily Nixon, could have been inserted into the U.S. delegation. It is true that after attending the independence ceremonies in Ghana, Nixon became a strong proponent of increased American attention to Africa. Yet the deeper root of his trip, and therefore of policy based both on his trip and on his subsequent report to the president, was the 1954 Congressional resolution, originally suggested by an African American leader.

As in 1954, African Americans continued to be enthusiastic about Ghana’s importance during late 1956 and early 1957. In October, the *Chicago Defender* reported Nkrumah was “being advised to invite a party of American Negro correspondents to

¹⁶⁶ Telephone Call, Richard Nixon to John Foster Dulles, January 28, 1957, Telephone Call, John Foster Dulles to Richard Nixon, January 29, 1957, and Telephone Call, John Foster Dulles to Henry Cabot Lodge, February 1, 1957, all on Reel 5, *Minutes of Telephone Conversations of John Foster Dulles and of Christian Herter (1953-1961)* [microform] (Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America, 1980) (hereafter TC-JFDCH).

come to the Gold Coast next March.” On December 8, the *Pittsburgh Courier* praised the independence of Ghana because “it’ll be a nation of black people, governed by black people.” A week later the *Courier* announced, “To see this historical event, every American Negro should be sitting in the grandstands. All cannot go. But Prime Minister Nkrumah and his cabinet earnestly want American Negroes to be present to see their forebears enter the company of free nations.” On December 29, the *Courier* also declared Ghana’s independence was “already beginning to assume world-wide significance.” Finally, on January 5 the *Courier* further claimed “that the ancestors of most American Negroes came from the Gold Coast. There exists a feeling of blood relationship.” The language revealed how African American interest in Ghana, based on transnational racial identifications and growing for years, culminated in late 1956 and early 1957 as Ghana prepared for freedom.¹⁶⁷

By early 1957 American officials were quite aware of such sentiments and there were direct entreaties to the State Department by African Americans concerned about the racial makeup of the U.S. delegation to Accra. On January 4, Jessie Vann, *Pittsburgh Courier* editor Robert Vann’s wife, sent a letter to Dulles, noting “that millions of Negro Americans are keenly aware of this historic event, and its far-reaching consequences in the light of world events.” Vann also provided an outline of the special edition the *Courier* was preparing on Ghana’s independence. She wanted “the State Department to know we feel this is a public service that must be rendered... a hand-clap of friendship

¹⁶⁷ “World Looks to Freedom of Ghana,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, p. A13; P.L. Prattis, “Horizon: A New Nation,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 15, 1956, p. A4; “Inaugural Plans Take Shape as Ghana Independence Nears,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 29, 1956, p. A7; “Odds and Ends and Things,” *Chicago Defender*, October 13, 1956, p. 2; “Ghanese Await Day of Independence on March 6 and They Like Americans,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 5, 1957, p. A7.

from the United States to Ghana...a sincere gesture of international brotherhood which will be understood and appreciated.” Vann went on to recommend Representative Charles Diggs (D-MI) for the official delegation because he held “the highest elective office of any Negro American in the Government.” A reply drafted by assistants for Assistant Secretary Rountree read in part, “I am particularly pleased at having this chance to write to you about the role your newspaper is playing on the occasion of Gold Coast independence. Officers in both the Department of State and United States Information Agency have told me of your very fine efforts in planning a special Ghana Salute Edition...it seems to me that your own personal efforts and those of the Courier attest to the very real interest the people of this country have in the new State of Ghana.”

Regardless of who drafted the response, American policymakers were clearly aware of the outlook of major African American periodicals. The edition itself will be examined below, but even in her letter Vann noted the content would emphasize the progress being made in race relations within the United States. The edition therefore seemed tailor-made for USIA efforts to depict a positive image of American race relations abroad. Vann’s correspondence with Rountree revealed yet another direct contact between an African American and a mid-level State Department official concerning Ghana. In addition, the USIA would later purchase 71,000 copies of the *Courier*’s special edition for distribution in Africa, revealing the use of an African American periodical by U.S. officials.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Letter, Jessie Vann to John Foster Dulles, January 5, 1957, 745K.02/1-457, Reel 10, CFBA 1955-59; Letter, William Rountree to Jessie Vann, January 18, 1957, Reel 10, 745K.02/1-457, CFBA 1955-59; USIA Circular, “Special ‘Pittsburgh Courier’ Supplement Celebrating Ghana Independence,” February 1, 1957, RG 84, AGUR, 1951-58, Box 3, Folder “USIA Correspondence, Ghana Independence, 1957,” NACP.

In late 1956 and early 1957, deliberations over both whether or not an African American was to be on the delegation and who the individual might be further revealed how U.S. officials accounted for African American public opinion when forming the delegation. In December 1956, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations Jock Hogland told Special Assistant to the Secretary of State John Hanes that of the four positions on the delegation, Nixon was to be one, two should be members of Congress, and the fourth should “be a Negro and one acceptable to the Vice President if he goes.” On January 14, OSAA Director Fred Hadsel told Rountree, “We believe it necessary that one member be a Negro. Present thinking is: that head of delegation be high-ranking Government official but not Negro.” Of course, latent racism appeared among U.S. officials in that they did not want an African American to lead the delegation. Even if they had claimed no high-level African American official existed to send, it would only have served to undermine the lack of black inclusion in the Eisenhower administration. More important, however, was Hadsel’s emphasis on the necessity of one member of the delegation being African American. He did not specify why he thought an African American should be included, but domestic public opinion was undoubtedly part of his calculations. As seen earlier, in mid-1955 Hadsel had participated in a conference discussing American foreign policy towards Africa with African Americans and had written a policy paper expressing concern over the influence of domestic public opinion on the administration’s actions in Africa. Hadsel was therefore exactly the type of mid-level official in consistent contact with African

Americans during the 1950s through whom American blacks influenced elements of U.S. foreign policy towards Ghana.¹⁶⁹

Other officials, in fact, clearly worried about the pressure from African American newspapers. On January 29, Director of the Executive Secretariat in the Department of State Joseph Greene wrote to Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Carl McCardle that in addition to an official government statement of congratulations to Ghana upon its independence, he was “now told that the American Negro press has solicited...a Presidential statement...in addition to the formal statement previously approved.” Green wanted “careful consideration...given to the matter.” No extra statement was forthcoming because the USIA already had plans to circulate the official statement and the State Department wanted Eisenhower’s message to Ghana to be the only public statement. While the African American request was denied in this instance, Greene’s desire for “careful consideration” indicated the concern mid-level officials expressed over African American public opinion. In a similar display of the pressure coming from African American newspapers, a week later Bernard Shanley, Eisenhower’s Appointment Secretary, asked chief of staff Sherman Adams, “Would it not be advisable for either Fred Morrow or Ernest Wilkins of the Labor Department [the highest level African American appointees in the administration] to accompany the Vice President on his trip to Africa. I believe we would be subject to much criticism, particularly in the negro [sic] press, if one of our outstanding colored officials did not go on this trip.” Some U.S. officials seemed to believe that even a black member of Congress on the delegation

¹⁶⁹ Memorandum, Jock Hoghland to John Hanes, December 20, 1956, JFDP, Personnel Series, Box 17, Folder “Chronological December 1956 (1),” DDEL; Memorandum, Fred Hadsel to William Rountree, “Conversation with Mrs. Bolton,” January 14, 1957, 745J.00/1-1457, Reel 7, CFBA 1955-59.

would not mute African American criticism. An African American from the ranks of the actual administration therefore seemed required. Despite denying a separate statement for domestic consumption, Eisenhower's officials expressed both knowledge and concern about the views of the African American press regarding Ghana.¹⁷⁰

Prominent African Americans in both Congress and the administration submitted their names to be on the official U.S. delegation. Adam Clayton Powell, Harlem's representative in the U.S. House, was one such individual. Administrative Officer for Special Projects E. Frederic Morrow, the highest ranking African American in the White House at the time, also sincerely wanted to go to Ghana. On February 14, Morrow wrote in his diary "that it would be politically wise if I were named to the delegation to accompany the Vice-President." Morrow added, "Nixon had gone to many colored countries in the world before without a Negro member in his group, and I felt that the presence of Negroes would make his visits much more effective. Each time the Vice-President had made one of these trips, the Negro press had asked why he was not accompanied by some Negro official." On the next day Sherman Adams told Morrow he was going and flippantly said, "'Maybe you'll find some of your relatives over there.'" Despite the derogatory language, Adams clearly recognized African American identification with Ghana. While Morrow was not on the official delegation, he used the words "politically wise" to press his case for being included. Such language, as well as the suggestions by Hoghland, Hadsel, and Shanley that an African American be on the

¹⁷⁰ Letter, Joseph Greene to Carl McCardle, "Independence Day Greeting to Ghana (formerly Gold Coast)," January 29, 1957, and Memorandum, Bruce Wilkinson to Joseph Greene, "Gold Coast Independence, Statement on," January 20, 1957," both in 745K.00/1-2957, Reel 10, CFBA 1955-59; Memorandum, Bernard Shanley to Sherman Adams, February 7, 1957, RDEP, WHCF, Official File, Part 2, Box 505, Folder "OF-116-NN," DDEL; Herbert S. Parmet, *Eisenhower and the American Crusades* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 177.

delegation, further revealed the pressure African Americans both within and outside the government exerted on U.S. officials regarding who would travel to Ghana to celebrate an enormously important event for non-whites in both the United States and around the world.¹⁷¹

There were other African American leaders who did not make the cut. In early February the State Department had also considered Bond and another publicly active African American, Crystal Fauset, but neither succeeded in their efforts to be on the delegation. Bond was conciliatory and eventually, like Powell as well, found a way to travel to Ghana anyways. Fauset, however, responded angrily to being left off the U.S. delegation. In Pennsylvania Fauset had been the first black woman in the nation elected as a state representative. She had also served as advisor on minority affairs for President Franklin Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor and had been a special assistant in the Office of Civilian Defense during World War II. According to historian Doris Weatherford however, throughout the 1950s “Fauset sought an African diplomatic post in vain.” In mid-February 1957 Fauset learned she had not been chosen for the official U.S. delegation. Expressing transnational identification with Ghana, she told the White House, “A woman like myself should have been allowed to represent the millions of slave mothers who loved their children with passion and devotion and who would have rejoiced if they could have foreseen what has happened to their childrens [sic] children in this country today.” After further emphasizing the connections between African Americans and Africans due to the slave trade, she angrily stated “I love Africa and am proud of my African ancestry. I know that [the] failure to include me in the delegation is

¹⁷¹ Morrow, *Black Man in the White House*, 125-6.

a great mistake which someday will be understood and deeply regretted.” Although U.S. officials experienced pressure from African Americans regarding the American delegation to Ghana, they simultaneously controlled the delegation by picking candidates who they believed would portray abroad a vision of the United States consistent with the official U.S. narrative of democracy, freedom, anti-communism, and progress in race relations. In the end, Walter Gordon, the Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, joined Nixon, Bolton, and Congressman Charles Diggs as America’s official representatives.¹⁷²

W.E.B. Du Bois, an original founder of the NAACP, was one African American never in the running for the delegation. In fact, the State Department actively prevented him from visiting Ghana in early 1957. He had long been a thorn in the side of American officials, criticizing colonialism, racism, the Cold War worldview, and Western capitalism from an increasingly radical stance. By the early 1950s, the State Department began to block Du Bois from traveling abroad by periodically denying him a passport. In early 1957 they did so once again. Du Bois variously contacted Powell, Diggs, African American Representative William Dawson (D-IL), the United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, Senator Thomas Hennings, Jr. (D-MO) who chaired the Senate Constitutional Rights Subcommittee, and even Nixon and Dulles in order to obtain a passport. Of the few responses he received, all were noncommittal and expressed regret that nothing could be done to help him.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Memorandum, Robert Gray and Howard Pyle to Sherman Adams, “Representatives to the Independence Celebration of the Gold Coast,” February 8, 1957, RDEP-WHCF Official File, Part 2, Box 929, Folder “OF-320, Ghana,” DDEL; Doris Weatherford, *American Women’s History* (New York: Prentice Hall General Reference, 1994), 126-7; Letter, Crystal Fauset to the White House, February 21, 1957, RDEP-WHCF, General File, Box 811, Folder “GF-122, Ghana,” DDEL.

¹⁷³ Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to Mohammed Amad (Chairman of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities), February 24, 1957; Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to William

The denial of Du Bois's passport came under fire in Ghana. On March 13, Donald Lamm of the U.S. embassy in Accra mentioned his concern that two articles in Ghanaian newspapers criticized the State Department for preventing Du Bois from traveling to Accra. Journalists with the *Ghana Evening News*, Nkrumah's official organ, spoke to both Ralph Bunche and Nixon about Du Bois during the independence ceremonies. Bunche tried to defend the State Department's decision by noting that Du Bois had not signed a required "non-Communist affidavit." The *News* editorialized, "We are not interested at the moment in whatever personal political or religious views Dr. Du Bois may hold. He is one of the fathers of the Pan-African Movement and to deny him the right to see the birth of the child of his dreams – the crowning moment of a life of battles – is to precipitate the end of this venerable scholar – a veritable fratricide." When Nixon told the paper he was unaware of Du Bois's predicament, the *News* sarcastically remarked, "Quite astonishing [emphasis in original]." The language of transnational racial identification filled the article and demonstrated how Ghanaians also viewed their racial connections to African Americans as more important than ideology. Historians such as James Meriwether, Mary Dudziak, and Brenda Gayle Plummer have more fully documented the State Department's campaign to maintain travel restrictions on African American activists deemed antagonistic to the United States, such as Du Bois and Paul Robeson. The point here is that once again U.S. officials sought to control not only who

Dawson, February 22, 1957; Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to Adam Clayton Powell, February 22, 1957; Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to Charles Diggs, February 22, 1957; Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to Thomas C. Hennigs, Jr., March 26, 1957; Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to Richard Nixon, February 22, 1957; Letter, W.E.B. Du Bois to John Foster Dulles, February 22, 1957, all on Reel 72, Du Bois Papers.

manned the official delegation, but also, when in their power, which African Americans attended the ceremonies in Accra.¹⁷⁴

Ultimately, however much U.S. officials controlled the makeup of the official delegation as well as who was allowed to travel to Ghana, black public opinion influenced the inclusion of an African American on the delegation. In fact, when discussing both an official statement of congratulations to Ghana upon independence and the U.S. delegation, Maxwell Rabb told Fred Fox, a member of the White House staff, “I think this idea should be very helpful on both the international and domestic scenes in making some recognition of Ghana...It can’t help but bring good will to this country.” While African Americans did not achieve everything they hoped for in the delegation to Ghana’s independence ceremonies, black opinion was present in the internal discussions of U.S. officials who increasingly accounted for the views of both African American leaders and the black press.¹⁷⁵

As in 1954, some members of Congress recognized both the importance of Ghana and the racial links between African Americans and black Africans. On January 28, 1957, Representative Barratt O’Hara (D-IL) spoke to the House, noting that Ghana was “said to be the ancestral home of the majority of our fellow Americans of the Negro race” and describing Ghana as “the first independent Negro ruled nation within the British Commonwealth.” O’Hara was proud that four prominent African Americans from his district would be attending the ceremonies, including John Johnson, the publisher of the

¹⁷⁴ Telegram, Donald Lam m to State Department, “Press Attacks U.S. Refusal to Issue Passport to DuBois [sic],” March 13, 1957, 945J.61/3-1357, Reel 36, CFBA 1955-59. On the travel restrictions on Du Bois and Robeson see Meriwether, *Proudly*, 81-82, Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 61-63, and Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 16, 154, 195-597, 204, 248, 250, 254, 311.

¹⁷⁵ Memorandum, Maxwell Rabb to Fred Fox, February 28, 1957, RDEP-WHCF Official File, Part 2, Box 929, Folder “OF-320, Ghana,” DDEL.

black magazines *Jet* and *Ebony*, and Sidney Williams, who had been a member of the Chicago Urban League. On March 5 and 6, the Senate and House passed official resolutions to extend greetings to Ghana upon independence, accompanied by a variety of claims about the importance of Ghana to both Africa and the West. Some of the language of policymakers entered such statements, however, as when Senator H. Alexander Smith (R-NJ) described Ghana as “a fine demonstration of the orderly evolution of institutions of self-government among formerly colonial peoples.” On March 6 in the House, Representative Thomas Gordon (D-IL) mentioned both the original 1954 resolution and the official U.S. delegation before stating it was “particularly fitting and appropriate” to send an official message of congratulations and greeting to Ghana. Representative Laurence Curtis (R-MA) announced, “The creation of a new independent Negro nation marks a proud achievement for the Negro race.” O’Hara again noted the interest of his African American constituents in Ghana and told the House two of the black officials in his district had given him a message for the United States to send to Ghana, which the World Broadcasting Company had delivered. While the official 1957 Congressional resolution of greeting to Ghana would not be the one written by the two black officials from Illinois, both O’Hara’s announcement of the broadcast of their speech to Ghana and his own January speech on Ghana continually reminded members of Congress of African American identifications with that nation.¹⁷⁶

Ghana also brought the issue of American segregation and racism into the chambers of Congress. On April 12, Senator John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) submitted a speech for the record he had recently given on Ghana in New York City. After discussing

¹⁷⁶ *Cong., Rec.*, 85th Cong., 1st Sess., 1045-6, 3105, 3182-3.

Ghana's history and path to independence, as well as the worldwide struggle with the Soviet Union, Cooper remarked, "There is a final point which bears deeply upon the attainment of understanding and sympathy between our country and Ghana and indeed on our influence for world freedom. It is the issue of racial discrimination. I see here, as I know you must see, a parallel between the international issue of colonialism and racism – and the work of full civil rights and desegregation going on here." Cooper went on to argue America's international image as a nation of freedom could not be maintained without racial equality and justice. Three days later, Bolton submitted a speech to the House she had given at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama which ran along similar lines as Cooper's speech. While warning of communist aggression in Africa, she had told her predominantly African American audience, "I believe that you who carry in your veins the blood of Africa will want to find your particular niche in the help our country can give to Ghana and to other emerging countries. Your instinctive understanding of the thoughts and emotions of our African neighbors should be of infinite value." On the one hand, Bolton's words almost contained racial essentialism in that she assumed African Americans would automatically understand the needs and wants of Africans due to their common blackness. On the other hand, both groups had indeed suffered for being non-white and had experienced white dominance, so her statements contained an element of truth. African Americans certainly identified with Africans on the grounds of oppression. Congressional attention to African American identification with Ghana revealed how pervasive the awareness of such identification had become by early 1957.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 5639-40, 5693-4.

March 6, 1957

Compared to their efforts to send an official delegation deemed acceptable, U.S. officials quickly lost the ability to control events in Ghana pertaining to race relations. They had, of course, only a slim chance of doing so in the first place. Leading up to March 6, African American newspapers continuously praised Ghana's impending freedom. On February 9, Horace Cayton at the *Pittsburgh Courier* announced, "The liberation of Ghana is more than the achieving of self-rule by a small country; it will become the symbol for the liberation of an entire continent and a breakthrough of the color bar to the Western European white world which has maintained colonialism." Indeed, Cayton noted, the reality of "South Africa seems to be man's fate while Ghana is man's hope." Ghana was the "hole in the dike" leading to racial equality in Africa. The same day the *Chicago Defender* proclaimed, "When Ghana is accepted into the UN, it is quite possible that the spokesmen for the land of our fathers may be the ones to rise on the floor and challenge the U.S. about its racial problems and so in effect, history will have turned a complete circle!" A week later Ethel Payne, the *Defender* writer who traveled to Accra to cover the independence ceremonies, quoted the latter statement and further commented, "For it was from these shores that the slaves in chains were brought to America. Now, the free people of Ghana may be able to strike the last of the shackles from their brothers in America. It's an exciting idea to say the least!" Her words captured the hope of African Americans that the decolonization of Ghana would challenge racial

inequality in the United States by providing both an example of black capability and by adding more voices to the increasingly global call for racial equality.¹⁷⁸

Ghana's independence excited the black masses as well. On February 25, a certain J. Hamilton Johnson wrote to the *Defender* arguing that while the event would be of momentous importance for Africans, "it should be a great day for all African-Americans." Johnson claimed the black American "must first take his head out of the sand, and say my ancestors came to America from Ghana, which is true." In a front page article on March 2 the *Defender* announced, "Dozens of observations will be taking place in cities across the U.S." A list followed of some of the major events being held to celebrate Ghana's independence in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Again the paper described Ghana as "the land from which the ancestors of most American Negroes came." In a March 11 letter to the editor a man named Jay J. Peters ruminated, "Today, at Ghana, [sic] the shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through with memories of flourishing civilizations." The next day an anonymous letter clearly tied Ghana's decolonization into the domestic struggle against racism by stating, "Let us hope that the Negro leadership watching the birth of freedom in Ghana will return to this country strongly imbued with the spirit of Kwame Nkrumah who led the fight for liberty of the Ghana people, for the emancipation of the Negro American is not yet a reality." The letter further prodded northern African Americans who could vote to exert political pressure on the nation's officials in order to help end segregation in the South. The writer argued American blacks should follow the example of Ghana, which had shown, "The

¹⁷⁸ Horace Cayton, "A New Black Nation on the World Scene," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 9, 1957, p. B7; "Fresh Off the Ticker," *Chicago Defender*, February 9, 1957, p. 2; Ethel Payne, "Ghana's Independence, Africa's Biggest Event," *Chicago Defender*, February 16, 1957, p. 3.

reality of politics is that a group gets as much as it demands and can politically command.” Here again was language revealing Ghana to be a symbol of black capability of participating in modern political methods. Americans, both black and white, followed the independence of Ghana so closely that Horace Mann Bond, upon his return to the United States after attending the independence ceremonies, declared Ghana’s decolonization “the most widely read story, in American newspapers, in recent history.” The Lincoln University clipping service had collected articles on Ghana from over two thousand newspapers.¹⁷⁹

Some of the clearest thoughts on how Ghana’s symbol would benefit African Americans appeared in a special March 9 edition of the *Pittsburgh Courier* which focused solely on Ghana. The edition contained numerous articles on Ghana’s history, economy, struggle for independence, and the various dignitaries and individuals from the United States and other countries who attended the independence ceremonies. The most interesting piece from the edition was the editorial, “The Courier Salutes Ghana.” The editors believed Ghana’s independence had “a particularly pertinent significance for American Negroes...this is because the ancient empire of Ghana was the land of the forefathers of most American Negroes.” Such racial identification bore directly on the questions the editorial then asked, “Are American Negroes an inferior people? Can they meet the full challenge of modern, Western civilization? We American Negroes look to Ghana to furnish the answers to these questions.” Therefore, the editors concluded,

¹⁷⁹ Letter to the Editor, J. Hamilton Johnson, “Salute to Ghana,” *Chicago Defender*, February 25, 1957, p. 9; “Celebrate Birth of Ghana Here and Abroad,” *Chicago Defender*, March 2, 1957, p. 1; Letter to the Editor, Jay J. Peters, “Ghana An Example,” *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1957, p. 9; Letter to the editor, “Let Ghana Be a Lesson to Us,” *Chicago Defender*, March 12, 1957, p. 9; Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Kwame Nkrumah, March 26, 1957, Series III, Box 68, Folder “294B,” Bond Papers.

“Ghana’s contributions, as a free nation, to peace, to art, to industry, to government, will be regarded by American Negroes as symbols of their own worth and potential. When we, American Negroes, shake hands with Ghana today, we say not only ‘Welcome!’ but also, ‘Your opportunity to prove yourself is our opportunity to prove ourselves.’” The editorial was a concise exposition of the belief that the example of blacks in Ghana achieving political independence and mastering the “full challenge of modern, Western civilization” would inspire African Americans to do the same. Black Americans also hoped such an image would convince whites who, due either to racism or other factors, doubted the ability of blacks to participate successfully in modern politics. A week later in a regular edition, the *Courier* ran a similar editorial arguing black economic freedom was linked to political freedom and civil rights. The editors claimed, “It is our hope that the brilliant example of Ghana will spur us to close ranks similarly and pool talents and resources so that we in the great American democracy may attain a larger measure of independence.” Such were the hopes of African Americans stemming from their transnational racial identification with Ghana.¹⁸⁰

A number of African American leaders, including Rayford Logan, Horace Mann Bond, A. Philip Randolph, and Martin Luther King, Jr., attended the independence ceremonies and experienced similar racial identifications with Ghana. In a piece he later wrote on Ghana, Logan claimed, “The winning of independence by nations in Afrique Noire has given us American Negroes faith in our ability to move ahead even more rapidly than we have in the past.” He also warned, “There are those who hope that other

¹⁸⁰ “The Courier Salutes Ghana: An Editorial,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 9, 1957, p. B; Editorial, “Independence...Here,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 16, 1957, p. 37.

new African nations will lapse into a chaos comparable to that in the Congo (Leopoldville). These die-hard racists will then be able to say: 'I told you so; African Negroes are incapable of governing themselves.' And they would almost certainly add: 'American Negroes should therefore not be permitted to become first-class citizens.'” Although his reference to the anarchy in the Congo indicated he was writing some time after June 1960, many African Americans throughout the 1950s shared his concern regarding the dangerous consequences should African nations not present to the world a sound record of black political and economic achievement. For Logan, the example of Ghana as a civilized nation with modern political and economic structures would reinforce the African American argument that blacks in the United States were capable of fully participating in modern society on equal terms with whites.¹⁸¹

While Randolph expressed similar views of Ghana as a symbol of black modernity, Bond witnessed the racial identifications of Ghanaian officials with African Americans. In March 1957 Randolph was a vice president of the AFL-CIO and represented the organization at the independence ceremonies in Accra. According to the *Chicago Defender*, he called “the peaceful transformation of the Gold Coast from a ‘tribal colony under British rule to the independent, democratic, modern Republic of Ghana’ ... ‘a modern miracle.’” Bond discussed American foreign policy with a Ghanaian official named Robert Gardiner who, according to the handwritten notes Bond made during his trip, “roundly criticized U.S. policy in refusing visas to Robeson, Dubois – says, sending Nixon is like giving Africans what the U.S. (white folks) think the Africans

¹⁸¹ Rayford Logan, “Impact of the New African States on American Negro,” Box 166-39, Folder “Impact of the New African States on American Negro,” Logan Papers.

need, not what the Africans want – the same old story.” One of Nkrumah’s advisors, Ako Adjei, also told Bond, “Ghanaians would regard it as insult if [a] white man was appointed” as the American ambassador to Ghana. Apparently, “A Lincoln man [by which Adjei meant an African American]...could walk right in to the P.M’s bedroom any time he wished.” Ghanaians would understandably be upset when the State Department later announced a white careerist named Wilson Flake, not an African American, would be the U.S. ambassador to Ghana. While the transnational racial identification of Ghanaians with African Americans was not as strong as the reverse relationship, it existed. Due to his familiarity with Ghanaian officials, Bond experienced such sentiments firsthand.¹⁸²

Just as many other African Americans had, Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized the correlation between independence in Ghana and events in the American South. By March 1957 King had become both nationally and internationally famous for his leadership during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which had begun in that Alabama city when Rosa Parks famously went to jail for refusing to give her bus seat to a white man. Along with several other religious leaders of the Southern Negro Leaders Conference, King sent a letter to Nixon in mid-February arguing, “We are convinced that you will better be able to represent America’s defense of justice and freedom at the celebration, if prior to your leaving for Africa on March 6th, you arrange for the fact-finding trip we have proposed

¹⁸² “Randolph Hails Ghana As Modern ‘Miracle,’” *Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1957, p. 6; Bond, Handwritten Notes on March 1957 Trip, p. 1, 8, Series III, Box 23, Folder “34C,” Bond Papers. David Rooney, in *Political Kingdom*, 170, describes Gardiner as “one of the most distinguished Ghanaians of his age,” but provides no more information. Merika Sherwood, in *The Years Abroad*, 97-99, reveals that Gardiner was an active member of the West African Students Union whom Nkrumah knew while they were both in London during World War II. Please see the conclusion for a full discussion of Logan’s article from which his quote was taken. The piece is a clear, concise exposition of African American views of Ghana and Africa, but I did not want to repeat his quotations at length.

into the South.” While Nixon did not respond, King finally obtained a meeting with the vice president in Accra. Most important here, however, was King’s clear identification of how American racism and segregation affected the American image overseas. While in Ghana King gave an interview to Etta Barnett, wife of the founder of the influential Associated Negro Press organization, Claude Barnett. In the interview King clearly revealed his conceptions of the racial connections between African Americans and Ghana. Barnett, setting up an important answer, asked King how much influence the independence of Ghana would have “in the history of peoples of color all over the world?” King responded at length, “I think it will have worldwide implications and repercussions – not only for Asia and Africa, but also for America. As you well know, we have a problem in the Southland in America, and I think this freedom – the freedom in the birth of a new nation – will influence the situation there...now Ghana will become a symbol of hope for hundreds and thousands of oppressed people all over the world.” Barnett then asked King what Ghana’s independence meant specifically for racism and segregation in the United States. He replied, “It renews my conviction in the ultimate triumph of justice. And it seems to me that this is fit testimony to the fact that eventually the forces of justice triumph in the universe, and somehow the universe itself is on the side of freedom and justice. So that this gives new hope to me in the struggle for freedom as I confront it.” Scholars have clearly documented a number of influences on King and his actions, including especially Christianity and Gandhian conceptions of non-violence. Yet the independence of a non-white Ghana also played a role in convincing him of “the

ultimate triumph of justice” and therefore helped propel him to future heights of activism he had yet to reach in 1957.¹⁸³

Ghana’s influence on King’s thinking was even more evident in a sermon he gave on April 7 at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, titled “The Birth of a New Nation.” King first covered the history of Ghana and Nkrumah’s personal background, at times linking those topics to Christian themes of the Ten Commandments and the Land of Canaan. Then he claimed, “Ghana has something to say to us. It says to us first, that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed. You have to work for it....Privileged classes never give up their privileges without strong resistance. So don’t go out this morning with any illusions...If we want for it to work itself out, it will *never* [emphasis in original] be worked out! Freedom only comes through persistent revolt, through persistent agitation, through persistently rising up against the system of evil.” Therefore, King argued, victory in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, resulting in the desegregation of public transportation in that city, had been just the beginning. He went on to speak further of the lessons Ghana held for African Americans, stating, “It reminds us of the fact that a nation or a people can break loose [sic] from oppression without violence.” Therefore, King said, “We’ve got to revolt in such a way that after revolt is over we can live with people as their brothers and their sisters. Our aim must never be to defeat them or humiliate them.” King also reiterated his belief that Ghana’s independence demonstrated “the forces of the universe are on the side of justice.” King infused the

¹⁸³ Martin Luther King, et. al. to Richard Nixon, February 14, 1957, in Clayborne Carson, Ralph Luker, et. al., eds., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (hereafter King Papers), Vol. IV (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 134-5; Transcript of Interview, Etta Barnett and Martin Luther King, Jr., March 6, 1957, King Papers, Vol. IV, 145-7.

entire sermon with Biblical allusions and language, and even spent a few minutes speaking of Gandhi, but the very intertwining of these other themes with the example of Ghana revealed how they all worked together to influence one of the most important civil rights leaders in the United States. While King did not specifically use racial language to identify with Ghana in this sermon, perhaps to emphasize universal values of justice and freedom regardless of skin color, he clearly spelled out the influence he believed Ghana's decolonization would have on the African American struggle for civil rights. Ghana presented a symbol of non-violent persevering resistance against oppression which would help sustain African Americans on the long road to be traversed before full racial equality occurred in the United States.¹⁸⁴

Historians have extensively covered the independence ceremonies themselves, so only a brief mention here is necessary. Indeed, James Meriwether has provided an excellent list of the African American individuals and organizations present in Accra, including Logan, Randolph, Bond, King, Bunche, Powell, Lester Granger, Claude Barnett of the Associated Negro Press, editors and publishers of the *Defender* and other African American newspapers such as the *Amsterdam News*, members of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and a number of African American religious figures. A spirit of celebration permeated the entire experience for these African Americans witnessing the birth of a black nation with which they increasingly identified. There were, however, a couple of awkward moments for the U.S. delegation headed by Nixon. First, at an official dinner, Nkrumah seated officials from the PRC in a more prominent

¹⁸⁴ Sermon, Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Birth of a New Nation," April 7, 1957, King Papers, Vol. IV, 155-166.

position than Nixon and the Americans, further underlining Nkrumah's desire to pursue a non-aligned foreign policy. Second, King and other African American leaders who had been upset at Nixon for ignoring their pleas to visit the American South finally tracked the vice president down. Ethel Payne of the *Defender* reported, "It took Ghana's independence to accomplish what Negro leaders in the U.S. have been trying in vain for weeks to bring about." Unfortunately, Nixon still refused to visit the American South, but he did invite King to Washington, D.C. for a meeting to discuss southern race relations. As the *Pittsburgh Courier* correspondent who was traveling with Nixon put it, King "had to span an ocean and continent to do so, but he finally caught up with the Vice President...here in the freedom-charged atmosphere of the Gold Coast." King then apparently told Nixon, "'I'm very glad to meet you here, but I want you to come visit us down in Alabama where we are seeking the same kind of freedom the Gold Coast is celebrating.'" As much as he perhaps wanted to, Nixon could not escape the racial reverberations of the independence of Ghana which resounded in the United States.¹⁸⁵

A White Ambassador?

Nor would the issue of who would be the first American ambassador to Ghana go without racial undertones. African Americans were initially quite optimistic that the State Department would realize the importance blacks in the United States attached to Africa and would consequently send a black ambassador to Ghana. On February 23, for instance, the *Chicago Defender* predicted that when the State Department created a new

¹⁸⁵ Meriwether, *Proudly*, 160; Ethel Payne, "King Gets Bid to D.C. From Nixon in Accra," *Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1957, p. 3; Alex Rivera, "M.L. King Meets Nixon in Ghana," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 9, 1957, p. 2. On the independence ceremonies see, for instance, Meriwether, *Proudly*, 157-165.

Bureau of African Affairs, “A Negro will get a top assignment in the new division, part of the effort by State to quiet complaints about discrimination in employment policy.”

While not directly addressing the position of ambassador to Ghana, the prediction revealed the pressure African Americans believed they were able to exert on the State Department to place more black officials in higher government positions. In addition, such attitudes were evident before Nixon went to Ghana, further highlighting his initial unimportance in U.S. foreign affairs regarding Africa. On March 16, George Schuyler at the *Pittsburgh Courier* addressed the issue of U.S. representation in Accra head on. He wrote, “Who will be the ambassador to Ghana is now the \$64,000 question confronting GOP politicians who, eyeing 1958, are pondering a Negro.” He sarcastically related how the “‘friendly’ Eisenhower Administration has sent white men to Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Ethiopia and Sudan – as if there were no competent Negroes! West Indian and South American posts are also lily-white.” Such sentiments by writers at two of the most prominent black newspapers indicated the ongoing battle, often unsuccessful, African Americans had engaged in since World War II to obtain more positions for blacks in the nation’s foreign service. In addition to arguing that African Americans were obviously capable of holding high level appointments based on their own merit, the black press often claimed blacks in official positions would benefit the American image abroad. Indeed, an editorial a week later in the *Courier* again criticized Eisenhower for the lack of black officials overseas and argued, “We do not contend that Negroes should be sent only to Africa (all posts everywhere should be open to them), but it would seem to be peculiarly appropriate to send them there in the best American interests. It would be the best evidence presented to the world that our talk of equality and fair play is not

hypocritical.” Historian Michael Krenn has aptly chronicled the lengthy black American campaign for a more racially inclusive State Department, but in 1957 the post in Accra was even more important than other positions due to the racial identification of African Americans specifically with Ghana.¹⁸⁶

With such optimism surrounding both Ghana’s independence and the potential appointment of a black ambassador to the new nation, African Americans were shocked and angry when they learned a white man with an apparently racist wife had received the job. After the official U.S. delegation headed by Nixon toured several other African nations, the group stopped in Rome on its return journey. At a reception held by the U.S. ambassador there, a woman with a martini in her hand walked up to several African American reporters who were with the delegation. She asked what Ghana was like and then mentioned Secretary Dulles had told her husband, Wilson Flake, he would be the ambassador to Ghana. In an article on the encounter, the *Chicago Defender* remarked, “Speculation had been rife that a Negro would be named.” Bunche, Morrow, and Bond had apparently been among the potential candidates. Worse than the collapse of the hope for a black ambassador were the words which then escaped the lips of Flake’s wife. According to the *Defender*, she said, ““Of course, we have to take the crumbs.”” Three African American journalists then woke up Morrow, who had retired early from the reception, to tell him what Mrs. Flake had said. According to Morrow’s account, she had been “obviously tight [tipsy or drunk]” and had stated, “We are not very happy about going to this black country, but somehow we always get the dregs.”” Morrow continued

¹⁸⁶ “Rummaging Around,” *Chicago Defender*, February 23, 1957, p. 2; George Schuyler, “The World Today,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 16, 1957, p. 21; Editorial, “Who Gets African Posts?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 23, 1957, p. 15; Michael Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*.

in his diary, “She then went on to indicate in no uncertain terms that she had nothing good to say for black people. The Negro reporters fled the scene. They appealed to me to do something about this situation by reporting the incident to the State Department so that the Administration would not commit a blunder by sending this couple to represent us in Ghana.” Morrow further remembered, “This controversy became a small scandal upon our return to the States. The State Department did make an investigation of the incident, and of course the lady categorically denied that they had made any such statements.” Morrow also told the White House about the incident, but he remained largely uninvolved, apparently because he had not witnessed the event. Yet the very fact “a small scandal” erupted indicated the influence black public opinion could have on a State Department increasingly sensitive to both racial issues and transnational racial identifications.¹⁸⁷

The *Chicago Defender* continued to remind its readers of Mrs. Flake’s remarks and covered the development of the story when the entire delegation returned to the United States. On April 6, the *Defender* revealed that Wilson Flake “hails from Anson County, N.C., and his last assignment was at the Embassy in Johannesburg, South Africa, two facts hardly likely to make him acceptable to the government of Ghana.” A white southerner who had worked with the apartheid government of South Africa seemed an astonishingly poor choice, especially when African Americans had been so hopeful for a black ambassador. The *Defender* announced one of its usually incorrect predictions when

¹⁸⁷ “Hint Embassy Aide Set For Post in Ghana,” *Chicago Defender*, March 19, 1957, p. 2; Memorandum, Mary Stanley, “Remarks Attributed to Mrs. Flake in Rome which were reported to the White House,” March 25, 1957, JFDP, Personnel Series, Box 17, Folder “Chronological March 1957 (1),” DDEL; Morrow, *Black Man in the White House*, 147-8.

it stated, "If the talking unhappy wife had hoped to find a way to kill the assignment, she could not have picked a better way!" The *Defender* also noted, "Embarrassed Nixon aides had only a terse 'no comment' when informed of the incident." To African Americans, such an obviously horrible choice for the position of ambassador to a newly free black nation could not possibly pan out. On April 20, the *Defender* reported both that State officials were investigating Flake and his wife based on her comments and that, incredibly, she "stoutly denied that she intended anything disparaging about the post, [and] claimed she was misquoted." As with Nixon's aides, "State declined comment on the incident." A week later, the *Defender* further reported, "The State Department is in an uproar over the disclosure of the 'famous Crumbs Assignment,' remarks of Mrs. Wilson Flake...[who] is reported to have made out a sworn deposition that she did not make the statement." Apparently, regional political affiliations had also come into play because "the inside word is that the Southern Career bloc in the Department is prepared to ram through Flake's appointment regardless of indiscretions on the part of his wife and regardless of how the people in Ghana may feel." African Americans now feared, correctly, a white southerner with a racially unenlightened wife would represent the United States in an important black nation.¹⁸⁸

Throughout early May, African American newspapers sought to persuade the State Department to send a black ambassador to Ghana. On May 4 Ethel Payne, who had reported on the independence ceremonies for the *Defender*, criticized the whiteness of the foreign service. She used the example of Mrs. Flake's comments in Rome to show "the

¹⁸⁸ "National Grapevine: Case of Talking Wives," *Chicago Defender*, April 6, 1957, p. 2.; "Arabian Night's Dream," *Chicago Defender*, April 20, 1957, p. 2; "The View From Here," *Chicago Defender*, April 27, 1957, p.2.

serious defects in the system that allows totally disinterested persons to have a monopoly on assignments where genuine interest and sympathy for the people ought to be the primary considerations.” On the same day an editorial in the *Pittsburgh Courier* stated, “It is not the Courier’s view that black U.S. diplomats should be assigned to black countries because we feel that Americans chosen to represent this country abroad should be selected without regard to race, color or creed, on a basis of capacity.” Yet the editors then contradicted themselves by saying, “However, in view of the new importance of Africa and the challenge it offers to American statesmanship, as pointed out by Vice President Nixon upon his return from his recent African tour, we feel that the interests of the United States will often be best served by utilizing qualified Negroes.” In a sort of double standard, the *Courier*’s editors were arguing for racial equality in all diplomatic posts except Africa, where blacks should be favored. While not exactly consistent, the argument highlighted the deep African American desire to have black individuals represent the United States in black African nations.¹⁸⁹

Thus when Flake’s appointment became official later in May, African Americans reacted viscerally. The *Courier* denounced “the State Department ineptitude which has led to this appointment” and minced no words by concisely stating, “We deplore this appointment because we think it is stupid and dumb.” In its usual disingenuousness regarding black official appointments, the *Courier* remarked that it did not oppose Flake because he was a southern white, but because his appointment was “an insult to the people of Ghana” and “a backhand slap at Americans of African descent.” The *Courier*

¹⁸⁹ Ethel Payne, “U.S. Diplomacy Not Diplomatic Where Race is Concerned,” *Chicago Defender*, May 4, 1957, p. 11; Editorial, “Is this true, Nkrumah?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 4, 1957, p. A5.

again argued race should not be a factor in appointments, but then stated, “The State Department has flubbed an opportunity. It would have been good for the United States to have sent an American of African descent to Ghana. This appointment [of Flake] queers up the entire African picture whether the State Department knows it or not. How can Secretary Dulles and others in the State Department be so insensitive to what is happening in Africa today?” Apparently Flake was not a bad choice because he was a southern white, but because he was not black. While an inconsistent argument, such sentiments clearly demonstrated the racial importance of Ghana to African Americans. The *Defender* reported similar anger in Ghana, especially over the infamous “‘crumbs’ remarks,” and stated, “The new Ambassador will probably have some rough moments with the Ghana press.” Yet there was little evidence the episode affected high-level U.S.-Ghana relations. Indeed, Nkrumah seems never to have mentioned the event.¹⁹⁰

Flake himself would end up doing an excellent job while in Accra. He often correctly gauged the sincerity and context of Nkrumah’s decisions or policy statements, worked to enhance ties between the United States and Ghana, and helped smooth relations between the two countries during tense moments. While Flake’s appointment obviously went through, Flake’s wife apparently did not attend his swearing in ceremony in order to avoid any further complications or negative press. Her absence thus indicated black public opinion had a small degree of influence over the ambassadorial appointment to Ghana. While the deeply desired goal among African Americans of a black ambassador never materialized, State Department officials had at least become sensitive

¹⁹⁰“Ghana Ambassador,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 11, 1957, p. A5; “National Grapevine: Diplomatic Boil,” *Chicago Defender*, May 18, 1957, p. 2.

to the racial issues revolving around African American identification with Ghana. The entire episode involving Mrs. Flake's comments revealed how complicated the intersection of foreign policy, race, Africa, and African Americans had become for the Eisenhower Administration by the first half of 1957.¹⁹¹

One final aspect of the appointment of a white man as U.S. ambassador to Ghana further illustrated the supreme importance of race to African Americans. At one point, black Americans were worried Nkrumah himself had asked Eisenhower to send a white ambassador. On May 4, the *Pittsburgh Courier* ran an editorial under the headline, "Is This True, Nkrumah?" The piece mentioned that the widely popular *Washington Post* journalist Drew Pearson had "made the shocking charge that Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana requested the United States not to name a Negro as ambassador, allegedly because he feels that a white U.S. ambassador can be more helpful to the new African nation." Thus, the editors declared, "If true it will certainly cause U.S. Negroes to make a drastic and agonizing reappraisal of the African Prime Minister...it is not a flattering commentary on the usually astute West African politician." On the same day, the *Chicago Defender* carried a story that Nkrumah had denied the charge through the Ghanaian embassy in the United States. In fact, after Nkrumah's denial, the editors of the *Courier* subtly accused the State Department of causing the problem when they wrote on May 11, "The department always manages to mislead the public by 'leaking' that such a country does not want a Negro or does not want a white man." The important point here is that Nkrumah's politically leftist views and non-aligned foreign policy surprisingly did not seem to trouble mainstream African American leaders and journalists who had largely

¹⁹¹ "Diplomatic Roundup," *Chicago Defender*, June 8, 1957, p. 2.

acclimated to the Cold War worldview by the mid-1950s. Yet when he appeared to transgress the boundaries of transnational racial identification, the editors of one of the most prominent African American newspapers suggested there might be a need for “a drastic and agonizing reappraisal” of Nkrumah. Although the conservative *Courier* columnist George Schuyler consistently presented unflattering portraits of Nkrumah’s actions in Ghana, Nkrumah had far fewer critics of his economic and political policies among African Americans than even among his own people. Even with knowledge of Nkrumah’s leftist and non-aligned views, racial ties with Ghana remained of paramount importance to blacks in the United States. In 1957 African Americans would criticize anyone, even their hero Nkrumah, who threatened to undermine those connections.¹⁹²

Conclusion

Between late 1956 and the spring of 1957 headlines across the United States and around the globe carried news of Ghana’s independence. As the first sub-Saharan nation to gain independence from European colonial powers and led by a charismatic and confident leader who announced his nation would not play the bilateral Cold War game, Ghana became a symbol of non-white success and ability to follow a third way in international relations. Not only was Ghana self-governing, but by embracing non-alignment Nkrumah was also overtly shedding the pro-Western foreign policy orientation of Ghana’s former white colonizers. A few black leftists, such as Du Bois, openly celebrated Nkrumah’s neutralism. Yet such discussion remained muted among most

¹⁹² Editorial, “Is This True, Nkrumah?”, *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 4, 1957, p. A5; “Internationally Speaking,” *Chicago Defender*, May 4, 1957, p. 2; Editorial, “Ghana Ambassador,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 11, 1957, p. A5.

African American leaders due most likely to both the dominant Cold War framework within the United States and the desire of mainstream black leaders to fit into American society. Most important for African Americans were both the racial connections they perceived between themselves and Ghanaians and what such identifications meant in their own struggle for racial equality. The example of black Africans fully running their own political and economic affairs within a modern framework, although socialist, meant the world now had more evidence of black ability to participate equally in modern political and economic systems.

African Americans therefore continually voiced their joy for Ghanaians, their hope Ghana would show whites in the United States that African Americans could embrace modernity, and their vision of Ghana as an example of non-violent, persevering struggle. While African Americans had failed to convince U.S. officials to send a black man as the first American ambassador to Ghana, their opinion had ensured the presence of an African American on the official U.S. delegation. In addition, Nixon, who was initially quite reluctant to travel to Accra, could not avoid the racial implications of Ghana's decolonization and American policymakers at all levels recognized the importance of Ghana in racial terms by early 1957. African Americans had played a significant role in pointing U.S. officials towards that importance. U.S. officials would therefore finally develop a complete policy towards the emerging continent of Africa by the late summer of 1957, due in part to the transnational racial identification of African Americans with Ghana and the resulting pressure African Americans placed on members of the Eisenhower administration to embrace both actions and policies which highlighted the importance of Ghana and Africa,.

CHAPTER 7: RACE AT ALL LEVELS

Introduction

In the two years after March 1957 Ghana became even more important to both African Americans and the Eisenhower administration. In October 1958 the Board of Directors of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs discussed establishing a "Public Health Program" in Ghana funded and planned in part by the State Department, the American Council on Education, the World Health Organization, and Nkrumah's government. The goal was "to supply expert technical and professional personnel, public health specialists, doctors, and nurses to assist in leadership training programs for the Ghana government." In language displaying the racial aspect of the project, the Directors believed "the entire nation will benefit from the rapprochement between the Negro American and the darker races. The Negro American will be making a contribution to his own ancestral homeland....By lending assistance to Ghana in this field, we will be directly assisting a new nation and building up her potential as an ally. Ghana will be able to take her place be a black Republic in the great community of nations." As "an ally" and a "black Republic" Ghana remained a symbol of black modernity bolstering the African American struggle for civil rights. Potential cooperation of the State Department in such an endeavor also revealed the continuing connections between black Americans and the Eisenhower administration.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs," October 18, 1958, p. 3 on Reel 1, "Part 1: Minutes of National Conventions, Publications, and President's Office Correspondence" of Randolph Boehm and Lillian Serece Williams, eds., *Records of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, 1992* [microform] (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1993-1994).

In fact, during 1957 elements of African American influence were present in both the Anglo-American relationship as well as in the development of major policy papers on Africa. In addition, the root, and much of the course, of Nkrumah's important 1958 visit to the United States originated in African American identification with Ghana, further highlighting black influence on major episodes in American foreign relations with Ghana during the 1950s. Nkrumah also began to act concretely on his Pan-African views by hosting two Pan-African conferences during 1958. By doing so he stimulated both interest and questions among the African American community regarding the uses of Pan-Africanism in the campaign for domestic civil rights. At the same time, events such as the eviction of Nkrumah's finance minister from a restaurant due solely to his race forced the Eisenhower administration to continue to deal with problems caused by the intersection of race and international relations.

The Bermuda Conference

At virtually the same time that an official high-level U.S. delegation was in Accra to celebrate the independence of a non-white nation, other American policymakers met with British officials in the Caribbean to explore how to better coordinate the international policies of the two nations. The March 1957 Bermuda Conference also took place in part to restore calm to Anglo-American relations in the aftermath of Britain's debacle at Suez. The previous fall Eisenhower had become furious with the joint British, French, and Israeli plan to seize the Suez Canal from Egyptian nationalist Gamal Abdel Nasser. He believed the events had provided anti-Western content for both Egyptian and communist propaganda while simultaneously diverting global attention from the Soviet

crackdown on Hungarian dissidents. According to historian Ronald Hyam, the conference was also to address what the British perceived “as the negative, unreconstructed and prejudiced attitude of the Americans (in at least some quarters of Washington) towards British ‘colonialism.’” Despite divisions over Suez and the perceived anti-colonial stance of American foreign policy, a perception bolstered in part by public American support for Ghana’s independence which African Americans had advocated, Great Britain sought to retain close ties to the United States in order to remain a relevant actor in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere. As Prime Minister Harold Macmillan famously stated later in the 1960s, Great Britain still sought to play the British Greece to the American Rome.¹⁹⁴

Internal American assessments of the relationship between the United States and Great Britain noted negative British perceptions of the United States. On March 7 the American embassy in London expressed concern to the State Department over a recent Gallup Poll which showed “that anti-American attitudes now extended to influential and vocal segment of Tory [conservative] and middle-road groups, many of whom formerly America’s best friends [sic].” The embassy therefore recommended, “Every effort must be made to demonstrate the close, friendly and intimate nature of discussions between the president and Macmillan.” Pictures emphasizing their friendship were to be circulated in Britain as part of this goal. The ambassador also stated, “[It] would be exceedingly useful if forthright statement on US recognition of constructive aspects of Britain’s colonial policy could be made along lines being taken by Vice President in Ghana celebrations. There is a rather bitter feeling here that we completely ignore what Britain has done and

¹⁹⁴ Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, 302.

do not appreciate that she is no longer the old-time colonial power but instead has made rapid progress in giving freedom to her former colonies.” The previous week in Accra, Nixon had praised the orderly transfer of authority, under British auspices, to Nkrumah and the CPP. From the vantage point of Nkrumah, and indeed of many African Americans, protestor deaths in 1949, jail time for Ghanaian political leaders, and foot dragging by the British government demonstrated that the British had only reluctantly given up power. Yet to Nixon and some U.S. officials who feared rapid and premature independence, the process had followed a reasonable timetable.¹⁹⁵

Officials in Washington agreed on the need to publicly highlight the beneficial aspects of British colonialism. On March 14 Fisher Howe, Director of the Executive Secretariat at the State Department, used virtually the exact same language as the U.S. ambassador in London to suggest to General A.J. Goodpaster, a liaison to President Eisenhower from the Defense Department, that such a “forthright statement” be made. Goodpaster apparently requested more information and the next day Howe sent him copies of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post and Times Herald* which had covered Nixon’s speech. Howe believed a prime example of the sort of laudatory phrases the United States needed to employ regarding British colonial policy was Nixon’s statement, ““Here in Ghana we have as good an example of a colonial policy at its best as the world can see.”” Nixon had also praised the British for economic and educational progress in Ghana and “had been deeply impressed by the way the British had trained the Africans for self-government,” implying black Africans had learned self-rule only with

¹⁹⁵ Telegram, American Embassy in London to State Department, “Bermuda Conference,” March 7, 1957, Papers of James Hagerty, 1953-61 (hereafter JH Papers), Box 16, Folder “Bermuda Conference 1957, Agenda, Pre-Conference Notes,” DDEL.

help from white Europeans. While some American officials had periodically been critical of British colonialism, the United States still valued Great Britain as both a bulwark against communism in many parts of the world and as key to NATO. Feathers ruffled by American pronouncements against British colonialism therefore needed to be soothed.¹⁹⁶

The very fact U.S. officials had to reassure the British regarding the American stance on colonialism resulted in part from increasing criticism levied by African Americans against British colonialism. The vast majority of the content discussed during the Bermuda Conference covered European, Middle Eastern, or United Nations issues ranging from economic agreements to overall Western defense policy. Yet during one meeting Secretary Dulles subtly referred to the role of African Americans in the segment of American public opinion focused on the British presence in Africa. After discussing the increasing importance of Africa and the American concern over Soviet representation in Ghana, Dulles sought to reassure British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd of friendly American intentions in Africa by voicing U.S. approval of “an evolutionary trend toward independence” on the continent. Yet Dulles’s need to restate American opinions on decolonization demonstrated the influence public opinion in the United States was having on the Anglo-American relationship. Indeed, Dulles then “said that he realized there was a tendency among some groups in the United States to advocate the principle of independence and to press for its immediate application. He thought that this approach to such questions might cause unnecessary activity among some of the peoples of Africa

¹⁹⁶ Memorandum, Fisher Howe to A.J. Goodpaster, “Pre-Bermuda Attitudes in the UK”, March 14, 1957, and Memorandum, Fisher Howe to A.J. Goodpaster, “Vice President’s Statements on British Colonial Policy,” March 15, 1957, both in JH Papers, Box 16, Folder “Bermuda Conference 1957, Agenda, Pre-Conference Notes,” DDEL.

and might raise false hopes among them. The United States for its part did not wish to embarrass the United Kingdom or other countries who had relations with the countries of Africa, but there were steps taken by some which were beyond our control and we could not prevent.” During the 1950s, and especially in early 1957, African Americans disproportionately constituted the “groups” Dulles mentioned. American blacks thus played a role in complicating Anglo-American relations regarding Africa.¹⁹⁷

Nixon’s Report and NSC 5719

Despite Dulles’ emphatic assertions in Bermuda that American policy still sought gradual, orderly transitions to independence, Nixon’s visit to Accra initiated a broad review of U.S. foreign policy towards Africa. Upon returning to the United States Nixon submitted a report to Eisenhower which he wrote both to describe his trip and to suggest changes in U.S. policy. Nixon discussed Africa’s increasing importance and highlighted “the wider significance of the emergence of the new nation of Ghana.” He believed, “The eyes of the people of Africa south of the Sahara, and of Western Europe particularly, will

¹⁹⁷ “Memorandum of a Conversation, Mid-Ocean Club Conference Room, Bermuda, March 23, 1957, 10:30 am,” in *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 53-56. For the full text of the discussions, see *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. 27: *Western Europe and Canada*, <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/FRUS>, p. 702-767. On page 759 there appears a March 13 paper titled “Means of Combatting [sic] Communist Influence in Tropical Africa,” which was approved by both U.S. and British officials. The paper reaffirmed the dangers of Soviet encroachment and premature independence, and emphasized “striking a balance” regarding the pace of decolonization. On an interesting note, when Eisenhower’s press secretary James Hagerty gave a press conference on March 22, the second day of the conference, he became frustrated with reporters asking him if the meetings were “as gratifying as yesterday’s meeting was,” and how long the meetings had lasted. Hagerty exploded, “Now lookit! – let’s get some sense and some order into these questions. We are not going to use adjectives that vary from day to day. This conference is a conference between friends. You also know that we are trying our best to give you the topics, but you cannot expect us to answer questions like that.” His response betrayed the stress which American officials felt in trying to repair Anglo-American rifts and perhaps revealed that the conference was not a glorious moment of Anglo-American cooperation as the official press releases, and even Ronald Hyam, indicated. See transcript of press conference, March 22, 1957, JH Papers, Box 16, Folder “Bermuda Conference, 1957, Briefings,” DDEL.

be upon this new state to see whether the orderly transition which has taken place from dependent to independent status...will continue to work successfully...By the same token, inimical forces will be closely following the situation to see whether any openings present themselves for exploitation in a manner which would enable them to disrupt and destroy the independence which Ghana seeks to achieve.” Nixon’s central concern was that communists might take advantage of unstable conditions in Ghana or elsewhere in Africa. The United States therefore needed to develop closer ties to the continent. While Nixon was clearly operating from a Cold War mindset, he was still advocating significant new attention to Africa.¹⁹⁸

Nixon’s report also specifically mentioned African Americans. The vice president labeled one of the issues the United States needed to address, “Effect of Discrimination in U.S. on African Attitudes.” He was troubled that “a consistently distorted picture of the treatment of minority races in the United States” and “a completely false impression of the attitudes and practices of the great majority of the American people” had repeatedly appeared in Africa. While what Nixon labeled as “distorted” and “false” portrayals of American race relations were actually quite accurate due to the ongoing oppression of African Americans, he at least recognized the negative effect such racial violence and discrimination had on the American image abroad. He declared, “We cannot talk equality to the peoples of Africa and Asia and practice inequality in the United States. In the national interest, as well as for the moral issues involved, we must support the necessary steps which will assure orderly progress toward the elimination of discrimination in the

¹⁹⁸Richard Nixon, “The Vice President’s Report to the President on Trip to Africa, February 28 – March 23, 1957,” p. 1-2, WHO, Office of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Special Assistant Series, Subject Subseries, Box 10, Folder “Vice President (1) January 1954 – April 1957,” DDEL.

United States.” Yet Eisenhower’s emphasis on gradual change in social relations and his reluctance to implement the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision dictating desegregation of the nation’s schools indicated that “orderly progress” was already the administration’s outlook and was failing to end racial discrimination.

Therefore, the only significant step Nixon took in his report was intellectual in that in his own worldview he finally connected domestic race relations to the U.S. image overseas. Nixon also recommended increased economic aid to Africa, but continued to suggest African nations should retain their ties to European countries. Overall, he warned of communists inroads in Africa. The report was most important simply because Nixon was recommending increased American attention to Africa, something African Americans had been seeking for years.¹⁹⁹

Indeed, the report quickly became public and African Americans reacted quite positively. Writing for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Benjamin Mays, the president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, remarked, “For once we have a Vice President who has been of real help and assistance in his travels about the world because I think he has made friends for the United States.” Mays concluded, however, “It is unfortunate, though, that we must move in Africa and other parts of the world mainly because we fear communism.” Mays was disappointed that attention to the effects of American race relations abroad emerged less from a sincere concern for racial equality than from a desire to deprive communists of propaganda material in Africa and elsewhere. An editorial in the *Chicago Defender* praised Nixon’s report and claimed, “Upon his return from Ghana, he made the most severe indictment that has ever been made by a high

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 4-8.

ranking government official against segregation. He pleaded for equality of treatment for Africa and for effective employment of Negroes in the diplomatic service. From this fork of the political road, Richard Nixon looks very appealing. He has passed the litmus test.” In fact, in May 1957 the *Defender* would name both Nixon and Congresswoman Frances Bolton as “prominent figures” who were connecting “the rising tide of freedom in Africa and the current battle for the passage of civil rights legislation in America.” According to the article, the two spoke at a press dinner attended by over five hundred people, including chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Theodore Francis Green and African ambassadors. The *Defender* noted the “theme of the dinner was ‘How many miles to freedom’ linking the independence of Ghana to [that] in the Southern [sic] states.” Despite some reservations, such as those voiced by Mays that Nixon’s views still emanated from an anti-communist outlook, many African Americans generally approved both Nixon’s newfound support for attention to Africa and the way he linked together racial issues in the domestic and international arenas.²⁰⁰

Nixon’s visit also led to the development of the first National Security Council policy paper on Africa South of the Sahara, NSC 5719, which the Eisenhower administration adopted in late August 1957. Important CIA assessments and State Department papers, including the February 1956 document entitled “Africa: Problems of United States Policy” which mentioned the influence of African Americans on U.S. policy, accompanied the draft when it finally reached the Council. A memorandum circulated among members of the council in preparation for the meeting noted NSC 5719

²⁰⁰ Benjamin Mays, “My View: Finally Africa,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 5, 1957, p. A4; Meriwether, *Proudly*, 113; Editorial, “Our Opinions: Vice President Nixon Scores,” *Chicago Defender*, August 17, 1957, p. 10; “Stress Africa Freedom, Rights at Press Dinner,” *Chicago Defender*, May 28, 1957, p. 5.

“owes its origins in part to the visit made to Africa by the Vice president last spring upon the occasion of Ghana’s achieving its independence.” Another substantial reason for developing a coherent U.S. policy towards Africa mentioned by the memorandum was that the State Department was currently pressuring Congress to create a separate Bureau of African Affairs, although the measure was at the time stalled in the House after passing the Senate. U.S. officials certainly recognized Ghana’s importance due to international public opinion, but ample evidence covered above has indicated they also took into account domestic public opinion, including that of African Americans who advocated increased U.S. attention to Ghana and more support for decolonization. A black leader had also helped send Nixon to Ghana in the first place. Thus African Americans, although in the background, played a part in the need American policymakers saw for the first comprehensive policy paper on Africa.²⁰¹

Parts of NSC 5719 indicated the heightened awareness of Africa’s importance among American policymakers. U.S. officials described Africa as “emerging as an area which will have an increasingly important influence on the course of world events.” Realizing a policy of encouraging continuing close ties between Europeans and Africans “manifestly has its limitations,” the document recommended “supporting and encouraging constructive nationalism and reform movements in colonial areas in Africa, when convinced they are likely to become powerful and grow in influence.” Among the actions listed to carry out such an approach were “public statements by senior American officials, visits of prominent Americans to the area, an exchange of persons program, and

²⁰¹Memorandum, “Item 5 – U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara (NSC 5719),” August 22, 1957, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Special Staff File Series, Box 1, Folder “Africa South of the Sahara (3),” DDEL.

general public and private sympathy in the United States for the desires of dependent peoples for a greater degree of self-government.” Recommendations for encouraging European moves towards granting measures of self-government appeared at several other points. Thus NSC 5719 contained much language indicating U.S. officials were now aware of the importance of Africa and were becoming a bit more comfortable with balancing the needs of Europeans with the aspirations of Africans.²⁰²

Yet the document would not dramatically alter the parameters of the American policy towards Africa which had developed by 1957. The only significant debate occurred over strengthening the warnings in the document concerned with communist infiltration of new African nations and African nationalist movements. Nixon and Undersecretary of State Christian Herter favored such stronger language and Nixon also warned of Egyptian and Indian neutralist influence on the continent. Thus despite noting the importance of Africa, Nixon and NSC officials largely viewed that importance through a Cold War lens. Even the document’s general statement of U.S interests reflected earlier concerns with premature independence. American goals were “that Africa South of the Sahara develop in an orderly manner towards self-government and independence in cooperation with the European powers now in control of large parts of the continent.” Policymakers even sought to “preserve the essential ties which bind Europe and Africa.” Many African nationalists, of course, would suggest those ties served only to reinforce economic exploitation. The language of “orderly political evolution” resounded throughout the document and the military and economic needs of

²⁰² NSC 5917/1, “Statement of U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar year 1960,” *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 76, 78-79.

the United States and its European allies generally predominated. African resources, strategic positions, and potential manpower could not be allowed to fall into the hands of communists. In addition, NSC 5719 also employed racist language, claiming, “The African is still immature and unsophisticated with respect to his attitudes towards the issues that divide the world today. The African’s mind is not made up and he is being subjected to a number of contradictory forces.” As mentioned above, bits of an alternative outlook emerged, including a realization Western “policies cannot be effective if the African feels he is merely a pawn in a power struggle.” Yet whether such statements meant the United States should legitimately embrace the aspirations of Africans or just appear to do so publicly often remained ambiguous.²⁰³

African Americans appeared in NSC 5719 both implicitly and explicitly. As seen above, one of the ways to enhance American influence in Africa was “general public and private sympathy in the United States for the desires of dependent peoples for a greater degree of self-government.” In the 1950s African Americans constituted a significant and vocal proportion of the American population expressing such sympathy. U.S. officials also realized, “U.S. influence is restricted by the extremely distorted picture Africans have been given concerning the race problem in the United States.” One of the given solutions was to “emphasize U.S. progress in the field of race relations through all available media.” Thus while NSC 5719 generally reinforced American Cold War attitudes and ties to European allies, the document was, however haltingly, a step in the direction of balancing European and African concerns. The concise outlook of U.S.

²⁰³ “Memorandum of Discussion at the 335th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, August 22, 1957,” *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 71-74; NSC 5917/1, “Statement of U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar year 1960,” *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 76-77, 79.

officials in August 1957 was, “Premature independence would be as harmful to our interests in Africa as would a continuation of nineteenth century colonialism.” Given the context of the numerous Cold War crises of the 1950s and the conservative racial views of many members of the Eisenhower administration, a significant embrace of African desires for rapid decolonization and substantial aid was very unlikely. Indeed, given the lack of concern for Africa among high-level policymakers during the early and mid-1950s, the very fact the administration adopted a more middle of the road approach by 1957 was remarkable. The independence of Ghana as well as Nixon’s visit there had stimulated the new attention given Africa. Yet African Americans had also constantly pressured State Department officials throughout the 1950s to accord more attention to Africa, and to Ghana specifically. They had also, as seen above, played a significant role in sending Nixon to Africa in the first place. Thus black Americans were in the background of the policy developments during the summer of 1957 which, while not revolutionary or even very liberal, produced the first comprehensive policy paper for American foreign relations with black Africa.²⁰⁴

Race Remains Prominent

As American policymakers continued to explore a new policy towards Africa during the spring and summer of 1957, U.S. officials remained in close contact with those in the private sector advocating deeper ties between the United States and Africa. On April 17, the Institute of African-American Relations (IAAR) invited numerous

²⁰⁴ NSC 5917/1, “Statement of U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar year 1960,” *FRUS 1955-57: 18*, p. 79-80.

American officials to a dinner at the Carlton Hotel in Washington, D.C. Among those attending were the Director of the Office of Northern African Affairs, the USIA's assistant director for the NEA, the chief of the African branch of the Division of Research in the NEA, and Deputy Director of the Office of Southern African Affairs (OSAA) George LaMont. While whites largely ran the IAAR, with the *New York Age* even criticizing the organization as late as 1959 for having only one African American on its eighteen member board, the meeting revealed the massive interest in Africa among U.S. officials. A speech given at the dinner, presumably by one of the directors, began, "The growing importance of Africa and its significance for America need no emphasis." No other elaboration was forthcoming and such a simple statement reveals how ingrained the idea of Africa's importance was in the minds of many mid-level American officials by 1957. The IAAR's main objective was to aid "the peaceful, healthy evolution of the constructive forces" in Africa, largely through educational efforts and establishing connections with African students studying in the United States. Such goals coincided well with those of U.S. officials who sought orderly transitions to independence and pro-American orientations among new African states.²⁰⁵

State Department officials also continued to notice the identification of African Americans with Ghana. In April 1957 Robert Ross, a desk officer primarily covering Liberia and Nigeria, visited those nations as well as Sierra Leone and Ghana. Upon returning, Ross recommended careful consideration of which black officials were to be sent to the region because "there are strong opposing currents within the politically-

²⁰⁵ Guest List for IAAR Dinner, April 17, 1957 and Speech Outline for IAAR, Inc., both in RG 59, RCOBIR, 1947-1963, Box 12, Folder "Conferences on Africa, 1950-1959," NACP; Meriwether, *Proudly*, 202.

minded elements of the American Negro community on the question of racial-extremism versus racial-moderation. Those in the extremist camp make it a policy to engage in heated vocal attacks upon U.S. racial discrimination and the government which would permit it, and to attempt to undercut the position of any prominent Negro who counsels moderation in opposition to them.” Ross demonstrated a keen awareness of the ways African Americans were utilizing African decolonization to criticize racial inequality in the United States. Yet if every African American who opposed racial discrimination had therefore embraced “racial-extremism,” as Ross’s reasoning went, there would have been virtually no black individuals acceptable to the State Department. Most important here, however, was Ross’s awareness of black public opinion when thinking about American policy in Africa.²⁰⁶

Expatriate African Americans unfortunately did not have to explain American racism to Africans who personally experienced such discrimination while in the United States. On May 25, 1957 the *Chicago Defender* reported the head of Ghana’s Transportation Division, on a tour of the Tennessee Valley Authority in Knoxville, had been denied a room in “first class hotels even though he is a foreigner. Darker hued people either must stay at the Negro YMCA, at Knoxville College or in private homes.” The *Defender* labeled the episode an “embarrassment” and stated it was “extremely bad for international relations.” On July 20, the *Defender* ran a story on a Reverend Richard Dansah, who had recently arrived in the United States to study at Allen University in

²⁰⁶ Memorandum, Robert Ross to Ferguson and LaMont, “Notes on West African Trip”, July 1, 1957, p. 1, 11, RG 59, BAA, OWAA, General Subject Files, 1958-1962, Folder “22: Visits, Missions, Tours – General, 1959,” NACP. While the folder title and general location of the document seem to indicate a later date, the document twice includes the year 1957 and there are no other marks indicating that it was received other than in 1957.

Columbia, South Carolina. Even before reaching Columbia, Ansah “had three encounters with Jim Crow which left him both surprised and confused.” When he tried to purchase food and a cup of coffee at a bus stop the waitress first ignored him and then said she would only serve him in the kitchen, away from the rest of the customers. Ansah left in protest. Twice on the bus whites told him to exit the whites-only area. The second time Ansah reportedly responded, “I pay the same fare as you, the seat is empty and I prefer it. Your American Vice President, Mr. Nixon came to my country, Ghana, he bowed before our rulers, was given every courtesy – and we didn’t ask him to take a ‘back seat.’ Maybe I call on Mr. Nixon to get you people straight about my status in Ghana!” The *Defender* remarked proudly, “What happened [sic] Mr. Ansah kept his seat.” Yet such encounters clearly belied American pronouncements of progress in race relations.²⁰⁷

The most embarrassing racial incident for the United States involving a Ghanaian official occurred three months later. On October 8 Ghana’s Finance Minister K.A. Gbedemah, who was in the United States to discuss funding for the Volta River Project with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, stopped to eat at a Howard Johnson restaurant in Dover, Delaware with his personal assistant, an African American named Bill Sutherland. Gbedemah ordered an orange juice, but the waitress told them they could not drink the beverage on site. According to a front page Reuters report in the *Ghana Evening News* titled, “Gbedemah Meets Colour Bar in United States,” the Ghanaian demanded to see the manager and told him who he was. The manager still told him he would have to leave and stated, “‘Coloured people are not allowed in here.’” The

²⁰⁷ “TVA and International Relations,” *Chicago Defender*, May 25, 1957, p. 2; Albert G. Barnett, “Round-Up of Globe News: Ghana Student in America Compares His Country’s Freedom with Dixie’s Jim Crow,” *Chicago Defender*, July 20, 1957, p. 10.

Evening News reported Gbedemah “intended to ask the Howard Johnson Chain for an apology and would lodge an official protest through the American ambassador to Ghana when he returned home.” He apparently also remarked, “If the Vice President of the United States can have a meal in my house when he is in Ghana, and if Adlai Stevenson can come into my home, then I cannot understand why I must receive this treatment at a roadside restaurant in America.” Gbedemah was quite vocal about his experience and the incident quickly became public knowledge. The next day major newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Washington Post Herald*, and the *Washington News* ran stories on the incident.²⁰⁸

Officials in the Eisenhower administration scrambled to react quickly to an event they knew would embarrass the United States both at home and abroad. At 8:29 a.m. on October 9 Eisenhower’s press secretary, James Hagerty, called Dulles and asked if a breakfast between Gbedemah and the president would be a good idea. Dulles “said it strikes him as pretty smart.” Dulles then called Assistant Secretary of State for NEA William Rountree, who thought the “suggestion was wonderful,” and Undersecretary of State Christian Herter, who responded, “It is a very nice idea – he is an uncouth fellow but a nice idea.” Herter seemed not to appreciate Gbedemah’s extremely public protests concerning the incident. When Hagerty called again at 9:03 a.m., Dulles told him the others had approved the breakfast. By the time of a third conversation between the two at

²⁰⁸ “Gbedemah Meets Colour Bar in the United States,” *Ghana Evening News*, October 10, 1957, p. 1, Reel 20, SCDCA; “Restaurant Bars African Leader,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1957, “Restaurant Bars Ghana Aid: Finance Chief Refused Service in Delaware as Negro,” *New York Herald Tribune*, October 9, 1957, “Ghana’s Finance Minister is Ejected By Restaurant Catering to Whites,” *Washington Post Herald*, October 9, 1957, “Restaurant Insults Ghana Official,” *Washington News*, October 9, 1957, all in Republican National Committee: Newsclippings and Publications, Box 248, Folder “Foreign Relations Africa – Ghana, Pre-1961,” DDEL.

10:24 a.m., the decision had been made that “the Pres[ident] and the Ghanese [sic] will breakfast alone.” Another phone call between Dulles and Nixon revealed Nixon’s concern solely with upholding the American image abroad. Apparently Nixon had hosted Gbedemah in his house that morning. The vice president described Gbedemah as an important man in Ghana, but also labeled him “a very sensitive fellow. All those people were.” Whether the latter phrase meant only Ghanaians or all Africans, Nixon did not exactly voice a racially enlightened view by labeling blacks “very sensitive.” Then, indicating the influence of public opinion, Dulles “asked if it would be regarded as playing politics” and Nixon “said everything was regarded that way...it was one of those things where something has to be done.” For once, the administration had responded uncharacteristically rapidly to an incident of racial discrimination.²⁰⁹

Such speed was perhaps based on the administration’s belief the breakfast with Gbedemah would serve to bolster the narrative of racial progress the United States Information Agency was trying to spread around the globe. A portion of the notes given to Eisenhower before his press conference on the morning of October 9 addressed Gbedemah’s experience. The section read, “If asked, the President will say that incident was terribly unfortunate (ordered out of restaurant in Delaware). Would be glad to invite him to dine at White House. Actually, breakfast appointment for tomorrow has been set up. Jim [James Hagerty] thinks it will have terrific propaganda value.” Presumably the last sentence was not for public consumption. Such sentiments revealed how the

²⁰⁹ Telephone Calls, James Hagerty to John Foster Dulles, 8:29 a.m., John Foster Dulles to William Rountree, 8:32 a.m., and John Foster Dulles to Christian Herter, 8:47 a.m., October 9, 1957, Reel 6, Box 7, Folder “September 2, 1957 – October 31, 1957 (2),” in TC-JFDCH; Telephone Calls, James Hagerty to John Foster Dulles, 9:03 a.m. and 10:24 a.m., and Telephone Call, Richard Nixon to John Foster Dulles, 9:25 a.m., October 9, 1957, Reel 10, Box 12, Folder “September 2, 1957 – December 26, 1957 (3),” TC-JFDCH.

administration sought to place a positive spin on what had happened to Gbedemah. That evening the State Department issued instructions to the embassy in Accra concerning the incident and the negative press coverage. The ambassador was to tell Nkrumah about the story, apologize, and also tell him about Eisenhower's invitation to Gbedemah. Dulles, who personally signed the dispatch, also included a subsequent section labeled "FYI" which said, "Department confident President's intervention will serve to put incident in proper perspective in Minister's mind and do much to counteract bad press reaction abroad." The "proper perspective" Dulles referenced meant the official government narrative of gradual progress in American race relations. In fact, high-level policymakers were generally self-congratulatory during the entire episode, believing the incident provided an opportunity to demonstrate evidence of the steps being taken to end racial discrimination. In the end, the breakfast between Gbedemah and Eisenhower went well. African American journalists generally praised the government's response, although the *Chicago Defender* included a subtle jab by noting the administration's "unusual apology." Despite the government's relatively quick action in October, the incidents earlier in 1957 apparently never attracted the attention of high-level U.S. officials. Policymakers' attention to incidents of discrimination against non-white foreigners only occurred if U.S. prestige overseas seemed threatened.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ "Pre-Press Conference," October 9, 1957, p. 2, DDEP-AWF, Press Conferences Series, Box 6, Folder "October 9, 1957," DDEL; Telegram, John Foster Dulles to Accra, October 9, 1957, 845J.41/10-957, Reel 27, CFBA 1955-59; Don Dixon, "Snubbed Ghana Official to Breakfast with Ike," *Chicago Defender*, October 10, 1957, p.2. See also "American Race Prejudice," *Chicago Defender*, October 14, 1957, p. 11, A.L. Foster, "Other Peoples Business," *Chicago Defender*, October 19, 1957, p. 4, "People, Places, and Situations," *Chicago Defender*, October 19, 1957, p. 2, "Ike, Nixon Apologize to Negro Over Delaware Racial Snub!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 19, 1957, p. 13, and "Integration," *Chicago Defender*, November 23, 1957, p. 11.

Just as racial ties between American blacks and Ghanaians were in one way enhanced by Gbedemah's personal experience of American racism, so would Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism stimulate in African Americans a sense of racial pride. One of the key tenets of Nkrumah's ideology was the belief African nations needed to work together to end formal colonialism as well as economic neo-colonialism and minority white rule in Africa. He thus sponsored a number of Pan-African conferences throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s to discuss joint efforts to achieve such objectives. Some meetings only included delegates from fully independent nations while others embraced even those peoples still under European control. Employing the former standard, Nkrumah held the first Conference of Independent African States between April 15 and 22 in Accra. Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Egypt, under the title of the United Arab Republic, attended. Among the series of resolutions the conference issued were calls to end formal colonialism and white minority control as well as a specific protest against the ongoing French war in Algeria. Dulles's assessment of the conference reflected both relief and concern. The secretary told the American embassy in Kenya, "While the resolutions coming out of the Conference were relatively moderate and contained no real surprises, the Department is concerned over the impact of the meetings and Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism upon such areas of unrest as Kenya." Dulles also believed that while Ghana's ability to physically project power was limited, "the tremendous influence [emphasis in original] of this new state and its leader within sub-Saharan Africa cannot be denied." African American responses were generally more positive. The *Chicago Defender* praised Nkrumah for "carv[ing] virtually out of his bare hands an independent state which is giving much prestige to Africa while focusing world

attention on the moral and political issues that are yet unmet.” While criticizing the conference for not inviting Africans still under colonialism and noting that some other African leaders opposed Nkrumah, the *Defender* was generally enthusiastic that African leaders had gathered to address African problems.²¹¹

In fact, during the first months of 1958 African Americans continued to view Ghana, in the words of the *Defender* article covering Ghana’s first anniversary of independence, as “a shining example of the darker races’ ability to lift themselves upward toward the light of democracy and self-salvation once the yoke of subjugation is removed.” As usual, Ghana was important not just as a symbol of black freedom, but due also to the image of modernity the new nation carried. The same *Defender* article announced, “The new African state is moving with incredible momentum toward adopting the economic and political principles which have guided the destiny of the civilizations of the West.” The piece also claimed, “The people are enjoying a new surge of progress compounded of confidence in the future and determination to achieve their goal of economic stability and national security.” Economic opportunity and physical security were certainly of primary concern to African Americans at the beginning of the campaign for civil rights in the United States and Ghana seemed to evidence black progress towards those goals. The *Defender*’s United Nations correspondent Marguerite Cartwright, who also taught at Hunter College in New York City, was present at the celebration of Ghana’s first anniversary in March 1958. Upon her return from Ghana, Hunter College issued a brief press release on her trip, noting she was impressed at “the

²¹¹ Telegram, “Ghana and Its Influence in Africa,” John Foster Dulles to American Embassy in Nairobi, May 19, 1958, p. 2, Reel 7, CFBA 1955-59; “The Meeting of African Leaders,” *Chicago Defender*, April 28, 1958, p. A11.

extraordinary progress and rapid strides this modern, well-run state has made in just a year.” Racial solidarity and modernity remained intertwined in the minds of African Americans when thinking of Ghana. Finally, the vision and unity evidenced by Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism struck at least one African American journalist as of supreme importance. In June the *Defender* ran an article titled, “Unity, Glory Are the Vital Goals.” The piece read in part, “The Africans have two vital things we need badly. The Africans have a sense of destiny, of inescapable achievement and glory while we are being smothered by a gnawing cynicism. They are reaching for a massive all embracing unity through which to express a new idea of African personality, while we fester in our insularity behind the borders of the United States.” Ghana’s sponsorship of African progress and unity continued to encourage African Americans not only to combat white racism, but to expand their vision of the freedom and solidarity available to them.²¹²

Nkrumah’s 1958 Visit to the United States

Such ideas stimulated by Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism combined with ongoing African American identification with Ghana to produce Nkrumah’s second visit to the United States in late July 1958. While historian James Meriwether argues Nkrumah’s trip “played a vital role in the reconceptualizations” of African American identity and helped “shift the attitudes of black Americans,” much of the above discussion of African American identification with Ghana has demonstrated such changes in thinking had

²¹² “Ghana’s First Anniversary,” *Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1958, p. A11; “Dr. M. Cartwright to Speak at YMCA World Service ‘Sip’,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 24, 1958, p. 6; Press Release by Hunter College of the City of New York, May 8, 1958, Series III, Box 19, Folder “8D”, Bond Papers; “Unity, Glory are Vital Goals,” *Chicago Defender*, June 7, 1958, p. 11.

already occurred. Even if Meriwether is describing the black masses, and not black leaders who recognized the importance of Ghana much earlier than average working class African Americans, letters to newspapers as well as parties within the United States celebrating Ghanaian freedom during 1957 indicated the black masses had already embraced Ghana. In fact, the already existing identification with Ghana was the root cause of Nkrumah's 1958 trip. Historians who have analyzed the relationship between Ghana and the United States during the 1950s have usually attributed no causation at all to Nkrumah's trip or have merely assumed the visit resulted from an invitation from Eisenhower on the anniversary of Ghana's independence. Meriwether's statement that "Nkrumah returned to the United States in 1958" and Ebere Nwaubani's claim that "the United States/Ghana relationship was deepened by Nkrumah's official visit to the United States in July 1958" both illustrate the former view while Mary Montgomery's remark that "President Eisenhower marked the occasion [Ghana's first anniversary of independence] with a congratulatory note to the Prime Minister that included an official invitation to visit Washington" reflects the latter. Brenda Gayle Plummer only mentions the trip when she writes of "Nkrumah's appearance at an ACOA rally on 125th Street and Seventh Avenue in Harlem." Only Meriwether includes any significant discussion of African American reactions. Nwaubani and Montgomery merely note he was popular and then turn solely to Nkrumah's two meetings with Eisenhower during the trip. Yet just as Nixon's 1957 visit to Ghana was rooted in the 1954 Congressional resolution sponsored by an African American leader, Nkrumah's 1958 visit to the United States originated in

African American racial identification with Ghana at the time of Ghana's independence in March 1957.²¹³

Although at some point during the independence celebrations Nkrumah had announced his desire to visit the United States, African American pressure on State Department officials, and the recognition by those officials of the importance a visit by Nkrumah would hold in both international and domestic terms, formed the groundwork for Nkrumah's trip. Only a few days after Ghana's independence the ACOA began to develop plans for a visit by Nkrumah. More importantly, however, on March 13 Albert Ceres, the Director of Public Relations for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, contacted the Hershey Chocolate Corporation, Lincoln University, and the University of Pennsylvania for help in organizing a visit by Nkrumah. Ceres wanted Nkrumah to "address the 38th Annual Encampment of the Department of Pennsylvania" on July 13. The prime minister would then visit the company and institutions. Ceres's reasoning for the visit indicated the influence of African American identification with Ghana. He stated, "Hundreds of our members are Negroes." He also argued the visit "would have domestic and international significance" and thus further indicated his recognition of the importance of black enthusiasm for Ghana and Nkrumah.²¹⁴

Ceres also contacted the State Department with his plans and sought to obtain government participation in a potential Nkrumah visit. On April 23, Ceres telephoned

²¹³ Meriwether, *Proudly*, 172; Nwaubani, *Decolonization in West Africa*, 132; Montgomery, "Eyes of the World," p. 84-8; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 282.

²¹⁴ Handwritten notes on copy of "Agenda: Executive Board Meeting of the American Committee on Africa" and "Minutes of the Executive Board of the American Committee on Africa," both on March 11, 1957, on Reel 4 of *Records of the American Committee on Africa* [microform] (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1992); Letter, Albert F. Ceres, Jr. to Horace Mann Bond, March 13, 1957, Series III, Box 68, Folder "294B," Bond Papers.

OSAA Deputy Director George Lamont in the State Department to discuss the trip. Later that day, LaMont penned a response to Ceres which began, “I refer to our telephone conversation this morning regarding your proposal to invite Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana to visit the United States.” LaMont’s language indicated Ceres, who acted based on his recognition of African American identification with Ghana, was the original proponent of government involvement in a visit by Nkrumah. LaMont went on to express his regrets the Department could only fund a trip by Nkrumah resulting from “an official invitation,” but since such trips “have to be arranged long in advance, usually a year or more,” the Department was already out of money for 1957. LaMont concluded, “We shall, of course, bear in mind the possibility of inviting him officially to the United States at some time in the future.” The idea for official government involvement in a visit by Nkrumah to the United States thus originated with a man acting on his knowledge of the extreme importance of Ghana to African Americans.²¹⁵

Subsequent internal discussions among U.S. officials concerning an invitation to Nkrumah further revealed the impact of African American public opinion on Nkrumah’s 1958 visit. On August 20, a staff secretary for Assistant Secretary Rountree circulated a memorandum noting Rountree wanted recommendations from each area desk for “state and official visits deemed desirable by this Bureau for calendar year 1958.” LaMont’s response three days later was quite revealing. He believed a visit by Nkrumah “would clearly be in the best interests of the U.S.” Lamont remarked, “Dr. Nkrumah received the major portion of his education in this country and has maintained close relations with certain U.S. academic circles during the entire period in which he has led Ghana in its

²¹⁵ Letter, George LaMont to Albert F. Ceres, Jr., April 23, 1957, 745J.11/4-2357, Reel 8, CFBA 1955-59.

steps toward independence.” LaMont’s use of the word “certain” was very likely a reference to African American leaders. LaMont even went on to note that several institutions wanted Nkrumah to visit, listed Howard and Lincoln among them, and stated, “It would be advantageous for us to afford our own official recognition of his position of African leadership.” LaMont was speaking of domestic issues when he wrote the latter sentence because in his memorandum he spent the entire subsequent paragraph on the recognition of Ghana’s importance by communist and non-aligned countries and then argued an invitation to Nkrumah would also please “the people of Ghana and other African areas.” Thus he clearly delineated between the domestic and international impact of a potential visit by Nkrumah. In sum, LaMont believed the State Department needed to demonstrate its appreciation of Nkrumah’s stature in part to placate domestic, and African American, public opinion.²¹⁶

Thus African Americans, through Ceres and LaMont, were centrally responsible for Nkrumah’s 1958 U.S. trip. A visit by Nkrumah did not materialize in 1957, although after Ceres’s April conversation with LaMont the State Department continued to worry over how to receive Nkrumah should he travel to the United States under private sponsorship. In early August Secretary Dulles expressed such concern and in his late August memorandum LaMont mentioned the possibility Nkrumah would still make a trip to the United Nations in the fall of 1957. LaMont’s overall emphasis, however, was to ensure an official, properly planned visit the following year, a visit in part to address

²¹⁶ NEA Circular, Eric Oulashim, “State and Official Visits in Calendar Year 1958,” August 20, 1957, and Memorandum, George LaMont to Henry Rountree, “Calendar 1958 Official Visit to U.S. by Prime Minister Nkrumah (Ghana),” August 23, 1957, both in RG 59, BAA, OWAA, Records Relating to Ghana, 1958-63, Box 1, Folder “22.8: 1958 Nkrumah Visit,” NACP.

African American enthusiasm for Nkrumah. By early October Nkrumah decided against a trip that year to the United States because, as he told Horace Mann Bond, "I have been kept pretty busy over here." While Nkrumah himself seems to have originally proposed a visit, Ceres of the Veterans of Foreign Wars sought to make the trip a reality. He did so based substantially on his realization of African American identification with Ghana and the domestic significance the visit would have. The State Department was uninterested in an official visit by Nkrumah before Ceres contacted LaMont and LaMont's later justifications for bringing Nkrumah to the United States included clear references to the transnational racial ties between African Americans and Ghana. Nkrumah's 1958 official visit to the United States thus did not materialize out of thin air and did not occur due to a spontaneous invitation from Eisenhower in March 1958. The trip originated in African American enthusiasm for Nkrumah and Ghana, with the State Department first scrambling to take advantage of any potential visit and then planning an official visit based in part on African American public opinion.²¹⁷

Thus when in March 1958 Eisenhower extended a formal invitation to Nkrumah to visit the United States, African Americans both praised the decision and discussed what the trip would mean for their own struggle for freedom. Upon learning of the invitation, the *Chicago Defender* proclaimed, "It is a reassuring sign that the new African state...has gained the confidence and respect of the world's mightiest nation." The *Defender* then likened Ghana to the United States by stating, "Ghana is stable politically and a democratic rule of law is plainly established. The fundamental rights of the citizen

²¹⁷ Telegram, John Foster Dulles to Wilson Flake, August 9, 1957 and Telegram, Wilson Flake to John Foster Dulles, August 12, 1957, both in RG 84, GCGR, 1956-1958, Box 1, Folder "350," NACP; Letter, Kwame Nkrumah to Horace Mann Bond, Series III, Box 23, Folder "35C," Bond Papers.

are secure.” While noting some remaining problems of “tribalism and feudalism,” the piece generally portrayed an image of a modern, democratic nation. The *Defender* even quoted Nkrumah’s assurances of education and electricity to reinforce the image of Ghana as modern. As usual, racial pride emanated from the article, which read in part, “In the perspective of history Ghana is a symbol of resurgent Africa rising out of the mist of antiquity, surging forth like the golden sun of glory. It is the Africa that was but yesterday enslaved, despised, condemned to eternal darkness and cursed by her own descendants.” Yet now Africa was moving towards a “manifest destiny” of freedom. Ghana was now a symbol of black capability and was no longer “cursed by her own descendants.” When writing to the Ghanaian Embassy in the United States, Executive Secretary of the NAACP Roy Wilkins described Ghana “as the embodiment of world-wide aspirations toward the ideals of human freedom to which we have so long been dedicated.” Yet black leaders and journalists were not the only ones excited about Nkrumah’s visit.²¹⁸

Enthusiasm for Nkrumah among the African American masses was similarly palpable and helped bring Nkrumah to Harlem and Chicago. In addition to the visit itself, therefore, much of the course of the trip originated with African Americans petitioning the State Department for access to the Ghanaian leader. Hope Stevens and Elmer Carter, two Harlem citizens, wrote the NAACP requesting both a stop by Nkrumah in Harlem and the presence of Roy Wilkins on a proposed Harlem Citizens Committee of One

²¹⁸ “Invitation to Ghana’s Premier,” *Chicago Defender*, March 22, 1958, p. 10; Letter, Roy Wilkins to Seth Anthony, April 30, 1958, Reel 1, John H. Bracey, Jr. and August Meier, eds., *Papers of the NAACP: Special Subjects, 1956-1965* [microform], Part 24, Series A: *Africa-Films* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1997) (hereafter *NAACP*: 24, A).

Hundred which would plan Nkrumah's appearances there. They wrote, "We believe that the citizens of Harlem and the Negro citizens of New York should have an opportunity to pay their tribute to Prime Minister Nkrumah, who is one of the most important personages in the modern world." Once again, Nkrumah as a symbol of the "modern" world underlined the way blacks in the United States viewed him as a man leading a nation showcasing black capability. In another indication of African American influence on American relations with Ghana, the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the ACOA jointly proposed a dinner for Nkrumah to the State Department. Seth Anthony, the Charge d' Affaires at the Ghanaian embassy in the United States, then told Roy Wilkins, "The State Department considers this proposal a good idea, and it is being conveyed to Accra for a decision." The event eventually took place in Harlem after the above invitations for Nkrumah to visit the area were successful. Senator Irving Ives (R-NY) called Dulles in early July to tell him "Elmer Carter of NY (a Negro who is a member of the Board against Discrimination appointed by Dewey) called and wants to know if the PM of Ghana could be at a reception they want to give him in Harlem on Sunday, July 27, in some armory." Dulles said he would "look into it" and the two men "agreed it is a good thing to do." Here again was African American initiative in planning a major part of Nkrumah's visit to the United States.²¹⁹

In addition, Nkrumah's stop in Chicago came about due to queries by African Americans. As early as April 7, the *Chicago Defender* reported Sidney Williams, the

²¹⁹Letter, Hope Stevens and Elmer Carter to Roy Wilkins, "Proposed Harlem Citizens Committee of One Hundred to Welcome Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah," June 27, 1958 and Letter, Seth Anthony to Roy Wilkins, April 16, 1958, both on Reel 1, *NAACP*: 24, A; Telephone Call, Ives to John Foster Dulles, July 2, 1958, Box 8, Folder "July 2, 1958, June 2, 1958 to July 31, 1958 (4)," Reel 7, TC-JFDCH; Memorandum, July 21, 1958, Papers of Christian A. Herter, 1957-61, Box 5, Chronological File, Folder "July 1958 (1)," DDEL.

“chairman-convener of the First Friends of Ghana, organized by Chicagoans in December, 1956,” had traveled to the Ghanaian embassy in Washington to request Nkrumah also visit Chicago. He was successful. While the Eisenhower administration recognized the importance of Nkrumah and Ghana and sought to gain propaganda value from Nkrumah’s visit, African Americans contributed to both the trip’s origination and overall course. Indeed, the influence of African Americans can be seen in the fact that on June 6 Clarence Randall, Eisenhower’s Special Assistant on foreign economic policy, wrote in his journal that Nkrumah was “coming to Chicago for two days, and the State Department have [sic] been hard put to it to know just what to do about that visit. The Mayor will of course give him a ceremonial luncheon, but the question was what after that.” In Harlem and Chicago, African Americans held the initiative during Nkrumah’s visit, with the State Department scrambling to get involved.²²⁰

The overall attitude of the Eisenhower administration toward Nkrumah’s trip remained balanced between a realization of Ghana’s importance in both international and domestic public opinion and a concern with making sure the visit bolstered the U.S. image overseas. On July 19, Dulles told Eisenhower, “Our primary objective for the forthcoming visit is to demonstrate our recognition of the importance of Ghana’s independence and acceptance of that nation as a full-fledged member of the community of nations.” The secretary also described Nkrumah as “the inspiration of African nationalists throughout that continent.” Eisenhower thus met twice with Nkrumah to discuss foreign policy issues and the Volta River Project. Historians Ebere Nwaubani and

²²⁰ “Ghana Supporter in D.C. Parley,” *Chicago Defender*, April 7, 1958, p. A5; June 6, 1958, p. 10, Clarence B. Randall Journals, 1952-61, Box 5, Folder “CFEP Vol. 8, May 1-June 11, 1958,” DDEL.

Mary Montgomery have covered those meetings so they will not be discussed here. In order for Nkrumah's trip to bolster the U.S. image abroad, the USIA planned to utilize the visit in overseas propaganda. The agency devoted substantial space to the visit in *American Outlook*, one of its publications in Africa, and provided copies of taped interviews with Nkrumah to Radio Ghana. In mid-August, after the trip had concluded, Eisenhower's Operations Coordinating Board declared, "His [Nkrumah's] reaction and that of public opinion in Ghana indicate that his visit to the U.S. was highly successful from the point of view of U.S. policy objectives." Overall, U.S. officials believed the trip had bolstered the American image overseas and had served to help keep Ghana oriented towards the West.²²¹

The administration accounted for African American enthusiasm by inviting black leaders to official dinners hosted for Nkrumah while he was in the United States. When constructing the guest lists for such events, Under Secretary of State for NEA Joseph Palmer told Rountree, "Efforts have been made to include in the lists ample representation by groups having a special interest in the Prime Minister's visit, i.e. the American negro community." While those with educational and business interest in Ghana were also invited, the list for the dinner to be headed by Eisenhower included E. Frederic Morrow, Ralph Bunche of the United Nations, Howard University President Mordecai Johnson, Lincoln University President A.G. Grubb, the "sole Negro member of

²²¹ Memorandum, John Foster Dulles to Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Official Visit by Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana," July 19, 1958, WHO, Office of Staff Secretary, Subject Series, State Dept. Subseries, Box 5, Folder "State Visits - 1958-1959 (3)," DDEL; Nwaubani, *Decolonization in West Africa*, 130, 132-4; Montgomery, "The Eyes of the World," 88; Telegram, Henry Dunlap to USIA, "Agency Plans for Coverage of Nkrumah's Visit to U.S.," June 17, 1958, RG 84, AGUR, 1951-58, Box 1, Folder "Program 1958," NAI; Operations Coordinating Board, "Weekly Activity Report," August 11, 1958, p. 3, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, OCB Secretariat Series, Box 9, Folder "OCB 319:1 Activity Report," DDEL.

the New York Stock Exchange” Philip Jenkins, Channing Tobias of the NAACP, and William Walker, a “prominent Negro newspaperman” with the National Association of Newspaper Publishers. By mid-1958, U.S. officials thus clearly understood the “special interest” in Ghana among black Americans and believed they had to take into consideration such transnational racial identifications when Nkrumah visited the United States.²²²

Indeed, language of transnational racial identification abounded in the words of African American leaders who spoke in honor of Nkrumah during his visit. When he arrived in the United States on July 23, a host of high-level government officials, including Nixon, were there to greet him. The first part of his trip included a series of officially sponsored luncheons and dinners, speeches to Congress, and two meetings with Eisenhower. The rest of the trip consisted of visits to Harlem, where over ten thousand people crammed into a National Guard Armory to see him, and then Chicago. At various functions held in Nkrumah’s honor, black leaders such as Ralph Bunche, Roy Wilkins, and Lester Granger gave speeches full of transnational racial identification between African Americans and Ghana. Wilkins declared, “We have felt the stirring of the blood tie between us and the land of our forefathers. As other loyal Americans look back upon their European homelands with affection and pride, so we look upon Ghana and the emerging nations of Africa. Your struggles and your successes have aided us in our trials and tribulations here.” Granger called Ghana “an inspiring example for those colored and white Americans who are trying to rid this nation of the last blood-stained vestiges of our

²²² Memorandum, Joseph Palmer to William Rountree, “Guest List for Official Visit of the Prime Minister of Ghana,” June 26, 1958, 745J.13-6-2658, Reel 8, CFBA 1955-59.

slave holding history by removing every barrier or encumbrance that prevents Negro Americans from fully enjoying their equal citizenship.” Granger further stated, “Many Negroes of this country can trace their forebearers [sic] back to the land of Ghana that was the Gold coast. I, myself, am one of those. Thus we are quick to see a close kinship between those who have successfully participated in the ‘revolution of rising expectations’ abroad and those of us who participate in this same revolution at home.” Historian James Meriwether has provided an apt treatment of many of the details of Nkrumah’s visit, including the enthusiastic crowds and the numerous African American dignitaries, from athlete Jackie Robinson to union leader A. Philip Randolph, involved in Nkrumah’s appearances.²²³

While the attitudes of black leaders were of course important and influential, Meriwether does not fully explore how the trip exposed divisions between African American leaders and the black masses. Letters to the editors of major African American newspapers included both the usual transnational racial identification with Ghana as well as criticisms of black American leaders. The *Chicago Defender* was especially diligent in publishing a number of such letters during the late summer of 1958. One man named James Nash claimed, “I am sure that Chicago’s people of African descent would benefit from the words of wisdom from this great American leader who organized the people of Ghana to throw off the yoke of colonialism and destroy the subversion of freedom and democracy born out of the doctrine of ‘white supremacy’ that cloaks the super

²²³ “Remarks by Roy Wilkins, executive secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, at a dinner in honor of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister of Ghana, Waldorf-Astoria, July 29, 1958, 8:00 p.m.,” and “Welcome Remarks by Lester B. Granger, Executive Director, National Urban League, to Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana on the occasion of a dinner in the Prime Minister’s honor, Tuesday, July 29th, Waldorf-Astoria, N.Y.,” both on Reel 1, NAACP: 24, A; Meriwether, *Proudly*, 172-7.

exploitation of colored peoples everywhere.” A woman named Minnie Curtwright believed Nkrumah “could tell us what the future holds for Africa and her descendants who are suffering in foreign soil.” An anonymous writer who declared, “I touched the man!” described his experience with Nkrumah thus, “I was then made aware of the pulsating throb of freedom that permeates this man and diffuses his very being until it radiates beyond and like the pull of a giant magnet gathered all men unto him.” The writer labeled Nkrumah’s claim Africa would never be truly free until blacks around the world were free “a most unusual but correct point of view.” The writer then provided a telling comparison between how some African Americans viewed Nkrumah and how they viewed their own leaders by stating Nkrumah was “not just an illustrious son of Africa, but a statesman of the first rank in this mad world of ours. How unlike his counter-part the American black man, who, no matter how wide his experience or how great his training feels that it is something to crow about if he can just be the third assistant to some inferior white in the city hall or some unprincipled executive in Washington, D.C.” For some among the black masses, Nkrumah was the ideal leader and African American elites paled in comparison. Both Nash and Curtwright had also criticized black leaders for initially planning to keep Nkrumah away from the black masses during his visit to Chicago. These letters thus revealed a measure of underlying resentment at African American leaders who appeared either as trying to keep Nkrumah within their own elite circle of influence or as severely lacking in their leadership on black civil rights. Indeed, one woman named Maude deplored the fact “the masses of underprivileged Negor [sic] men and women did not have a chance to see Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana. The silk-stockings members of the race in conspiracy with some

white Negro haters saw to it that the people who needed to see Dr. Nkrumah most were kept entirely out of the picture. This is a shame! Whoever had arranged the dinner and reception [in Chicago] should be given a free one way ticket to h....” Thus Nkrumah’s visit also provided a forum for common blacks to express their frustration over their perceptions of faulty black leadership and the slow pace of black activism for civil rights.²²⁴

At times such exasperation and frustration extended to the entire African American community. In another letter to the editor, a man named Richard Cailiouet claimed, “The reason we blacks are held in universal contempt by whites and suffer from self contempt ourselves is not so much blackness as weakness. We Negroes are not a strong people. Yet our race is a race of tremendous potential.” Cailiouet went on to fault African American leaders when he wrote, “Africa is a land of tremendous potential wealth and power. Many American Negro and African leaders have spoken of a closer bond between them. Yet no organization has been created among us to extend aid to Africa.” Cailiouet suggested less spending by black Americans “on cars, cigarettes, skin whitened ‘processes’ etc.” and more direct aid to Ghana to help build the Volta River Project, roads, and schools. For Cailiouet, “If our race is to be strong and win the respect of the world and gain back our own self respect, as a race, then we Negroes ought to do all we can to help our brethen [sic] in Africa to become strong, free and united.” Cailiouet then summed up the direct transnational effects such African American contributions to

²²⁴ Letter to the Editor, James Nash, “The People Speak: Would Like to Hear Premier Nkrumah,” *Chicago Defender*, July 26, 1958, p.10; Letter to the Editor, Mrs. Minnie Curtwright, “The People Speak: About Nkrumah’s Visit,” *Chicago Defender*, July 30, 1958, p. 11; Letter to the Editor, “The People Speak: Kwame Nkrumah,” *Chicago Defender*, September 6, 1958, p. 10; Letter to the Editor, Maude, “The People Speak: Silkstocking Negroes,” *Chicago Defender*, August 11, 1958, p. A11.

Ghana would have within the United States. He stated, “We could help make [Pan-Africanist Marcus] Garvey’s dream of a strong, free, black united West Africa a living reality and indirectly help win freedom and full citizenship for ourselves here in the United States.” The language of a nation made industrial through the Volta River dam and made modern by new schools and roads indicated the black masses were embracing the narrative of modernity which African American leaders had been espousing since the early 1950s in order to convince the world of black capability and thus reinforce the drive for full racial equality in the United States.²²⁵

Overall, most comments by non-elite blacks contained deepened transnational racial identifications. A man named Peter Mosley wrote to the *Chicago Defender*, “I believe strongly that the time has come when we American Negroes must do something to help Africa attain her freedom. We should offer our technical, educational and financial aid to our mother country...If we have any pride left, we should waste no time in bringing to formation a society of interested Negroes with the aim of deliberating [sic] the rest of Africa from the yoke of colonialism.” A woman named Maria Garden declared, “For the first time in my life I was proud to be a Negro...All is not lost for us. Dr. Nkrumah may lead us out of this babel of racial confusion and dilemma.” She described Nkrumah as a “great world leader” with immense “intellectual stature.” Garden further claimed, “His coming has opened the eyes of [sic] great many people who heretofore have been frowning on Africa and Africans.” A man named Jay Peters was delighted that Nkrumah’s Chicago visit had “enlightened many an Afro-American on the

²²⁵ Letter to the Editor, Richard Cailiouet, “The People Speak: Closer Ties with Africa,” *Chicago Defender*, September 18, 1958, p. A11.

world picture and has given to all Chicagoans the story of the NEW AFRICA [emphasis in original].” Nkrumah’s time in Harlem and Chicago placed the reality of a free black Africa at times literally on the doorstep of average black Americans. The resulting outpouring of transnational racial identification clearly revealed an embrace of a free Ghana both on its own terms and as a symbol of black modernity.²²⁶

Nkrumah’s visit also, however, highlighted divisions among some African American leaders regarding Pan-Africanism. Sociologist St. Clair Drake, who was a professor simultaneously at Roosevelt University in Chicago and the University of Ghana, wrote to George Padmore in May 1958 concerning Nkrumah’s upcoming visit. Padmore was a West Indian leftist who was Nkrumah’s advisor on African affairs between 1957 and 1959. Drake was concerned about the invitation the American African Students Association (AASA) had extended to W.E.B. Du Bois to speak at their June meeting in Chicago because “the Commies have insinuated themselves at the center, and the only [emphasis in original] major speaker is going to be DuBois [sic]. They will present him as the symbol of Pan Africanism. I can predict precisely what he will do, namely, to denounce the United States vigorously, to praise the Soviet Union loudly, and to tell the students that the real ally in their struggle against imperialism is the USSR.” Drake disagreed with Du Bois’s views of international relations and felt his presence at the AASA conference was “not very smart just on the eve of the PM’s [Nkrumah’s] visit, nor is it good in long range terms for the African students here.” Drake believed the “Old

²²⁶ Letter to the Editor, Peter Mosley, “The People Speak: Inspired by Dr. Nkrumah,” *Chicago Defender*, August 4, 1958, p. 11; Letter to the Editor, Maria Garden, “The People Speak: A New Day for U.S. Negroes,” *Chicago Defender*, August 6, 1958, p. A1; Letter to the Editor, Jay Peters, “The People Speak: Nkrumah and Garvey,” *Chicago Defender*, August 23, 1958, p. 10.

Man” had a right to speak “the CP [Communist Party] line” since free speech was so important in the United States and since Du Bois was “the Father of Pan Africanism.” Yet, Drake argued, “someone should be on that program to act as a corrective and to present the modern sophisticated non-Soviet Pan Africanism.” Drake then asked Padmore, “Don’t you think he [Nkrumah] ought to make clear to the young people his version of Pan Africanism is not DuBois’ [sic].” Drake realized “this is a delicate thing,” but he desperately wanted to “take the spotlight away from the CP” at a meeting which brought together many potential future African leaders.²²⁷

Drake himself certainly embraced Pan-Africanism, but not the Soviet-oriented version espoused by Du Bois. Drake’s letter to Padmore thus highlighted the divisions among African American activists and leaders over exactly what type of Pan-Africanism should be championed. By the latter half of the 1950s, many black Americans embraced Nkrumah’s vision of transnational racial cooperation without employing Du Bois’s critiques of the United States or his praise of the Soviet Union. In fact, Drake’s use of the word “modern” to describe the “non-Soviet Pan-Africanism” of Nkrumah indicated that some black Americans believed Du Bois’s views were mired in the 1930s era of the Popular Front and were no longer realistic. In the 1950s, black nations such as Ghana could stand on their own without a superpower ally and thus provide a potent symbol of black worth and capability precisely because of such non-alignment. In the end, Nkrumah’s 1958 U.S. visit reinforced the racial identification of the black masses with Ghana while simultaneously revealing splits between the black masses and black leaders

²²⁷ Letter, St. Clair Drake to George Padmore, May 22, 1958, Papers of St. Francis Drake, Box 8, Folder “23,” Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C (hereafter Drake Papers).

as well as among Pan-Africanists. In addition, both the origins and the course of the trip revealed African American agency in American foreign affairs.

Eisenhower's Officials and Transnational Connections

By the summer and fall of 1958, U.S. officials were actively seeking to enhance ties between American blacks and Ghanaians. Before Nkrumah arrived in the United States, he contacted the State Department concerning the development of a "Ghanaian-American Relations Association." Apparently Nkrumah was worried local chapters of such friendship organizations would spring up but "might be headed by persons of questionable motives and reputation." Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Joseph Palmer contacted E. Frederic Morrow for "the names of two negroes and two white persons whose stature and reputation would assure proper status of the group from the outset." These individuals would be put in contact with Nkrumah in order to develop a national-level organization of American-Ghanaian friendship. Palmer told Morrow the Department believed in "the desirability of establishment of a reputable national group to further relations between the two countries." Revealingly, Palmer also remarked, "Under Secretary [of State Christian A.] Herter has expressed a personal interest in this matter and has asked that we keep him informed of developments." By mid-1958 high-level U.S. officials not only noticed, but also sought to enhance, the deepening connections between African Americans and Ghana.²²⁸

²²⁸ Memorandum, Joseph Palmer to E. Frederic Morrow, "Prime Minister Nkrumah's Interest in a 'Ghanaian-American Relations Association,'" Records of E. Frederic Morrow, 1950-61 (hereafter REFM), Box 6, Folder "Ghana," DDEL.

In a similar display of a new government interest to get directly involved in the growing relationship between American blacks and Africa, in September Herter and CIA Director Allen Dulles “talked about sending some outstanding colored men to Africa.” They contacted Palmer who suggested either Morrow or Martin Jenkins, the president of historically black Morgan State College. The State Department also canvassed the opinions of embassies in Africa. Unfortunately, in a display of embassy officials’ ignorance and unwillingness to get involved in such racial ties, all but one “state[d] that they do not know to what use they can put these gentlemen.” When Herter learned of the replies at an Operations Coordinating Board meeting on September 17, he shrugged off such negativity and “requested a supplemental report” from George LaMont. According to an official involved in foreign economic policy named Joseph Rand, LaMont was “eager to devise some specific mission, not necessarily for the Department of State.” Rand then told Secretary of the Council of Foreign Economic Policy Paul Cullen, “I think we could usefully explore the appointment of Fred Morrow as a special roving emissary of the President.” Three months later Rand expressed similar sentiments, but in the end, no trip by Morrow occurred. Yet the internal considerations of a black “roving emissary” for Africa by men such as Under Secretary Herter and CIA Director Dulles indicated the increasing importance placed on African American ties to Ghana and Africa by some of Eisenhower’s top officials. Most policymakers, of course, wanted to use such connections to enhance friendly relations between the United States and the continent. Then the likelihood of achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives of orienting Africa towards the West and away from the Soviet Union would be enhanced. Yet the fact such measures were even under consideration indicated the agency of American blacks whose

transnational racial identifications, already fully formed, U.S. officials sought to use to their own advantage.²²⁹

Likewise, an August 1958 conversation at a National Security Council meeting evidenced the efforts by U.S. officials to use African Americans to enhance ties between the United States and Africa. The discussion at the meeting also revealed telling divisions between the State Department and President Eisenhower over the use of race in American foreign policy. While most of the discussion revolved around revising U.S. economic policy in sub-Saharan Africa, at one point Eisenhower “remarked parenthetically that he was having a continuing protocol discussion with the State Department, which insisted that he invite half a dozen American negroes to any White House reception of a distinguished African visitor. The President feared the African visitors felt they were being patronized.” Eisenhower’s comments occurred while the NSC was discussing the recruiting of International Cooperation Administration officials for work in Ghana and thus both the timing of his comments and the inclusion of the word “parenthetically” in the official record of the meeting are revealing. He seemed to be interjecting into the discussion his frustrations at State Department insistence on the presence of African Americans to greet and converse with African leaders. Eisenhower may have sincerely believed “African visitors felt they were being patronized,” but he was more likely simply unwilling to involve African American leaders any more deeply in his administration. Such an attitude would have been consistent with the overall lack of black

²²⁹ Memorandum, Joseph Rand to Lieutenant Colonel Paul Cullen, September 18, 1958, U.S. Council on Foreign Economic Policy (hereafter USCFEP), Office of Chairman, Staff Series Box 3, Folder “Africa-Misc(1),” DDEL. Cullen was Secretary of the Council of Foreign Economic Policy and Rand was an official involved in developing foreign economic policy; Memorandum, Joseph Rand to Lieutenant Colonel Paul Cullen, December 4, 1958, USCFEP, Records, Box 12, Folder “CFEP 568 US Foreign Economic Policy for Africa South of the Sahara (3),” DDEL.

inclusion in his presidency. State Department officials, however, had been in consistent contact with African American leaders and were very aware of black American views of Africa. By 1958, therefore, they knew the inclusion of African Americans at official events for visiting African leaders was essential both to placate black public opinion and to bolster U.S. prestige abroad by taking advantage of existing transnational racial identifications. Eisenhower's complaint thus revealed black agency by exposing divisions between the president and the mid-level U.S. officials in contact with black leaders over the best way to accommodate African leaders.²³⁰

Language addressing the ties between African Americans and Ghana also appeared in a new policy paper on Ghana in late 1958. In November the Operations Coordinating Board produced a revised version of the previous January's "Operations Plan for Ghana." U.S. officials noted the importance of Ghana and Nkrumah's potential ability to influence large parts of Africa. Cold War priorities generally predominated in that the goals of U.S. foreign policy were to keep Ghana away from the Soviet Union and oriented towards the West. One American objective, however, seemed to echo black American wishes for Ghana. Policymakers wanted Ghana to "be a stable, developing and independent state serving as an example of African ability in self-government." More explicitly, U.S. officials recommended the USIA "should exploit the cultural link between Africa and the U.S. arising from the Africa-originated Negro-American minority." To that end, "every effort should be made towards a greater dissemination of factual news about the United States particularly to insure that Ghanaians are accurately

²³⁰ Memorandum, "Discussion at the 375th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, August 7, 1958," August 8, 1958, p. 12, DDEP-AWF, NSC Series, Box 10, Folder "375th Meeting, August 7, 1958," DDEL.

informed on progress made in desegregation and the role of Negro-Americans in U.S. society, U.S. free world leadership and U.S. interest in Africa.” Thus the usual language of emphasizing gradual progress in domestic race relations appeared. Yet U.S. officials also clearly recognized the link between African Americans and Ghana and highlighted black American involvement in foreign affairs. Although U.S. officials generally sought to use the knowledge of such involvement for the purposes of anti-communist foreign policy objectives, the new language of the “role” African Americans played in “U.S. free world leadership and U.S. interest in Africa” indicated once again Eisenhower’s policymakers were clearly aware of black interest in international issues.²³¹

The year ended on a relatively high note in official U.S.-Ghanaian relations. From December 5-13 representatives of political parties and trade unions from both independent countries and areas still under European rule met in Accra for the first All-Africa Peoples Conference. The December conference was larger and more representative than the Conference of Independent African States in April, which had been limited to official delegations from only the eight nations independent at that time. African Americans praised the December meeting as yet another step towards the intertwined goals of ending white colonialism in Africa and ending racial inequality everywhere. Horace Mann Bond attended the conference and declared, “I shudder for my own country, but delight that, somewhere [sic] in the World, there are men (in this case, black men) – who have tasted the biiter [sic] bread of racial discrimination, and yet remained unpoisoned by hatred, unaffected by greed and power, and bent on the

²³¹ Operations Coordinating Board, “Operations Plan for Ghana,” November 26, 1958, p. 1, 5, USCSEP, Office of the Chairman, Staff Series, Box 3, Folder “Africa-Misc (2),” DDEL.

realization of total human equalization.” Bond also continued his efforts to develop a narrative of modernity surrounding Ghana and Africa. He highlighted “the great adaptability of Africans” who “shrugged off the provincialism of the isolated rural farm, or village...and then, step[ped] confidently and with ease into the supposed complications of the Western World.” Regarding the anti-colonial and anti-racial proclamations the conference adopted, Louis Martin at the *Chicago Defender* similarly announced, “Negro Americans take a vicarious pride in the daring concepts and views of the African leadership. There is pride in the fact that for the first time in modern history, the white world is beginning to take black leaders seriously.” The NAACP did not send a delegation to the conference, but did send a public message of greeting written by Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins. The message read in part, “The rise of the African peoples to the status of free nations has inspired Americans of African descent...The emergence of independent African states and the struggle of other peoples to attain that state have aided us in our crusade in this country.” Even the title of the *Defender* article in which Wilkins’s message appeared indicated the uses of decolonizing African nations in the struggle for domestic civil rights. The title read, “Wilkins Hails African Conference: Says Struggle Aids U.S. Negroes,” When the NAACP message was read to the conference, reported the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the audience “wildly applauded.” Other African Americans also made the trip to Accra, including *Courier* journalist Marguerite Cartwright and Congressman Charles Diggs. In fact, the latter traveled as an official observer for the State Department, revealing yet another example of cooperation concerning Ghana between U.S. officials and black American leaders. *Courier* contributor Cecil Gregory summed up the sentiments of many African Americans when

he titled a piece describing both the conference and the political union of Ghana and Guinea, “West Africa: The Focal Point of the Black Renaissance!”²³²

Despite the avowedly anti-colonial, anti-apartheid, and anti-French content of the resolutions adopted by the conference, U.S. officials generally considered the meeting moderate in nature. In an intelligence briefing on the conference prepared for Eisenhower, the State Department noted Nkrumah had thwarted an attempted takeover of the tone of the conference by delegates from the United Arab Republic (UAR). In 1958 the latter was constituted by Egypt and Syria and led by the neutralist Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nkrumah had then channeled the meeting “along a more moderate course.” Two days after the conference ended, Eisenhower’s OCB likewise reported, “Embassy Accra has expressed the tentative view that conference which ended December 13 was better from U.S. viewpoint than had been expected; it exhibited some degree of moderation and responsibility despite the expected attacks on European metropolitan powers and white settlers.” In a final summation of the conference, OSAA Deputy Director George LaMont praised Nkrumah for fending off UAR attempts to gain “Conference approval of violence as a means of winning independence for African dependent areas.” Yet LaMont warned the makeup of the All-African Peoples Secretariat, established by the conference, leaned in favor of the UAR and perhaps indicated “it would be unrealistic to assume that the hard-fought victory won by Nkrumah and the relative moderates was a final one.” For

²³² Horace Mann Bond, “Impressions of the All-African Peoples Conference, Accra, December 5-12, 1958,” Series III, Box 23, Folder “37C,” Bond Papers; Louis Martin, “Dope and Data,” *Chicago Defender*, December 20, 1958, p. 10; “Wilkins Hails African Conference: Says Struggle Aids U.S. Negroes,” *Chicago Defender*, December 20, 1958, p. 21; “No Greetings From U.S. to Africa Meet,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 13, 1958, p. A7; Marguerite Cartwright, “World Backdrop,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 6, 1958, p. A8; “Diggs, U.S. Observer at African Meet,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 6, 1958, p. 11; Cecil Gregory, “West Africa: The Focal Point of the Black Renaissance!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 6, 1958, p. B1.

U.S. officials much was at stake in the conference. The level of radicalism and violence which might emerge in African independence movements could both sap the resources of America's European allies and potentially open the door to communists. Although the conclusion of the meeting left American policymakers generally pleased, they remained cautious about the future direction of African freedom movements.²³³

The conference also led to a number of personal interactions between U.S. officials and African American leaders in attendance. USIA officials helped Congressman Diggs conduct "an informal press conference" for Ghanaian and Guinean newspapermen "at his request" and also arranged for Diggs to interview Kenyan leader Tom Mboya. The same officials also reported they had been in close contact with both Bond and Claude Barnett, head of the Associated Negro Press. U.S. ambassador Wilson Flake, however, was annoyed with U.S. visitors because, while some "have been useful from our point of view," others had "been very free with advice about how the United States could improve its position in Africa." He did not specify exactly who had given him such advice, but his subsequent sarcasm indicated African Americans likely constituted a number of those individuals due to their enthusiasm for African independence. Flake wrote, "An extremely high percentage of this advice could, I feel, be rendered by any school boy bright enough to know that we would gain popularity among Africans if, for example, we ordered out our Fleet and gave European colonial powers 48

²³³ John S.D. Eisenhower, "Synopsis of State and Intelligence Material Reported to the President," December 9, 1958, WHO, Office of the Staff Secretary, Subject Series, Alphabetical Series, Box 14, Folder "Intelligence Briefing Notes, Vol. 1 (3)," DDEL; Operations Coordinating Board, "Weekly Activity Report," December 15, 1958, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, OCB Secretariat Series, OCB 319.1 Activity Report, Box 9, Folder "File #4," DDEL; Telegram, George LaMont to Joseph Satterthwaite, "All African Peoples Conference," December 23, 1958, RG 59, BAA, OWAA, General Subject Files, 1958-1962, Folder "5.2 Regional Africa Area Specialization, All African Peoples Conference, 1958," NACP.

hours to clear out of Africa!” Evidencing his Cold War outlook, Flake believed such people did not account for “the wider problems that must be considered in connection with our doing something to please some country or some individuals in Africa.” Perhaps it was no surprise, therefore, that after Flake personally hosted a luncheon for Diggs at his house, the congressman left Accra without telling the ambassador, which seemed to hurt Flake’s feelings. Regardless of Flake’s anti-communist viewpoint, his remarks revealed yet another incident in which private individuals, many of whom were likely African Americans due to the nature of their advice to Flake, sought to pressure U.S. officials regarding American foreign policy in Africa.²³⁴

Conclusion

In June 1957 a number of African American intellectuals formed the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) after attending the First International Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Paris. A year later AMSAC produced a volume of *Presence Africaine*, the journal of an international umbrella organization known as the Society of African Culture (SAC), edited by John A. Davis and titled, “Africa From the Point of View of American Negro Scholars.” Davis had taught at Howard and Lincoln Universities and had been involved in both President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s wartime Fair Employment Practices Commission and NAACP legal cases challenging segregation in U.S. schools. In his view the volume sought to combat both E. Franklin Frazier’s

²³⁴ Telegram, Henry Dunlap to USIA, “USIS Coverage of the All African Peoples Conference,” December 16, 1958, p. 3, RG 84, AGUR, 1951-1958, Box 1, Folder “Program 1958,” NACP; Telegram, Wilson Flake to Vaughan Ferguson, December 13, 1958, RG 59, BAA, OWAA, General Subject Files, 1958-1962, Folder “5.2 Regional Africa Area Specialization, All-African People’s Conference, 1958,” NACP.

argument “that there is nothing that the American Negro can contribute to African development” and W.E.B. Du Bois’s claim “that there is nothing that western capital can offer Africa.” Much of the volume covered African history, art, and music and contained suggestions for African political and economic development in general terms. Yet in his chapter, “The American Negro’s View of Africa,” Rayford Logan revealed some of the ongoing discussions among African Americans concerning Ghana. He wrote, “American Negroes, almost without exception, rejoiced when Ghana became self-governing on March 6, 1957. Those who have followed closely subsequent events – especially those who have read Richard Wright’s *Black Power* – view with some trepidation the emergence of factionalism, personalism and regionalism. Optimistic observers express the hope that Ghana is going through the growing pains that beset practically all young nations.” Despite doubts among some black Americans concerning Ghana’s level of stability and democracy, such assumptions indicated the ongoing wish among both pessimists and optimists for the new country to remain a symbol of black modernity and capability. Logan further indicated how deep African American identification with Ghana and Africa had become by 1958 when he commented, “There is one view which I find it extremely difficult to have American Negroes understand, namely, that the United States is walking a tight-rope in Africa.” He was referencing the balance in U.S. policy between support for European nations and African aspirations. Logan argued, “In the event of war with the Soviet Union the United States would need both the Atlantic Alliance and Africa. In the event of such a war a Sputnik with a nuclear warhead would kill American Negroes along with others.” Logan thus seemed to sympathize with the dilemma the Eisenhower administration found itself in when dealing with Africa. Yet the fact he found

it “extremely difficult” to convince other American blacks of the need for such a balanced approach to the continent revealed the deep level of enthusiasm among African Americans for African decolonization and African political, economic, and social advancement.²³⁵

During the two years following Ghana’s independence, identification with Ghana led African Americans to continue to pressure the Eisenhower administration both to support African decolonization and to address African aspirations. Most substantially, black American enthusiasm for Nkrumah directly resulted in his 1958 visit to the United States. The trip was a moment of great celebration in the African American community and Eisenhower, Nixon, and numerous other U.S. officials met or dined with Nkrumah. In addition, language noting the racial ties between African Americans and Africa continued to appear in policy papers such as NSC 5719 and the November 1958 Operations Plan for Ghana. Policymakers such as Under Secretary of State Herter, CIA Director Dulles, and other State Department officials similarly discussed such racial ties when considering sending a black official to Africa. By 1958 high-level U.S. officials were thus fully aware of black American interest in Ghana, Africa, and international relations. While policymakers often sought to take advantage of such connections to benefit American Cold War foreign policy, the source and course of Nkrumah’s 1958 U.S. visit revealed the substantial role African Americans played in American foreign relations with Ghana. Yet despite black enthusiasm for Nkrumah’s Pan-African conferences, questions continued to exist among African Americans regarding what type

²³⁵ John A. Davis, ed., *Africa From the Point of View of American Negro Scholars* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1958), 1, 226-7.

of Pan-Africanism would best benefit both Africans and black Americans, as Drake's letter to Padmore indicated. Logan expressed similar concerns in "Africa From the Point of View of American Negro Scholars" over whether or not Ghana would remain a potent and usable symbol of modernity into the future. More importantly, by the late 1950s both the emergence of other independent black African nations as well as the onset of the sustained struggle for civil rights in the United States, marked especially by the advent of the sit-in movement, would temper African American enthusiasm for Ghana specifically. At the same time, however, African Americans had learned how to have their voices heard regarding American foreign policy towards Africa. They thus remained actively involved in trying to deepen both official and unofficial ties between the United States and Africa.

CHAPTER 8: THE LIMITS OF GHANA'S SYMBOLISM

Introduction

In January 1959 the *Chicago Defender* reported on the All-African People's Conference held in Accra the previous month and listed the numerous "American Negroes now making their home in Ghana." In addition, a wide range of political ideologies could be found among those African Americans who were visiting. The latter group included St. Clair Drake, Frank Montero of the American Committee on Africa who had "organized the successful banquet for Prime Minister Nkrumah of the Waldorf-Astoria hotel last July," Horace Mann Bond, Claude Barnett of the Associated Negro Press, James Lawson of the United African Nationalist Movement, former leader of the leftist Council on African Affairs W. Alphaeus Hunton, representatives from the American Society for African Culture, and Congressman Charles Diggs. A number of African American women also attended, including actress and singer Etta Moten Barnett, journalist Marguerite Cartwright, the wives of Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois, and Meta Springer of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union from New York City. Essentially, wrote Homer Jack for the *Defender*, "American Negroes could not stay away" from experiencing such "a determination on the part of Africans to forge their own freedom." At the same time, warned Jack, "Some Americans present didn't realize that they, too, whatever their skin color and historical ancestry, were considered outsiders, and the American economic and political relations with the new Africa south of the Sahara are today just as suspect as those of Europe, Asia [i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru], or North Africa [i.e. Gamal Abdel Nasser]." Jack's reasoning seemed to be if Africa was truly to

be for the Africans, then American citizens, both white and black, could aid the continent only to a certain point.²³⁶

Homer Jack's description of the All-African People's Conference provided an accurate portrait of the American and African American relationship with Ghana during the last two years of the Eisenhower administration. African Americans continued to view Ghana as a symbol of black modernity. Yet when black Americans began to emphasize their American identity over their sense of affinity with Ghana and Africa, the limits of transnational racial identification began to appear. One such moment, which also revealed the contacts between black American and African women, occurred during the July 1960 Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent in Accra. At that meeting African American moderates and radicals tussled over the tone the American delegation would adopt. While the moderates prevented the broadcasting of an extreme anti-American message, some African American women began to assert their American identity above their ties to Africa or Ghana. Although most African Americans retained a significant measure of identification with Africa, Ghana began to assume less importance by 1960 as many other black African nations achieved independence. Simultaneously, the movement for civil rights rapidly expanded within the United States, not least due to the advent of the lunch counter sit-in movement in February 1960. A decline in the number of African American newspaper articles, speeches, and other actions specifically concerning Ghana demonstrated the relative decline in attention to Nkrumah's nation. Likewise, official U.S. policy towards Africa would not move beyond the "middle

²³⁶ Homer Jack, "Americans at African Confab: Attend Event as Observers," *Chicago Defender*, January 10, 1959, p. 11.

ground” approach adopted during the middle part of the decade. Yet interactions between African Americans and U.S. officials continued to reveal both black American concern with affecting U.S. policy in Africa and, at moments, continuing African American influence on the State Department, especially in the form of providing information about events on the ground in Africa.

African Americans as Sources of Information

By late 1958 and early 1959 the State Department had clearly recognized the racial ties between African Americans and Ghana. Some policymakers even began to actively seek the opinions of American blacks concerning Africa. At times U.S. officials seemed to rely on the experiences of African Americans in Ghana when developing assessments of the strength of various forces such as Pan-Africanism, neutralism, or the popularity of an African leader. Representative Charles Diggs (D-MI), who had been on the official American delegation to the 1957 independence ceremonies, had returned to Accra in late 1958 as an official U.S. representative to the All-African People’s Conference. Upon Diggs’s return to the United States, Joseph Satterthwaite, who held the newly created position of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, requested a meeting with him to learn about the conference. In Diggs’ office a lengthy discussion ranged broadly over a variety of topics, including the international image of American racism, assessments of several African American leaders or organizations, and Ghana’s potentially deepening ties with the Soviet Union. The meeting clearly revealed the concern among American policymakers over the actions of African American individuals and groups in Africa. In addition, Diggs sought to influence the views of U.S. officials as

they mined his thoughts for information they could use to implement their policy goals in Ghana and Africa.²³⁷

The conversation first touched on American foreign policy in Africa. Diggs told Satterthwaite “he was rather ‘peeved’ about the apparent delay” in an official American greeting to the conference. His anger stemmed from the fact the absence of a U.S. message caused problems for pro-Western African leaders. Director of the Office of South African Affairs Vaughn Ferguson replied that had the conference “pursued a course inimical to U.S. interests...our message could have been interpreted as a blanket endorsement of the Conference’s actions.” With some of the final resolutions of the conference calling for the immediate cessation of both colonialism and the French war in Algeria, such intricate interactions between the State Department and Pan-African conferences highlighted the delicate nature of the Eisenhower administration’s involvement with an Africa rapidly decolonizing during the late 1950s. Ferguson and Diggs also discussed the activities of the politically diverse African Americans at the conference, including James Lawson of the United African Nationalist Movement, Shirley Graham Du Bois, and the ACOA. U.S. officials were thus concerned over the specific form and substance of black American racial ties to Ghana. Ferguson actually defended the ACOA as “perfectly legitimate” despite the fact “some members tended to be somewhat militant.” U.S. officials were generally content with the role the ACOA had

²³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, “All-Africa Peoples Conference,” January 6, 1959, p. 1, RG 59, BAA, OWAA, General Subject Files 1958-1962, Box 1, Folder “5.2: Regional, All-African People’s Conference & Sec’t, 1959,” NACP.

performed and continued to view more radical activists such as Du Bois and Lawson as pariahs.²³⁸

Diggs then moved the conversation towards a discussion of international opinion concerning American segregation and racism. He asked how the Department would address “the adverse effects abroad of U.S. racial incidents.” Satterthwaite replied while “this problem gave us great concern,” there existed no “simple solution.” Many African Americans, including Diggs, disagreed. Yet Ferguson believed the “most effective instrument” in countering foreign claims of American racism “was the exchange program” because “those Africans who had visited the U.S. had achieved an understanding of the background of U.S. racial problems and were able to view the problem in its proper perspective.” Ferguson was voicing the Eisenhower administration’s emphasis on the gradual progress taking place in domestic race relations. Diggs did not respond, but by initially broaching the topic he had clearly attempted to use his overseas experience, which policymakers wanted to discuss, to get to what was probably the central issue for him, domestic American racism. Diggs also pressed African American concerns regarding the image of Africans when he “expressed the hope that the Department would exercise its influence in correcting the misrepresentations of Africans in the press and in motion pictures.” As Bond and others had been attempting throughout the decade, through his connections with government officials Diggs sought to alter the public image of black Africans. African American leaders considered images of Africans as primitive to be harmful to their efforts to achieve civil rights and racial equality. Satterthwaite responded dismissively that while “Departmental officers were constantly

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 1-2.

in contact with journalists and provided them with useful background information on Africa...To exercise much influence on Hollywood was a more difficult problem.” U.S. officials recognized the importance of Ghana and Africa, but routinely failed to understand the potential implications of their own and others’ racist language about Africa and Africans.²³⁹

Thus both Diggs and the U.S. officials he met with used Diggs’s presence in Ghana in part to address domestic issues involving African Americans. Satterthwaite largely wanted more information on the activities of black individuals and groups, most likely to know who might be useful to American foreign policy. Diggs clearly sought to use his interactions with Ghana to benefit the African American struggle for equality. The meeting also further indicated policymakers were clearly aware of both the racial ties between African Americans and Ghana and the challenges of race in the international arena. Finally, the fact U.S. officials had sought out Diggs’s views on his experience in Accra revealed the influence of African Americans in American foreign policy towards Africa, at the very least in the role of providing information to the State Department. At the same time, Diggs’s concerns revealed the limits of African American transnational racial identification with Ghana. His ultimate goal was not true transnational action against oppression, but the integration of African Americans into American society. At some level, every mainstream African American action pertaining to Ghana during the 1950s included the underlying belief Ghana was to be used for black Americans’ own purposes. Thus when African Americans began more sustained action on their own in 1960, Ghana’s star dimmed in the eyes of black Americans.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 2-3.

Satterthwaite also identified other actions by African American individuals and groups as beneficial to the American image in Africa during the late 1950s. Reverend James Robinson had founded Operation Crossroads Africa (OCA) in 1958 and had taken a group of Americans on a trip to Africa to participate in infrastructure building projects. In May 1959 Satterthwaite told a friend, “My associates in the Brueau [sic] of African Affairs agree that Operations – Crossroads Africa was one of the most successful ventures that private American citizens have ever undertaken in Africa South of the Sahara.” The assistant secretary went on, “The reports from our diplomatic and consular posts in the countries visited...were without exception most enthusiastic and it is quite clear that under the leadership of the Reverend James H. Robinson a very important piece of work was done form the point of view of American foreign policy objectives in the area.” An organization led by an African American had strengthened the sort of interpersonal ties between Americans and Africans which President Eisenhower and others in his administration believed important in orienting other nations towards the West. For instance, since 1956 the USIA’s People-To-People program had sent numerous Americans overseas on cultural exchange trips. Satterthwaite thus believed an African American leader was bolstering the prospects of success for U.S. foreign policy in Africa by deepening the identity of Africans with the United States.²⁴⁰

By the fall of 1959 the State Department was actively assisting Robinson’s efforts to expand the impact of his organization. After a meeting with Robinson, Satterthwaite

²⁴⁰Website, BlackPast.org, “BlackPast.org: Remembered and Reclaimed” <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=gah/operation-crossroads-africa-1958>, accessed August 31, 2011; Letter, Joseph Satterthwaite to Clifford Shields, May 22, 1959, REFM, 1950-61, Box 3, Folder “Special Projects: Working Papers, Africa,” DDEL.

wrote him that the State Department was pleased by the organization's plans to return to Africa "in view of the success" of the trip the previous year. Satterthwaite mentioned his inclusion of the efforts of Operation Crossroads Africa in a speech he had recently made and claimed, "The Department is most happy to see the increasing number of young people interested in Africa who, by their presence and their working in the field, can help in making America better understood in that continent." In a similar letter to Robinson, the USIA's Acting Deputy Assistant Director for Africa, John Noon, expressed almost identical sentiments. Throughout the 1950s the Eisenhower administration itself would not actively work to deepen American connections to non-whites beyond limited amounts of financial assistance or USIA activities. Mid-level officials such as Satterthwaite and Noon, who recognized African American identification with Africa, therefore had to encourage private organizations, in this case one led by an African American, to take the initiative in bolstering ties between the United States and Africans.²⁴¹

Satterthwaite also clearly recognized the negative effect of domestic racism on America's image overseas. He thus immersed himself in efforts to track and understand foreign sentiment concerning American race relations in order to provide what he, and the administration, considered the proper perspective on America's racial problems. In mid-May 1959, U.S. officials in Accra reported that editorials in the *Ghana Times* and the *Evening News* contained criticism of the United States for "the abduction and murder of Mack Charles PARKER in Mississippi, the imprisonment of Asbury HOWARD and his son last January in Alabama and the recent rape of a young Negro college girl in

²⁴¹ Letter, Joseph Satterthwaite to James Robinson, September 11, 1959 and Letter, John Noon to James Robinson, September 23, 1959, both in REFM, Box 3, Folder "Special Projects: Working Papers, Africa," DDEL.

Florida by four white youths.” Officials in Mississippi had arrested Parker on charges of raping a white woman, but before his trial began a mob dragged him from jail and lynched him. When Asbury Howard put up a poster encouraging African Americans to vote, officials arrested him for a “breach of the peace” and a white mob attacked him and his son while they were in court. His son was subsequently ordered to work on a chain gang for six months merely for helping defend his father. Although the white rapists in Florida actually went to trial, the event itself was horrible and contained clear racial overtones. Embassy officials related they were “closely questioned by Ghanaians long after such incidents occurred.” Apparently, while in the past “the questioners seemed genuinely puzzled and anxious for a factual explanation as to how and why such incidents occur,” now questions from individuals exhibiting “considerable antagonism...[seemed] to be somewhat more common.” In sum, the officials clearly recognized “that the cumulative effect of such incidents must surely be a slow corrosion of the considerable goodwill toward the US which apparently still exists here.” The tone of the final few words indicated how serious U.S. officials in Ghana believed the effect of racial incidents to be on American prestige, almost expressing surprise “considerable goodwill” could still be found.²⁴²

Satterthwaite was the member of the Eisenhower administration between 1958 and 1960 who especially had to negotiate the challenge presented to America’s overseas

²⁴² Information on the Asbury Howard incident came from Southern Christian Leadership Conference, “Statement Adopted at Spring Session of SCLC in Tallahassee, Florida,” May 15, 1959, p. 206n5 in Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Volume 5: *Threshold of a New Decade, January 1959 – December 1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). On the incident in Florida see for instance Claude Sitton, “4 Guilty of Raping Negro; Florida Jury Votes Mercy,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1959, p. 1; Telegram, Archie Lang to Christian Herter, “Local Reactions to Recent US Racial Incidents,” May 12, 1959, RG 84, Accra, General Records, 1959-1961, Box 4, Folder “Black People [Race Problems],” NACP.

image by domestic racism. Yet compared to Eisenhower's officials during the early and mid-1950s, he was at times surprisingly candid in public about the effects of such incidents on American policy in Africa. For instance, in September 1959 he told the Chautauqua Institute, "In view of our own domestic problems in the field of racial relations, the United States should in good conscience avoid attempting to suggest to any African territory specific solutions to these problems [i.e. racial issues within Africa]." Likewise, the next month the State Department told the American embassy in Conakry that during an upcoming trip to the United States by Sekou Toure, the leader of newly independent Guinea, "special care" was being taken to avoid any possible "racial incident[s] particularly during [the] North Carolina portion" of Toure's visit. Similarly, in June 1960 U.S. officials, after concluding a Conference of Principal Diplomatic and Consular Officers of North and West Africa, recommended "better coordination and planning" during visits to the United States by African dignitaries in order "to minimize the danger of racial incidents." The Department had learned from both Gbedemah's experience two years earlier in Delaware as well as from numerous reports by American officials abroad that the world was closely scrutinizing any event related to race occurring within the United States.²⁴³

The increased willingness of the Department to admit the problems racial incidents caused for U.S. prestige abroad and the related caution taken when non-white

²⁴³ Speech, Joseph Satterthwaite, "United States Foreign Policy and Africa," *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. XLI, No. 1054, September 7, 1959 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 335, 337; State Department Circular, "Guinea President's Visit to US," October 27, 1959, RG 84, GCGR, 1956-1958, Box 7, Folder "Political," NACP; "Report of the Conference of Principal Diplomatic and Consular Officers of North and West Africa, Tangier, May 30 – June 2, 1960," *Foreign Relations of the United States 1958-1960*, Vol. 14: Africa, <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/FRUS> (hereafter FRUS 1958-1960: 14), 140.

leaders visited the country prodded Lester Granger to tell St. Clair Drake in late December 1959, "I think that there is some kind of shift taking place in the State Department policy [sic] on a number of things." Granger noted that recent American voting patterns at the United Nations were part of such a shift. For instance, the United States was now voting for "petitioners from South West Africa" to be heard. That region had been under the control of apartheid South Africa since World War I and would remain so until 1990. Granger even claimed, "I feel sure that there are factions within the Africa Bureau of the State Department...which feel we need to go much farther in championing the cause of the African nationalists." There were other U.S. officials, however, who held "the opposite view." Granger then linked African American activism to American foreign policy in Africa when he stated, "I know that there must be this division because I think there is the same kind of division in the attitude of the personnel in the State Department toward our Committee [the ACOA, whose letterhead Granger was using]. We take quite a beating from some of them...while others give us a pat on the back." He concluded, "What we need to do is to strengthen the progressive element." He thus voiced what was by then the traditional African American goal of influencing the Department. Granger clearly revealed the personal contacts between African Americans and those U.S. officials sympathetic both to African nationalists and to black American efforts to get involved in Africa. He also identified the continuing tension in Eisenhower's State Department between those policymakers still favoring an approach openly wedded to European powers and those, who were often in contact with African Americans, seeking to place U.S. policy more firmly on the side of Africans. By recognizing the international implications of domestic American racism, by discussing

race with African American leaders, and by simultaneously seeking to present the “proper perspective” on such problems, Assistant Secretary Satterthwaite embodied such tension even within himself.²⁴⁴

Policy Remains Stuck

During the late 1950s, U.S. policy in Africa remained centered on the balance struck by 1957 between pro-European and pro-African attitudes toward the continent. Once NSC 5719 moved U.S. policy away from overtly supporting the colonial powers, little changed fundamentally in the American approach to Africa until President John F. Kennedy took office. Minimal aid reached the continent. Although the United States explicitly voted against South African apartheid at the United Nations for the first time in October 1958, as late as December 1960 the United States abstained from voting on the UN resolution known as the “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.” A year after NSC 5719, the Eisenhower administration adopted what was technically a new policy paper on sub-Saharan Africa, NSC 5818. Yet basic attitudes toward communism, European colonialism, and decolonization in Africa remained unchanged. When discussing revisions to NSC 5719 in early August 1958, for instance, Eisenhower “felt we must believe in the right of colonial peoples to achieve independence as we had, but agreed that if we emphasized this right too strongly, we created a crisis in our relations with the mother countries.” Despite his condescending remark that “he would like to be on the side of the natives for once,” Eisenhower never firmly moved policy in a pro-African direction. When in March 1960 the administration

²⁴⁴ Letter, Lester Granger to St. Clair Drake, December 22, 1959, Box 7, Folder “6,” Drake Papers.

discussed the first paper specifically focused on West Africa, NSC 6005, the main issue revolved around how to encourage former European colonizers to continue providing aid and investment to their former colonies. Such an approach would hardly lead to the economic independence nationalists such as Nkrumah so deeply desired. During one of the final NSC meetings under Eisenhower analyzing policy towards Africa, the new Undersecretary of State, C. Douglas Dillon, still expressed the static Cold War outlook of the administration. Despite recognizing “the overriding political significance of the area [West Africa]” four months earlier, in August 1960 he argued the United States should “rely on Western European nations to influence and support their respective dependent and recently independent areas.” The overall direction of U.S. policy in Africa changed very little between 1957 and 1960 and would not move beyond the balance struck in NSC 5719 between European and African desires.²⁴⁵

Yet the very fact U.S. policy had shifted over the course of the 1950s was due, at least in part, to African American contacts with officials in the State Department. While not every State official advocated an embrace of Africa, enough did so as to cause some conflict with other policymakers in Eisenhower’s administration over the direction of

²⁴⁵ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 124; “Independence of the Colonial Peoples – The Role of the UN,” *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, Advameg, Inc., 2011, <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/United-Nations/Independence-of-Colonial-Peoples-THE-ROLE-OF-THE-UN.html>, accessed October 4, 2011; “Memorandum, “Discussion at the 375th Meeting of the National Security Council,” August 7, 1958, p. 11, Reel 5, and Memorandum, “Discussion at the 438th Meeting of the National Security Council,” March 24, 1958, p. 7-13, 3rd Supp., Reel 6, both in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Minutes of Meetings of the National Security Council. Third Supplement [1948-1961]* [microform] (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1996) (hereafter MMNSC3); Memorandum, “Discussion at the 440th Meeting of the National Security Council,” April 7, 1960, p.2, Reel 6, MMNSC3; Memorandum, “Discussion at the 441st Meeting of the National Security Council,” April 14, 1960, p. 15, Reel 6, MMNSC3; Memorandum, “Discussion at the 456th Meeting of the National Security Council,” August 18, 1960, p. 3-4, Reel 7, MMNSC3. Dillon became undersecretary when Christian Herter became the new Secretary of State after Dulles resigned due to his ongoing battle with colon cancer. Dulles died in May 1959.

U.S. policy in Africa. For instance, in early 1960 one member of the Psychological Strategy Board felt it necessary to emphasize to the State Department that “West Africa is a major source of these [raw] materials for the Free World, even if not for the U.S.” State officials often sought to explain Africa’s importance beyond the common view of other policymakers that Africa was primarily useful for its natural resources. Similar divisions on the extent of aid to be extended to African nations or on the level of rhetorical support for decolonization consistently pitted some State officials against other groups in Eisenhower’s administration, including the Treasury Department and the heads of the military branches. Regarding the new policy paper on West Africa in early 1960, for example, Assistant Secretary of the Council on Foreign Economic Policy (CFEP) Joseph Rand told Special Assistant to the President and CFEP Chairman Clarence Randall, “The economic section is replete with splits but, in essence, Treasury and Budget (and at one place Commerce) dissent from the majority which would give the United States a freer hand in providing economic assistance to the area.” Analyzing the same paper four days later, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Burke similarly told Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, “The divergent views...relate primarily to the extent to which the United States should rely on Western European nations to influence and support newly independent African nations.” In this instance, however, Burke advocated a middle ground position for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Other historians such as Ebere Nwaubani have extensively analyzed the high-level policy deliberations on Africa during the Eisenhower years. The important point here is that the State Department, the area of Eisenhower’s administration in closest contact with African American leaders, remained

the strongest advocate of a firmer American stance on the side of African aspirations until the end of Eisenhower's presidency.²⁴⁶

At times the comments of policymakers in high-level papers even touched on race or revealed the influence of African Americans. Regarding racial issues, NSC 5818 largely employed language similar to NSC 5719, noting, "U.S. influence is restricted by the extremely distorted picture Africans have been given concerning the race problem in the United States." A subsequent goal was thus to "emphasize U.S. progress in the field of race relations through all available media." In January 1959, the Operations Coordinating Board noted how press and USIA coverage of Nkrumah's 1958 trip to the United States had bolstered U.S. prestige in Ghana. As shown above, African Americans had generated a visit by an African leader which high-level policymakers in the Eisenhower administration considered a public relations victory for the United States in Africa. Finally, in NSC 6005, the first policy paper solely covering West Africa, policymakers again sought to "correct" what they considered "distorted African views of U.S. race relations." Despite recognizing both the importance of African decolonization and the way domestic racial violence hurt the U.S. image abroad, a corresponding

²⁴⁶ P.J. Halla, Briefing Note for PB Mtg. 2-16-60, "U.S. Policy Toward West Africa," February 12, 1960, p. 2-3, WHO, Office of Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Records, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, Box 1, Folder "Africa, U.S. Policy Toward Parts of (2)," DDEL; Memorandum, Joseph Rand to Randall, March 10, 1960, USCFEP, Records, 1955-61, Chronological Series, Box 1, Folder "March 1960 (2)," DDEL; Memorandum, Arleigh Burke to Thomas Gates, "U.S. Policy Toward West Africa (NSC 6005)," March 14, 1960, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster Files, Box 44, Folder "West Africa," DDEL; See Nwaubani, *Decolonization in West Africa*, 38-55, 86-118 on the Eisenhower administration and Africa in general.

stronger stance on domestic civil rights still failed to capture the attention of most U.S. officials.²⁴⁷

The transnational racial ties in the Pan-Africanism of Nkrumah so enticing to African Americans simultaneously worried America's European allies. With the return of Charles de Gaulle to the presidency of France in June 1958 amidst the French war in Algeria, France sought a meeting with American and British policymakers to discuss the coordination of policy in Africa. At the resulting tripartite talks in April 1959, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Murphy reassured the Europeans of the American commitment to European economic involvement in Africa. He likewise expressed American concern over premature independence in Africa and labeled black Africans "immature and unsophisticated." Yet Murphy also stated, "This did not mean that we would necessarily refuse support or assistance to a newly independent territory especially when the United States' interests were involved." He further believed Nkrumah's recent All-African Peoples Conference "reflected articulate African opinion in the continent" pressing for "self-determination." Murphy's latter two comments caused tension with the head of the French delegation, Secretary General of the French Foreign Ministry Louis Joxe, who expressed concern about "Nkrumah's nationalist and Pan-African propaganda." While Nkrumah's vocal anti-colonialism continued to challenge American goals in Africa of both keeping the Europeans in and the continent oriented

²⁴⁷ NSC 5818: U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to the Calendar Year 1960," August 26, 1958, *Presidential Directives on National Security From Truman to Clinton*, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/collections/content/PRintro.jsp>, accessed September 2010; "Operations Coordinating Board Report (January 14, 1959) on U.S. Policy Toward Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar year 1960 (NSC 5818)," p. 12, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, Disaster Files, Box 44, Folder "Africa South of the Sahara (3)," DDEL; NSC 6005/1: U.S. Policy Toward West Africa, April 9, 1960, *Presidential Directives on National Security From Truman to Clinton*, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/collections/content/PRintro.jsp>, accessed September 2010.

towards the West, American suggestions that the United States would also help African nationalists simultaneously frustrated European nations. The Eisenhower administration thus continued to straddle an increasingly narrow and difficult to maintain “middle ground.”²⁴⁸

African Americans Still Embrace Ghana's Symbol

While policymakers remained wary of both Nkrumah's intentions and his usefulness for American Cold War foreign policy, African Americans continued to look at Ghana as a symbol of racial pride. In mid-September 1959 Sidney Williams, who led the newly formed organization First Friends of Ghana, wrote to the *Chicago Defender* protesting the use of the word “native” to describe Africans. He declared, “I am convinced that here in the United States we of African descent will never walk in true dignity and self-respect till Africa is free and powerful.” Williams also wished Ghana success “in its progress toward a modern state.” Two weeks later Louis Martin, a *Defender* journalist, was in Accra and claimed the city was “more modern than half the towns in Mississippi and the races of mankind mingle in harmony in peace.” He found racial equality and modernity in Nkrumah's Ghana. The following month, an African American newspaper once again combated *Time* magazine's portrayals of Nkrumah when the editors of the *Pittsburgh Courier* wrote, “Because Nkrumah has been forced to take some stern measures against dissidents, oppositionists and subversives, Time would give the impression that leadership in Ghana leans toward dictatorship...If you are to believe

²⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, “First Tripartite Talks on Africa,” April 16, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-1960: 14*, 46-48.

Time, democracy is faring badly in Ghana.” In February 1960 Marguerite Cartwright, who wrote regularly for the *Courier* on Ghana and had attended the All-African Peoples’ Conference in December 1958, described Ghana’s “exceptional progress and its leadership...By any yardstick, Ghana is a growing, successful operation, the home of Tema [a port city with new shipping and shipbuilding facilities], thriving businesses, flowing capital and a firm, imaginative approach to such social problems as education, health, housing and employment.” A short piece the next month in the *Chicago Defender* likewise declared Ghana “a modern example of statesmanship, diplomacy, economic stability, and political recognition in action.” The image of Ghana as a modern nation was firmly in place in African American minds by the end of the 1950s.²⁴⁹

African American leaders not only held similar views of Ghana as modern, but also continued to enhance black American connections to Ghana and Africa. In early December 1959, A. Philip Randolph, head of the African American union The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and also a vice president in the AFL-CIO, told Rayford Logan, “No greater tragedy could befall the Colored people of the United States than their continued failure to understand fully their ancestral relationship to the various peoples of Africa and the roles they can play as Americans both collectively and individually, in the dramatic developments taking place so rapidly in Africa today.” For Randolph, transnational identification with decolonizing Africans was of the utmost importance. Black American efforts to help newly free African nations would benefit

²⁴⁹“Williams Comments on Africa, Defender Issue,” *Chicago Defender*, September 12, 1959, p. 22; Louis Martin, “Dope and Data,” *Chicago Defender*, September 26, 1959, p. 10; Editorial, “Time’s Flippancy and Facts,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 24, 1959, p. A4; Marguerite Cartwright, “World Backdrop,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 20, 1960, p. A4; “Suggest Ghana ‘For’ 60 Vacation,” *Chicago Defender*, March 23, 1960, p. A8.

their own struggle for civil rights at home by providing the world with numerous examples of stable, prosperous, and progressive black nations. Horace Mann Bond also continued to be influential in helping African Americans embrace Africa and in 1959 he gave a speech titled, "The American Negro and Africa: From Pride to Shame to Pride." He argued that during the early 1800s "the pride of the Negro required him to resist by rejecting Africa," but by the 1950s "to have pigment in one's skin is to be proud, not to be ashamed." In September 1959, Bond seemed to believe his goal of placing Ghana and Africa squarely in the public eye had been successful when he noted "an interest [in Africa] almost hysterical pervades the American public." Bond further declared, "It cannot be denied that Africa has been, to a degree, the 'ancestral continent', [sic] for American Negroes." Speaking at Clark College in Atlanta a few months later, Bond portrayed Ghana as modern when he claimed, "Now, you can go to West Africa and stay in air-conditioned hotels...take your little anti-malarial pills every day, and never suffer a chill; eat ham and eggs and butter fr[e]sh out of Denmark every morning; in short, you can do as well for yourself in Africa today, as you could in Miami." In the same speech, Bond vehemently related how he had refuted studies by Harold Isaacs at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology which found, according to Isaacs, that African Americans did not identify with Africa. As usual, Bond was trying to shape public opinion concerning Africa. For a decade Bond and other African American leaders consistently argued both for the inclusion of Africa in black American self-identification and for an image of Ghana as modern, civilized, and progressive. Such portrayals of Ghana would benefit African Americans by undermining racist arguments centered on both the incapability of blacks to participate in modern society and the racial chaos

defenders of the color line believed would follow the immediate granting of full civil rights. Compared to earlier in the decade, however, fewer direct comments on Ghana, and more on Africa as a whole, appeared in African American speeches and newspaper articles during the late 1950s. Ghana, specifically, was becoming less important to African Americans.²⁵⁰

Yet both the State Department and the United States Information Agency remained in contact with African Americans regarding Ghana during the first half of 1960. As indicated by the conversation between Satterthwaite and Diggs in early 1959, U.S. officials seemed to depend to a degree on African Americans, or on members of organizations they had created, for information about conditions in Ghana and other parts of Africa. In mid-February the white anti-colonialist and Executive Director of the ACOA George Houser stopped in Accra on his way home from the most recent All-African People's Conference in Tunisia. Houser told U.S. officials in Accra he had learned in London that Nkrumah had invited Kenyan leader Tom Mboya to visit Ghana. Houser believed, however, Mboya would decline the invitation. When Ambassador Flake asked why, Houser told him Mboya "had declined [previous invitations] because he 'didn't know what he might be getting into.'" Houser's explanation seemed to indicate Mboya, currently working for Kenyan independence, did not want to be publicly associated with Nkrumah's increasingly anti-Western stance. Flake's subsequent remark

²⁵⁰ Letter, A. Philip Randolph to Rayford Logan, December 5, 1959, Box 166-19, Folder "A. Philip Randolph," Logan Papers; Speech by Horace Mann Bond, "The American Negro and Africa: From Pride to Shame to Pride," 1959, p. 1-3, Series VI, Box 172, Folder "11," Bond Papers; Horace Mann Bond, "First and Highly Tentative Draft of an Outline for a Research and Action Program by the United Negro Colleges on 'The African Student in the United States,'" September 6, 1959, p.1, Series V, Box 162, Folder "50," Bond Papers; Horace Mann Bond, "The Methodist Tradition, The Negro College, and African Advancement," February 9, 1960, p. 1, 4, Series VI, Box 172, Folder "12," Bond Papers.

to the State Department that “nothing further has been heard of visit here” revealed the lack of knowledge by U.S. officials of the invitation and highlighted their dependence at times on private sources of information. Two months later public affairs officer for the USIA in Ghana Richard Ernstein told USIA Director of the Office of Research and Analysis Oren Stephens about his meeting with St. Clair Drake on conducting surveys in Ghana. Drake had been studying communications systems in Ghana while he led the Department of Sociology at the University of Ghana. USIA officials therefore sought to access his knowledge and experience. After Drake described his work to Ernstein, the latter told Stephens, “Further detailed planning will now await Drake’s visit to [the] BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] in August.” Drake was now central to this specific USIA project. According to Ernstein, Drake was also “helping...arrange for a mature student to give us VOA [Voice of America, the USIA radio program] content critiques on a regular basis” so the agency could assess its own relevance to Africans. In this instance an African American leader provided a clear link between Ghanaians and a branch of the U.S. government.²⁵¹

African Americans also continued to seek out the State Department on a variety of matters, including the entry of a Ghanaian official into the United States. In mid-May 1960, Bond, Drake, and Claude Barnett of the Associated Negro Press were involved in an attempt to get a visa for Mbiyu Koinange, who had been a leader in the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya against the British during the early and mid-1950s. In 1960

²⁵¹ Telegram, Wilson Flake to Christian Herter, February 13, 1960, RG 84, GCGR, 1956-1958, Box 3, Folder “310: All African Peoples Conf. 1960,” NACP; Letter, Richard Ernstein to Oren Stephens, April 29, 1960, p. 1-2, RG 306, Country Project Correspondence, 1952-1963, Box 7, Folder “Ghana – Correspondence 1960,” NACP.

Koinange was an official in the Ghanaian Bureau of African Affairs and Bond believed granting him entry would bolster the U.S. image in Africa. Likewise, St. Clair Drake told Bond he should tell the administration Koinange's visit would benefit "African-American relations." Drake also suggested Bond should remind U.S. officials that he, Bond, led AMSAC and was a board member of the African-American Institute, two organizations involved with Africa which U.S. officials had found acceptable. The ultimate aim of African American leaders may have been to get Koinange into the United States to receive medical treatment because he would in fact die on July 27, 1960. The chances for Koinange's entry were slim given his reputation of taking part in leading the Mau Mau uprising and given the suspicion Koinange had been involved in the violent 1952 death of a pro-British Kikuyu chief. Yet the episode revealed another attempt by African American leaders to pressure U.S. officials concerning Africa.²⁵²

Conferences, Race, and Identity

Nkrumah's ongoing efforts to pursue non-alignment in the global Cold War continued to attract the attention of both the Eisenhower administration and African Americans. By late 1959, Nkrumah was considering making Ghana a republic in order to end official ties to the British monarch and to eliminate the position of governor-general, who represented the British monarchy and had remained after official independence began in March 1957. By doing so he viewed himself as acting on his public rhetoric of

²⁵² Letter, Horace Mann Bond to Visa Division of United States Immigration Service, May 17, 1960, Series III, Box 19, Folder "9E," Bond Papers; Letter, St. Clair Drake to Horace Mann Bond, May 17, 1960, Box 5, Folder "19," Drake Papers; Letter, Claude Barnett to St. Clair Drake, August 16, 1960, Box 5, Folder "12," Drake Papers; Jeff M. Koinange, *Koinange-Wa-Mbiyu: Mau Mau's Misunderstood Leader* (Sussex, England: The Book Guild Ltd., 2000), 110 and pictures.

neutralism and opposition to economic neo-colonialism. Nkrumah also used the opportunity of cutting such ties to draft a constitution in which he held significantly expanded powers as president. On January 20, 1960, Nkrumah outlined steps Ghana would take towards becoming a republic, although the nation would remain within the British Commonwealth. In a plebiscite during late April, Ghanaians overwhelmingly voted to adopt a republican constitution and to elect Nkrumah president. The Eisenhower administration sent an official delegation composed of banker James Lemon, Deputy Undersecretary of State Raymond Hare, and Flake to the Republic celebrations which began on July 1. Unlike 1957, however, little discussion over the composition of the delegation took place.²⁵³

Yet the transition of Ghana to the status of republic still involved racial issues and African Americans, as did almost any major event involving Ghana during the 1950s. In early June, Flake told the State Department he liked the “idea of giving Ghana microfilm copies of American books on Negro history.” He did not, however, believe such a gift to be appropriate for “Ghana’s transformation into [a] Republic” because “whatever gifts our representatives may bring should not have a racial overtone.” Flake sought to prevent race becoming a prominent issue as Ghana further shed connections to its former white colonial power. Yet African Americans would not cooperate with Flake’s wishes. Bond and his wife Julia, Barnett and his wife Etta, Dr. Louis Hansberry of Howard University, *Pittsburgh Courier* journalist Marguerite Cartwright, Thurgood Marshall, and W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois all attended the ceremonies. *The Chicago Defender*

²⁵³ Telegram, Wilson Flake to Christian Herter, January 20, 1960, 745J.03/1-2060, RG 59, Central Decimal Files (hereafter CDF), Box 1700, Folder “5,” NACP; White House Press Release, June 16, 1960, RDEP-WHCF, Official File, Part 2, Box 929, Folder “OF-320, Ghana,” DDEL.

declared, "Ghana has set sail on a new course of independence as a republic unfettered by ties to the British monarchy." Cartwright, a strong supporter of Ghana and Nkrumah throughout the decade, was moved to ponder, "How Ghana has accomplished so much in such a short time baffles one!" Nkrumah's desire to deepen Ghana's neutralism by shedding some of his nation's formal ties to Britain inspired African Americans as yet another example of black ability to chart their own path towards freedom.²⁵⁴

Another event which even more clearly highlighted both African American racial ties to Ghana and divisions among African Americans regarding U.S. foreign policy occurred shortly thereafter. During the third week of July, Accra played host to the first Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent. Nkrumah even personally delivered a speech to open the meeting. The goals of the Ghana Organization of Women, the original planners of the event, were "(a) to promote leadership and citizenship amongst women of Africa and African descent; (b) to give the...opportunity to discuss their common problems and how best these could be solved; (c) to promote friendship amongst women of Africa and African descent." Such objectives largely focused on deepening the transnational racial ties between black women. Yet shortly before the conference began, female Ghanaian politicians in Nkrumah's CPP formed the Ghana Women's Movement in order to shift the tone and course of the conference towards overtly political issues. In fact, as reported by two members of the mainstream Women's Africa Committee of the African-American Institute, black women radicals from the

²⁵⁴ Telegram, Wilson Flake to Christian Herter, June 8, 1960, 745J.11/6-860, RG 59, CDF, Box 1701, Folder "1," NACP; Telegram, Wilson Flake to Christian Herter, "Ghana Releases List of Official and Unofficial Delegates to Republic Celebrations," July 15, 1960, 845J.424/7-1560, RG 59, CDF, Box 2515, Folder "4," NACP; "Ghana Sheds Its Monarchy Ties," *Chicago Defender*, July 5, 1960, p. 19; Marguerite Cartwright, "World Backdrop: Ghana Celebrating," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 30, 1960, p. A6.

United States acted similarly by trying to criticize U.S. actions in Africa. Howard University director of medical service Dorothy Ferebee and New York University professor Jeanne Noble related how “a pro-Soviet bloc in the U.S. delegation under Shirley G. Dubois [sic] attempted to take over the Conference.” Other black women radicals present included Vicki Garvin, Hazel Grey, and Geraldine Lightfoot. When each country prepared to elect a chair for its delegation as well as a member to the Steering Committee for the overall conference, the radical members of the U.S. delegation quickly elected Shirley Graham Du Bois chairman and nominated other radicals for the Committee. Ferebee and Noble considered such actions “definitely pre-planned.” Ferebee somehow held up the vote on the Steering Committee members “until reinforcements arrived to wrest from the opposition the evident plan to condemn and vilify the United States.” The scuffle clearly revealed the division within the ranks of African American women between an emphasis on racial solidarity and a desire to use the conference as a platform to criticize the United States.²⁵⁵

Divisions were especially apparent in how each group sought to portray America’s racial problems. As Ferebee and Noble reported, “The American delegation was plagued from the outset by a political struggle and by the fact that in many ways its interests were tangential to those of the African women.” For instance, the American radicals focused not on how to cooperate with African women, but on the deplorable condition of African Americans in the United States. During one session, “Mrs. Dubois

²⁵⁵ Dorothy Ferebee and Jeanne Noble, “Report on the Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent: Accra, Ghana, July 14-21, 1960,” p. 1, 2, Series III, Box 27, Folder “62A,” Bond Papers. Information on other radicals from Telegram, Christian Herter to Wilson Flake, July 14, 1960, RG 84, GCGR, 1956-1958, Box 3, Folder “Conferences – Misc Africa 1960,” NACP.

[sic] deviated from her assigned speech which was to describe what women's groups are doing in America to talk about the large numbers of Negroes in jails and in mental institutions." W.E.B. Du Bois, also in Ghana at the time, had even in the weeks prior to the conference "allegedly warned Africans to beware of American Negroes who were now coming to Africa to exploit the Africans and asserted that they would lead the Africans down the path of imperialism." He had specifically labeled AMSAC and the ACOA as imperialist organizations. In contrast, moderate black women sought to "identify themselves with the African struggle for liberation and their African heritage, but...make clear their American personality, identity and heritage...to interpret the positive aspects of American democracy without denying its imperfections and the heroic struggle which American Negroes have made to achieve equality of status in order to counteract some of the Dubois [sic] propaganda...and...to lift the level of the Conference from nationalist levels to international levels by stressing the common problems of women everywhere." Yet these moderates also claimed, "America had best wake up from its belief that we are the land of promise" because "there is still a feeling that all of the United States is Little Rock." In the end, to moderates, "the political overtones overshadowed...social concerns" such as health issues, the care of children, and education. Their assessment was largely correct. For instance, one of the resolutions adopted by the conference read, "To urge the people of the U.S. to hasten their progress toward their national goal of freedom and equality for all its citizens." Other resolutions addressed United Nations actions in the Congo and criticized both South African apartheid and the French war in Algeria. Most important was how moderates generally emphasized the progress of African Americans within American society and reaffirmed

their American identity. They thus attempted to balance their transnational racial identification with black African women with their status as anti-communist Americans in a Cold War environment.²⁵⁶

Noble also shed light on the way black American and Ghanaian paths seemed to be diverging by mid-1960. She felt “a complete stranger in the midst of friendly folk.” She “never enjoyed a sense of real commonality, nor a sense of identification.” Such lack of affinity with many at the conference stemmed from different perceptions of the future. Noble recognized, “The only rallying point, or unifying force, between American Negroes and African people is a similar perception that we have been thought of and treated as inferiors no matter where we have dwelt...most of us feel that our badge of inferiority is that of color.” Yet “after such common commiseration, we part company.” According to Noble, “most Negroes in America feel that the U.S. embraces all nationalities and races and ought to integrate us into the fold,” but “the Africans seem to feel that the color problem has poisoned the world; that it is now too late for acceptance within a predominantly white country; and that the only hope for black people is to establish their own culture and civilization on African soil.” Noble’s views highlighted the division between mainstream African American concepts of race as simply a hurdle, albeit a high one, to eventual full integration in a multiracial society and radical African views of race as a fundamentally divisive category in international relations. In addition, throughout her entire report Noble struggled to balance a recognition of the similarities between African American and African women with a desire to remain American first

²⁵⁶ Dorothy Ferebee and Jeanne Noble, “Report on the Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent: Accra, Ghana, July 14-21, 1960,” 3-5, 7, Series III, Box 27, Folder “62A,” Bond Papers.

and primarily help advance the status of black Americans. She clearly revealed her attitude on such matters when she penned the hypothetical exchange, “When the American Negro says he wants to stay in America, the African asks: ‘Are you accepted?’ We have to say, ‘Well, no, BUT... [emphasis and ellipses in original].’” The experience of moderate black women at the conference highlighted the concern of African Americans who had sought to use Ghana as a symbol of modernity to bolster the struggle for civil rights, but who now found the increasing anti-American sentiments of Nkrumah, Ghanaian women, and radical American women to be unacceptable. Moderates believed such views could even threaten the African American goal of achieving an equal place in mainstream American society during the Cold War. Most African Americans would identify with Ghana and black Africans only as long as such identification did not challenge their long term objectives of full racial equality within the United States. Thus the Cold War continued to place limits on the extent to which mainstream African American leaders would act on their transnational racial identifications.²⁵⁷

Officials in both Washington and Accra closely followed the developments of the conference. In fact, Ferebee and Noble most likely wrote their report at the request of the State Department. Before the conference began, Secretary of State Christian Herter told the embassy in Accra a number of “American citizens of strong leftist tendencies” would attend the meeting. He listed Vicky Garvin, Hazel Gray, Shirley Graham Du Bois, and Geraldine Lightfoot as possible attendees. Herter also noted, “Some American participants [are] clearly anti-communist and may be of great assistance.” He then named Noble and Ferebee as among the latter group. Herter even indicated Ferebee had been

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 6-7.

“briefed” by the State Department and told to “contact [the] Embassy for further briefing if necessary.” From the U.S. embassy in Accra, First Secretary John Meagher provided a final report on the conference to the State Department paralleling the description of the event by Ferebee and Noble. U.S. officials were generally pleased that moderate African American women had directed the conference away from extremely radical positions. Yet Meagher still warned, “The extent of the effort of the inimical [to U.S. interests] group would suggest that this conference may well set the pace for future efforts at Communist penetration of ‘non-governmental’ meetings in Africa.” To combat such “penetration,” Meagher believed, “It will be necessary to be well represented numerically as well as substantively at such meetings.” To that end, “Alert representation obviously will stem from the continuing interest shown by the Department in the activities of American non-governmental organizations insofar as women’s groups in the U.S. are concerned.” Meagher went on to list a number of such organizations with whom the State Department could work. Thus the events of the conference forced officials in both Washington and Accra to realize they needed the help of African American women in order to limit criticism of the United States emanating from African conferences. Such recognition promised to open more avenues for mainstream black women to interact with U.S. officials.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ Telegram, Christian Herter to Wilson Flake, July 14, 1960, RG 84, GCGR, 1956-1958, Box 3, Folder “Conferences – Misc Africa 1960,” NACP; Telegram, John Meagher to Christian Herter, “Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent Held in Accra,” July 27, 1960, p. 1, 6, RG 84, GCGR, 1956-1958, Box 3, Folder “Conferences, Misc Africa 1960,” NACP. In November 1959 the Women’s Africa Committee of the African-American Institute, to which Noble and Ferebee belonged, hosted the first conference in the United States to address the role of women in Africa. A number of African officials from the United Nations attended, but no U.S. officials. The conference largely discussed how to involve African women more in community life and leadership and did not evidence the divisions among African Americans or between mainstream black Americans and Africans as did the July 1960 conference. See

While Ferebee seemed to be losing her identification with Africans, Nkrumah's officials visiting the United States in the late 1950s continued to voice their opinions on racial issues, thus contributing to the transnational connections between black Americans and Ghanaians. In the fall of 1959 Martin Therson-Cofie, the editor of the *Ghana Daily Graphic* and the *Sunday Mirror*, was in the United States on a trip funded by the State Department's leader grants program. After touring the *Pittsburgh Courier* publishing plant, he announced, "I was very much moved by the Negro question. They need a better deal. I don't like the way they have been neglected. They are deserving of a better standard of life than they enjoy at the moment. During my stay in your hotels, I never came across an American Negro guest." Therson-Cofie also evidenced Ghanaian transnational racial identification with African Americans when he suggested, "I think that the American Negro should look upon Africa as Jews look upon Israel. I'm not saying that they should come back to Africa, but they should take pride in the knowledge that their roots are in Africa." U.S. officials likely did not appreciate Therson-Cofie's comments pointing out faults in American race relations.²⁵⁹

Other episodes during the visits of Ghanaians were even more embarrassing to the United States. In May 1960, Badu Kofi, the sports editor for the *Ghana Times*, traveled to the United States under State Department sponsorship. He was filming in Denver when police falsely arrested him "for interfering in police business." Badu was released shortly afterwards, but the reason for his arrest was clearly racial because Denver Police Captain Lee Raedel, who oversaw the arrest, later stated, "It was some Nigger with a goatee

Press Release, The Women's Africa Committee, "First U.S. Conference on the Role of Women in Africa," November 23, 1959, p. 1-5, Series III, Box 27, Folder "62A," Bond Papers.

²⁵⁹ "U.S. Negroes Should Stand on Their Feet," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 15, 1959, p. B2.

beard.” The police had simply seen a black man who did not seem to belong in the area and arrested him. Likewise, in November H. V. H. Sekyi, an official with the Ghanaian Embassy in the United States, was visiting a polling station in Mableton, Georgia when “he was shoved abruptly from the polls.” According to the local official, “the place was getting crowded.” Sekyi said he would probably officially protest his treatment and announced, “What I don’t like is that people who should have been maintaining the law seemed to be on the side of those who had actually broken it.” Both the *Chicago Defender*, in a front page article, and the *Pittsburgh Courier* ran stories on the encounter. As with the incidents experienced by Gbedemah and others in 1957, individual Ghanaians continued to encounter American racism firsthand into the late 1950s.²⁶⁰

Open Splits

Official relations between Nkrumah and the Eisenhower administration had remained cordial between 1957 and 1960 despite the Ghanaian leader’s overt embrace of neutralism. American policymakers both understood Nkrumah was not going to openly side with the Soviet Union and continued to believe Nkrumah could play a role in keeping the Soviets out of Africa. For his part, Nkrumah still considered the West his best chance to obtain funding for the Volta River Project. Yet the collapse of the former Belgian Congo into anarchy during the summer of 1960 sharply divided Nkrumah and the Eisenhower administration. In addition, the decolonization of sixteen other African nations in what became known as “The Year of Africa” caused Ghana to assume less

²⁶⁰ “Ghana Editor Arrested, By Denver Police,” *Chicago Defender*, May 14, 1960, p. 1; “Expel African From Ga. Poll,” *Chicago Defender*, November 19, 1960, p. 1; “Diplomat From Ghana Pushed Around in Ga.,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 19, 1960, p. B3.

importance in the minds of U.S. officials. While African Americans were still enthusiastic about Ghana, they had also launched more fully their own struggle for civil rights, evidenced especially by the beginning of the lunch counter sit-in movement on February 1, 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina. Black Americans thus began to find less use for Ghana as a symbol of black capability. Ghana had served its purposes for a number of African Americans, who believed blacks in the United States were now ready to act on the appropriate lessons they had taken from Ghana. In this way, the decline in the use of Ghana as a symbol of modernity indicated the limits of mainstream black internationalism in the Cold War environment.

Other historians have written extensively both on the history of the Congo crisis and on relations between Ghana and the United States over the Congo, so a brief summary will suffice. Having done little to prepare the region for independence, Belgium declared in late 1959 the vast area of the Congo would be free within six months. Upon independence on June 30, 1960, the new nation immediately collapsed into chaos. Black troops attacked their white Belgian officers and white European citizens. More Belgian troops poured in, only adding to the violence. The mineral rich province of Katanga then seceded under Moïse Tshombe with Belgian military and material support. Nkrumah and the Congolese leaders Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu sought to keep the nation united in order to access the minerals of the Katanga region. The expulsion of Belgian troops and the end of Belgian influence were also primary goals. While the United Nations demanded the removal of Belgian troops and would later send its own forces, Ghanaian soldiers were the first to land in the Congo in mid-July to support the central government. Throughout the crisis, Nkrumah considered

Lumumba the legitimate leader of the newly free country and consistently demanded the removal of Belgian troops. Nkrumah therefore heavily criticized the West for not pressuring Belgium both to leave the Congo and to end its support of the rebels in Katanga. As Ebere Nwaubani writes, “Nkrumah saw Lumumba as a nationalist striving to safeguard his country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” The situation worsened during the first two weeks of September when Kasavabu tried to dismiss Lumumba. Army colonel Joseph Mobutu also began an uprising against the central government within the rest of the Congo. The Eisenhower administration supported Kasavabu in public, believing Lumumba to be unacceptably leftist, but also supported Mobutu in private through the Central Intelligence Agency. In fact, near the end of 1960 the CIA would capture Lumumba as he tried to flee and would turn him over to his enemies in Katanga to be executed.²⁶¹

Nkrumah’s September 1960 speech on the Congo crisis at the United Nations created an open breach between Ghana and the United States. Nkrumah traveled to the United States to address the UN General Assembly and met with Eisenhower on September 22 to discuss the usual issues of foreign policy and the Volta River Project. The cordiality of the meeting made Nkrumah’s UN speech the next day all the more surprising and upsetting to the administration. Nkrumah heavily criticized Belgium for a number of offenses in the Congo, declared the Congo a problem to be handled by Africans only, and announced his continuing support for Lumumba as the legitimate leader of the new country. Many of his ideas sounded much like Soviet views on both the

²⁶¹ Montgomery, “Eyes of the World,” 124-5; Nwaubani, *Decolonization in West Africa*, 159. See 146-160 for an extensive discussion of the tripartite relationship between the United States, Ghana, and the Congo during this crisis.

Congo and the role of the United Nations. In fact, Nkrumah's speech was met with much applause from non-aligned and communist delegations. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev even stood up to shake Nkrumah's hand. Secretary of State Herter, incensed by what he considered the anti-Western bent of the speech, subsequently criticized Nkrumah publicly. Likewise, Assistant Secretary Satterthwaite told the Ghanaian ambassador to the United Nations, "It was difficult to find a word in the speech showing any understanding of the position of the West in the East-West conflict....the content of the Nkrumah and Khrushchev speeches and the display attached to the reception by the eastern bloc delegates of the Nkrumah speech gave us every reason to believe there had been collusion between the two." The State Department later told the embassy in Accra Nkrumah's speech "failed to find fault with flagrant unilateral Soviet intervention in Congo." Therefore, the Department went on, "we do not wish [sic] take action to encourage Nkrumah's role in Africa unless and until he shows greater signs of stability and that his actions are not furthering Soviet objectives." In addition, the Department noted, "Nkrumah has grandiose view part he is to play in future Africa [sic]....We hope counter force such as Nigeria [independent in October 1960] will now begin assert strong moderating influence on manner in which regional cooperation is achieved." Such language indicated American policymakers were finally fed up with Nkrumah. Now that other nations, such as the more pro-Western Nigeria, were achieving independence, U.S. officials were beginning to attribute less importance to Ghana. Most revealing is the fact Director of the Office of West African Affairs (OWAA) C. Vaughan Ferguson was one of the officials who wrote the dispatch, which Satterthwaite also approved. Thus the mid-level State Department officials who had been in contact with African Americans would

only accept Nkrumah's actions and speeches to a certain point. While African Americans had asserted a level of influence on State Department policy regarding Ghana and Africa, U.S. officials remained fundamentally focused on the Cold War and were beginning to see other opportunities in Africa to achieve American objectives.²⁶²

Yet African Americans still valued Nkrumah highly and attempted to limit U.S. criticism of Nkrumah after his UN speech. Four days after the event, Herter responded to a letter from Claude Barnett of the Associated Negro Press. Barnett had apparently told Herter "of the dismay felt by the Delegation of Ghana at my [Herter's] remarks concerning President Nkrumah's speech." Barnett had also suggested Nkrumah and Herter meet to discuss the division between the two nations created by both the speech and the secretary's subsequent criticism. Herter told Barnett, "I must confess that I was equally dismayed because I thought that in conversations we had with Mr. Nkrumah and his party preceding his speech there had developed a close identity of views." Herter, however, promised at least to consider another meeting with Nkrumah. Noting the "faltering and even stupid" attempts by the United States to convince African nations to side with the West, *Pittsburgh Courier* journalist Horace Cayton wrote in mid-October, "Perhaps the worst American blunder was made by Secretary of State Herter....Herter seemed more incensed with the young African than he was with the Russian leader and openly accused him of being in the Communist camp over the T.V. networks: a silly and emotional statement Herter will live to regret." A week earlier another *Courier* article,

²⁶² Nwaubani, *Decolonization in West Africa*, 155-6; "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Satterthwaite) and the Ghanaian Representative at the United Nations (Quaison-Sackey)," September 24, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, 14: 663-5; "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Ghana," October 13, 1960, *FRUS*, 1958-1960, 14: 667-8.

relating how Canadian officials found Herter's comments "startling," had rhetorically asked, "Did Secretary of State Christian Herter, 'put his foot in his mouth' when he implied that President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana had been lost to communism?" The article further revealed, "Some observers thought that Herter statement a prime example of why, after two Soviet actions which have obliterated their standing in Africa, Western prestige did not gain accordingly." African Americans still saw Nkrumah as a symbol of black capability and an emerging Africa. The fact black Americans continued to view Nkrumah in this way, despite the anti-western language of his speech, revealed that while mainstream black leaders and publications were certainly anti-communist, they often cared more about race than politics when focusing on Africa.²⁶³

In fact, the *Chicago Defender* used language filled with transnational racial identifications when describing Nkrumah's speech at the United Nations. The newspaper declared Nkrumah to be "the voice of New Africa – the Africa which is seething with nationalism, and whose speedy rise out of the dust of colonialism has bewildered the white world." The *Defender* delighted in "the first time a black leader, clothed with the sovereign authority of an independent state," had addressed the United Nations in a major speech. The *Defender* claimed that instead of declaring each new African leader "a Communist, or Marxist, or Red sympathizer, the Western democracies should face up to the shift and change of a new era, and shower gifts and grants on the new African states, without strings...if not for helping to shape its destiny, at least as atonement for their

²⁶³ Letter, Christian Herter to Claude Barnett, September 27, 1960, Christian A. Herter Papers, 1937-67, Chronological File, Box 9, Folder "September 1960 (1)," DDEL; Horace Cayton, "World at Large," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 15, 1960, p. A6; "Canadians 'Startled'," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 8, 1960, p. 35.

accumulated sins committed for hundred[s] of years against helpless Africa.” In a later piece titled “Herter Knows Better,” the *Defender* heavily criticized the secretary of state for his comments on Nkrumah’s “stirring address.” First, the *Defender* noted, “What really stood out in bold relief was that an unmistakably black man had attained sufficient stature and prestige to ascend the rostrum of that great international body and voice unhesitatingly his views and sentiments about the issues that confront our contemporary world. That in itself is history of the first magnitude.” Therefore, declared the *Defender*, Herter’s claim Nkrumah was “‘leaning toward the Soviet bloc’ is both trite and offensive.” Furthermore, the paper argued, “We see nothing in that view [of supporting the legally constituted central government in the Congo] to inspire the suggestion that Dr. Nkrumah’s approach is communistic or irrational...It is precisely this sort of silly attitude that has driven a number of resentful souls into the Communist camp.” A succinct and not entirely rhetorical question concluded the editorial, “Mr. Herter knows better; or does he?”²⁶⁴

Thus by the end of 1960, the symbol of Ghana and Nkrumah had so inspired African Americans that some were openly criticizing the extreme anti-communism of officials in the Eisenhower administration. Ghana had therefore provided an avenue for mainstream African American leaders and journalists to criticize European colonialism and challenge Cold War rhetoric of creeping communism in Africa while still claiming their rightful place as full and equal members of American society. On October 1, for instance, the *Pittsburgh Courier* broadly declared, “Africa’s great impact upon the

²⁶⁴ “Day of Reckoning,” *Chicago Defender*, September 27, 1960, p. A10; “Herter Knows Better,” *Chicago Defender*, October 6, 1960, p. A14.

consciences of the white world was never more forceably [sic] demonstrated than through the reaction of Westerners to the new historic speech of Kwame Nkrumah before the United Nations.” The article went on to criticize “the great newspapers of America” who “either ignored completely or gave little place to the very important address of the African leader.” Perhaps this was because, as the *Courier* announced in forceful language, whites “looked upon the Ghana Prime Minister’s address with mixed feelings of dismay and anger all of which was laced with a good bit of fear.” Praising Ghana in such a manner implied criticism for white Americans and Europeans who ignored Africa. Likewise, by the end of 1960 the *Chicago Defender* was running editorials openly critical and suspicious of Western actions in the Congo. One piece even claimed, “Unless our memory is inordinately short, we cannot recall a single instance when Mr. Eisenhower dared lift his voice to hasten the end of colonialism.” Four days before Christmas the *Defender* similarly declared, “The habit of labeling every Negro leader who displays independence of thought and who disregards prevailing conformity has become a neurotic fixation with those who dislike the Negro in his new freedom role [sic].” The paper then labeled the United States and South Africa as the worst practitioners of such smear campaigns. Ghana’s importance therefore allowed black Americans striving for civil rights to avoid being marked with the rhetorical brush of communism while still advocating both an end to European control in Africa and a more nuanced view of African leaders, approaches the Eisenhower administration only began to adopt very late in the decade.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ “Many Papers Snub Nkrumah: Africa’s Impact on White World Shown Before UN,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 1, 1960, p. 24; “The Drama is Not Over,” *Chicago Defender*, December 1, 1960, p. 14;

Unlike most African Americans, American policymakers now seemed convinced Ghana was moving unacceptably to the left. U.S. officials thus began to explore the possibility of cementing closer ties with other newly independent African nations. By 1960 the unique moment for Ghana's sole leadership of black Africa had passed as nations with diverse political orientations joined the world stage. Such views were developing among American policymakers as early as June 1959 when Satterthwaite brought together USIA, Defense, and State Department officials at an African Regional Conference to discuss U.S. relations with Africa. At the conference OWAA Director Ferguson predicted, "With the rise of Nigeria on the east and the entry of the brilliant Sekou Toure [of Guinea] to the west, it appears evident that the role of Nkrumah as a Pan-African leader well [sic] be eclipsed." As shown above, in internal conversations after Nkrumah's UN speech State Department officials were beginning to shift their attention towards Nigeria, a nation with vastly more resources and people. Nigeria's leaders were also more pro-Western in orientation than Nkrumah. In addition, in a conversation on U.S. aid levels to Africa in early November 1960, Satterthwaite told Eisenhower and other policymakers that Ivory Coast's Felix "Houphouet-Boigny is emerging as the most able African leader, very pro-Western in outlook, and that his country is a point of strength in this area [of technical institutes in Africa]." Which country the Eisenhower administration was beginning to favor was not as important as

"Communism and Africa," *Chicago Defender*, December 21, 1960, p. 12.

the fact Ghana was no longer the sole, or even the most important, symbol of black Africa to U.S. officials by 1960.²⁶⁶

Yet one American, Senator John Kennedy, was still willing to consider Ghana of prime importance in Africa. Kennedy led a new subcommittee on Africa which the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had created in May 1959, although the group rarely met. More important to Kennedy was to support African decolonization in order to gain African American votes. During the 1960 presidential campaign, therefore, Kennedy spoke about Africa 479 times and delivered thirteen major speeches concerning the continent, according to historian Stephen Rabe. Africa was useful to Kennedy because, as Rabe relates, “Kennedy seized on the African issue to demonstrate that his knowledge of international affairs matched Nixon’s and that his understanding of nationalism would prove effective in winning the allegiance of the new African nations.” The approach seemed to work for Kennedy as he won three quarters of the black vote in northern cities. His subsequent record in Africa, however, became mixed. For instance, the early years of the Peace Corps, whose first members went to Ghana, were successful. Yet by 1962 Kennedy retreated from criticizing Portugal’s repression of African freedom movements in order to maintain U.S. access to military bases in the Azores islands. In 1960, however, he appeared to African Americans as more concerned about Africa than either the Eisenhower administration or even Republican candidate Richard Nixon.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ “Statement by Mr. C. Vaughan Ferguson on Developments in West Africa,” in Report, “African Regional Conference: Lourenco Marques,” June 9-11, 1959, p. 14, RG 59, Records of Ambassador Joseph C. Satterthwaite, 1953-72, Box 1, Folder “African Regional Conference, June 9-11, 1959,” NAI; A. J. Goodpaster, “Memorandum of Conference with the President: November 1, 1960,” November 8, 1960, p. 3, WHO, Office of the Staff Secretary, International Series, Box 1, Folder “Africa (General), Dec. 1958 – Jan 1961 (3),” DDEL.

²⁶⁷ Stephen G. Rabe, *John F. Kennedy: World Leader* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2000), 164.

Yet Kennedy's record of speaking on Ghana and Africa during the 1960 presidential campaign also complicated U.S.-Ghanaian relations. During a televised debate on October 13 Kennedy claimed Ghana was "supporting Soviet foreign policy at the United Nations," a clear reference to Nkrumah's speech. Kennedy was trying to criticize the Eisenhower administration's failure to attract African nations to the Western camp. The Ghanaian ambassador to the United States, W.M.Q. Halm, met with Satterthwaite the next day to protest the portrait of Ghanaian foreign policy Kennedy had presented. After two separate meetings, U.S. officials told Halm they could do nothing to reprimand Kennedy or limit his speech because he was both a member of Congress, not of the executive branch, and, of course, an American with individual rights such as free speech. Satterthwaite would not even issue a statement Halm had provided which would have expressed disappointment at Kennedy's comments. As Satterthwaite told Halm, part of his refusal also stemmed from a recent speech by Nkrumah which U.S. officials considered too pro-Soviet. The State Department had been "surprised and disappointed by President Nkrumah's remarks" criticizing the West and implying the Soviet Union was more peaceful than the West.²⁶⁸

At the same time, African Americans were enthusiastic about what appeared to be Kennedy's firm commitment to deeper U.S. involvement in Africa. After Kennedy won the presidential election, the *Chicago Defender* remarked he was "expected to give high priority to education and development programs for strife-torn African nations." The

²⁶⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, "Senator John F. Kennedy's Radio-TV Remarks on Ghana," October 14, 1960, 745J.00/10-1460, and Memorandum of Conversation, "Senator John F. Kennedy's Radio-TV Remarks on Ghana," October 20, 1960, 745J.00/10-2060, both on Reel 1 of Robert Lester, project coordinator, *Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Ghana, 1960 – January 1963* [microform] (Bethesda, MD: LexisNexis, 2003).

Defender also believed he would “encourage Negroes to join the U.S. foreign service in Africa,” thus fulfilling the longstanding African American goal of more black officials in the State Department. Indeed, the Operations Coordinating Board had already hinted at a greater inclusion of African Americans at posts in Africa. Although using vague language, the minutes of an OCB meeting on August 24 read in part, “The National Security Council had agreed that the U.S. Government should make a high priority effort to identify personnel resources available in the U.S. that could be utilized in connection with assistance programs in the emerging nations of Africa.” Seeking to “identify personnel resources” may have indicated that a previously underutilized population, African Americans, would now be more readily included in American relations with Africa.²⁶⁹

African Americans certainly continued to desire such involvement. Even up through the final months of the Eisenhower administration black leaders sought, as they had throughout the decade, to press U.S. officials to assist African Americans in strengthening the ties between the United States and Africa. In mid-October the Committee of Americans of African Ancestry, aided by Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for the Coordination of International Educational and Cultural Relations Robert Thayer, hosted a widely attended reception for UN delegates from African nations. The famous athlete Jackie Robinson and the politician and activist Crystal Bird Fauset subsequently wrote to Eisenhower in late December, “There should be a continuing program of hospitality such as the Reception.” The two also claimed if Africans could see

²⁶⁹ “Help for Africa High On Kennedy’s Program,” *Chicago Defender*, November 14, 1960, p. 7; Minutes of Operations Coordinating Board Meeting, August 24, 1960, WHO, NSC Staff Papers, OCB Secretariat Series, Box 17, Folder “File #14(3),” DDEL.

African Americans freely mingling with whites, criticism of U.S. racism would decrease. Likewise, Robinson and Fauset argued, if such a reception was set up on a permanent basis, "It would have a magnificent effect upon not only Colored people of our Country but African leaders everywhere." They went on to express transnational racial identifications, by now held by so many African Americans concerning Africa, when they announced, "The time has come when Africans themselves would be pleased to have our National Government recognize publicly the unique relationship which exist[s] between the United States and Africa through the presence in this country of 20,000,000 Americans of African Ancestry [sic]." As usual, black leaders were arguing for connections to Africa in order to please both the "Colored people of our Country" as well as the African leaders which would be hosted. The phrase "Africans themselves" also indicated that while black Americans had already long desired the Eisenhower administration to acknowledge racial links between the United States and Africa, now, Robinson and Fauset argued, African leaders likewise wanted the government to support those racial ties. Through Thayer the State Department had been involved in generating an initial gathering of Africans and black Americans. As usual, however, the latter, based in part on the strong transnational racial identifications with Ghana which had developed by 1960, wanted the government to embrace Africans even more firmly.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Letter, Jackie Robinson and Crystal Bird Fauset to Dwight D. Eisenhower, December 23, 1960, RDEP-WHCF, General File, Box 797, Folder "GF-122-Africa," DDEL.

Conclusion

On the last day of 1960, the *Pittsburgh Courier* ran an article clearly describing the effect of Ghana on black American conceptions of non-white capabilities. The piece read in part, “After the year 1949 [the year of the first riots in Accra], and especially during 1958 and 1959, the ‘image’ of the Negro has bulged into dimensions of importance long limited only to the arena of sports.” Specifically, “Until 1958, the word ‘Africa’ was a connotation of savagery and cannibalistic ‘natives,’ ready with white teeth to devour human flesh. From out of that abyss of night since 1957 looms the internationally important manifestations of Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah; of Nigeria’s Nnamdi Azikiwe, and of Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta.” The clear references to Ghana’s independence indicated the central reference point Ghana provided African Americans throughout the 1950s as a symbol of black freedom and black ability to embrace and participate in the modern world politically, economically, and socially. At the same time, the mentions of Azikiwe and Kenyatta revealed that by 1960 the field of usable African symbols had expanded. Nkrumah was no longer the single most important African leader to African Americans, although he did not recede far from the black American worldview. The 1950s was the decade in which Nkrumah loomed abnormally large for African Americans. Yet as the civil rights movement took inspiration from African independence movements and strengthened itself into a sustained campaign, black Americans had less use for Africa, or at least for Ghana specifically, as a symbol of black capability. African Americans were now confident in themselves and their actions. While

Ghana had played a role in solidifying that confidence, by 1960 Ghana was no longer specifically needed.²⁷¹

In addition, the Eisenhower administration began to consider Ghana as simply one among many African nations due to Nkrumah's ongoing neutralism, his vituperative anti-Western UN speech in September 1960, and the fact larger and more pro-Western Nigeria was free after October 1960. At the same time, however, interactions between U.S. officials and African Americans continued for a variety of reasons. American policymakers often needed information on events in Africa. As had been the case throughout the 1950s, African Americans also continued to seek government assistance in deepening ties between the United States and emerging African nations. Black Americans did not achieve the level of influence on American foreign policy and actions towards Africa which they had wielded between 1955 and 1958, but frequent interactions certainly still occurred. In November 1960, for instance, Harold Keith, the managing editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, met with acting Assistant Secretary of State for Administration Aaron Brown and head of the Division of Employment Ancel Taylor to discuss State Department hiring policies regarding race. Keith subsequently concluded, "A new day has arrived opportunity-wise for the Negro in the foreign service." Unfortunately, in his intricate study of the African American campaign to place more blacks in the ranks of the State Department, Michael Krenn describes the 1960s as a period in which "the rhetoric had been loud and long, but aside from a few highly publicized appointments (and none of these to policy making positions) little had

²⁷¹ "Changing 'Image' of Negro Startled World After 1957," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 31, 1960, p. A4.

changed.” Therefore, Keith’s confident proclamation was not entirely accurate. Yet events such as Keith’s meeting with U.S. officials to discuss issues of race had become much more commonplace by 1960 compared to earlier in the decade. U.S. officials had learned to listen to black voices to at least some degree and those black voices had been stimulated to talk by the symbol of Ghana.²⁷²

²⁷² Harold Keith, “Where do Negroes Fit in State Department Hiring Policies?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 26, 1960, p. 10; Krenn, *Black Diplomacy*, 130. See 112-162 of Krenn for a longer discussion of the relationship between African Americans and the State Department under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

CONCLUSION

In December 1960 the United Nations voted on yet another resolution calling for an end to colonialism. As usual the U.S. delegation abstained from voting in order to avoid either endorsing colonialism, and therefore angering the increasing number of non-white nations, or alienating its European allies who still controlled portions of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Yet when the unanimous result was announced, Zelma George, an African American musician on the U.S. delegation, “stood and applauded with the Africans, even though her vote could not be counted,” according to the *Pittsburgh Courier*. The *Courier*’s description of George’s actions as “show[ing] whites that though Negroes have been loyal to their country, they can be more loyal to each other” concisely summarized the outlook of many black Americans during the 1950s. George held virulently anti-colonial views and had been a thorn in the side of the Eisenhower administration throughout the 1950s as she sought a government position in order to influence American foreign policy. When Representative Frances Bolton first recommended George for the delegation to the United Nations in early 1958, Special Assistant to the Undersecretary of State for Administration Robert Hampton described George as “very smart but somewhat of a show-off.” In addition, historian Brenda Gayle Plummer relates how George was “cut out of the loop” and often had to obtain information on the U.S. position on issues at the United Nations from other delegations. Yet Hampton also believed, regarding a position on the U.S. delegation to the United Nations, George “was a possibility if this group was to be covered.” His phrase “this group” was clearly a reference to African Americans. Mid-level U.S. officials thus saw the value in having an African American join the group officially representing the United

States at the United Nations. George's interactions with U.S. officials thus reflected the larger relationship between African Americans and the Eisenhower administration during the 1950s. That relationship was marked both by black American agency and by the diverse responses of various policymakers to African American and global pressure regarding both U.S. foreign policy towards Africa and domestic race relations.²⁷³

Around the same time as George's provocative action at the United Nations, Howard University historian Rayford Logan gave a speech which included a perceptive analysis of the intersection of race and the international arena at the end of the 1950s. Logan wrote, "Today, it is commonplace that denials of equal rights to Negro Americans and the vacillating support by the United States of the so-called Black emergent and emerging nations are twin Achilles heels in the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union." Logan then reminded his listeners that many African Americans had long noticed this "commonplace." He went on to describe the efforts of W.E.B. Du Bois over a fifty year career to end American racism and American support of colonialism. He further highlighted African American agency in foreign relations when noting the administration was caught between "our NATO allies on the one hand or the African nations and Negro Americans – as well as other Americans – on the other." Logan also declared that while at the dinner hosted by the State Department for Nkrumah in July 1958, "I can assure you that it was a sight which I never thought I would behold when Mr. Dulles gave his arm to Mrs. Chapman, the wife of the Ambassador of Ghana, and

²⁷³ Phyl Garland, "Year of Sit-Ins, Boycotts, Violence; African Bid for World Recognition," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 31, 1960, p. 14; Memorandum, Robert Hampton to Harry Stimpson, January 29, 1958, Papers of Christian Herter, Chronological File, Box 3, Folder "January 1958 (1)," DDEL; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 273.

Prime Minister Nkrumah gave his arm to Mrs. Dulles.” Logan, however, simultaneously cautioned against black criticism of U.S. abstentions from votes against colonialism at the United Nations because, as he wrote, a nuclear war would kill Americans of all races. He thus defended the administration’s foreign relations in Africa to a greater extent than many other African American leaders. Yet his descriptions of the late 1950s revealed the sea changes which had occurred over the course of the decade in the interconnected relationship between American race relations, Africa, and the global arena.²⁷⁴

Logan also provided clear and concise assessments of what newly independent nations such as Ghana meant for African Americans. In a piece entitled, “The Impact of the New African States on the American Negro,” Logan remarked, “We have identified ourselves with these ‘black’ Africans...because we are descendants – at least in part – of African slaves.” He then described how African freedom would benefit African Americans when he argued, “The winning of independence by nations in Afrique Noire has given us American Negroes faith in our ability to move ahead even more rapidly than we have in the past. Few events in the twentieth century have electrified American Negroes as much as did the proclamation of the independence of Ghana on March 6, 1957.” Indeed, Logan found much at stake in the success of newly independent African nations. His words are worth quoting at length in order to illustrate the way African Americans believed the image of civilized and modern black African nations would bolster the struggle for civil rights in the United States. He wrote,

“We reject the thesis that the new African nations must be permitted to make the same mistakes as those may by these other nations. For we know

²⁷⁴ Rayford Logan, “The Reciprocal Impact of the Emergence of Africa and Race Relations in the United States,” February 12, 1961, p. 1, 5, 8-9, Box 166-27, Folder “42,” Logan Papers.

that, whatever the reasons may be for political instability and lack of economic viability, there are those who hope that other new African nations will lapse into a chaos comparable to that in the Congo (Leopoldville). These die-hard racists will then be able to say: 'I told you so; African Negroes are incapable of governing themselves.' And they would almost certainly add: 'American Negroes should therefore not be permitted to become first-class citizens.' We American Negroes therefore have a vital stake in the sturdy development of the African nations. We will continue to contribute to that sturdy development by helpful criticism; by aiding African students who come to the United States; by consolidating ties between African and American Negroes; by working as diplomats, teachers, missionaries, doctors, and technicians in Africa; by making known to the government of the United States our views as to policies which will best promote the interests of Africans."

Thus the positive image of newly independent Africans successfully embracing modern political, economic, and social systems was the central concern for the majority of African Americans. In addition, Logan's last line invoked the numerous actions African Americans undertook throughout the 1950s in order to shift American foreign policy in Africa toward a firmer embrace of rapid decolonization and other African aspirations.²⁷⁵

Summary of Main Arguments

Thus black American leaders were involved with numerous aspects of American foreign policy in Africa during the 1950s. Largely based on their transnational racial identification with Ghana, African Americans continuously prodded assistant secretaries and desk officers in the State Department to move towards a firmer stance on decolonization. While black leaders certainly did not produce an uncompromising stand against European colonialism in the Eisenhower administration, they did participate in

²⁷⁵ Rayford Logan, "The Impact of the New African States on the American Negro," n.d., p. 1, 6, 9, Box 166-39, Folder "5," Logan Papers. There is no date on the article, but he must have been writing in the early 1960s because he mentions some of Kennedy's early actions regarding Africa and the chaos in the former Belgian Congo.

the shifting of U.S. policy in Africa towards a “middle ground” approach more accommodating to African aspirations. Assistant Secretaries George Allen, William Rountree, Joseph Satterthwaite, and numerous other U.S. officials both in the State Department and at the United Nations recognized black American views and black public opinion concerning Africa and Ghana. They often expressed concern over the pressure they subsequently felt to adopt a more pro-African stance. These officials clearly recognized the international dimensions of race during the Cold War.

Thus while European desires and anti-communist worldviews also influenced U.S. officials, black opinion played a role in the American relationship with Ghana and Africa during the 1950s. In fact, in December 1960 National Security Advisor Gordon Gray worried that “as a result of the deadlock on policy in regard to the relationship of the Metropoles to the newly developing countries, there were no fully agreed basic NSC or OCB papers providing authoritative guidance for African Affairs.” African Americans had helped produce such disagreement in which State officials in contact with black leaders had sided more openly with African wishes. Black Americans also took advantage of the confusion on how to approach Africa in order to obtain a sympathetic ear for their ideas. The opinions and views of African Americans such as Horace Mann Bond, Max Bond, Walter White, Rayford Logan, St. Clair Drake, Lester Granger, A. Philip Randolph, and numerous other black journalists, educators, and individuals reached the State Department throughout the 1950s. Organizations such as the NAACP, the ACOA, AMSAC, and the Women’s Africa Committee of the African-American Institute were also active in such endeavors. The combined efforts of African Americans served to bring Nkrumah to the United States in 1951 and 1958, send Nixon to Accra in

1957, place an African American on the official U.S. delegation to Ghana's independence ceremonies, and make black Americans sources of information for the State Department on events and trends in Africa. In fact, black agency during these episodes in the Eisenhower administration's relationship with Ghana marked some of the highest achievements of African Americans in foreign affairs during the 1950s.²⁷⁶

Ghana's path towards freedom over the course of the decade was primarily responsible for producing such actions by African Americans. In fact, black American identification with Ghana, and thus the subsequent pressure they placed on U.S. officials based on that identification, was intimately intertwined with what exactly they saw in the image of Nkrumah's nation. Ghana certainly inspired oppressed blacks in the United States and provided an example of black freedom, but Ghana also appeared as a symbol of black ability to engage modern political, economic, and social systems effectively and intelligently. African American leaders hoped such an image would help undermine the claims of white racists in the United States that society would fall apart should blacks achieve racial equality. Ghana alone would not change such attitudes, to be sure, but Ghana became a piece of the black American rhetorical arsenal precisely because of this image of modernity. Despite Nkrumah's brand of state-centered socialism, black leaders from across the political spectrum embraced Ghana as a symbol of modernity. In the 1950s, therefore, when dealing with Africa race mattered far more than political ideology for the majority of African Americans. For instance, one of the remarkably rare moments when any black American suggested a reconsideration of their views of Nkrumah

²⁷⁶ Memorandum, Charles Rogers to Joseph Satterthwaite, "Policy Guidance on Africa," December 7, 1960, RG 59, Bureau of African Affairs, Staff Papers on Country Posts, 1956-1959, Box 12, Folder "JCS & JKP Correspondence – December 1960," NACP. This document is also in *FRUS 1958-1960: 14*, p. 171.

occurred not when Nkrumah's own domestic opponents labeled him a dictator or when U.S. officials feared he was leaning toward the Soviet Union, but when a rumor circulated that he had requested a white ambassador from the United States.

Yet the very fact African Americans sought to use Ghana for their own domestic purposes meant black American transnational racial identification with Ghana carried within itself inherent limits. While Kevin Gaines has analyzed the few black American radicals who left the United States to live in Ghana, the vast majority of mainstream African Americans had less use for Ghana once more African nations became independent and once the domestic civil rights campaign seemed to reach a sustained level with the beginning of the sit-in movement. For instance, the *Pittsburgh Courier* labeled 1960 the "Year of Sit-Ins, Boycotts," and only mentioned Nkrumah in reference to the crisis in the Congo. In addition, by late 1960 U.S. policy in Africa was similarly less focused on Ghana. In fact, Eisenhower's Operations Coordinating Board in November listed as a central objective regarding Nigeria, "encouragement and discreet support for Nigerian efforts to assume a position of leadership in African affairs, as long as such efforts remain in the over-all interest of the United States." Such goals were in part because "Nigeria may be expected to follow a more favorable policy towards the West than many of the other African countries." With more African options available, U.S. officials by 1960 were less willing to listen to black Americans about Ghana specifically. In addition, black organizing remained nascent during the decade. George Houser later remembered that in March 1959 the ACOA split over whether to focus its efforts centrally on direct support for education, health, or similar activities in Africa or on a consistent lobbying campaign in Congress and the State Department for more aid to

Africa. The vote fell 15-14 in favor of the former, highlighting conflicts among African Americans on how to approach Africa and steering the ACOA away from more sustained efforts to influence U.S. policy at a high level. For African Americans, the 1950s was a moment in which Ghana held a place in the sun. Yet once Nkrumah seemed to have served his purposes, however good those purposes were, he and his nation became only one of many potentially useful symbols in Africa.²⁷⁷

Ghana's path towards independence thus intertwined with the onset of the U.S. civil rights movement during the 1950s. Black Americans took inspiration to continue their struggle for political and civil rights from the visible example of black Africans gaining their political independence under Nkrumah's leadership. As Martin Luther King, Jr. sermonized, Ghana provided a lesson to black Americans that justice and freedom would eventually triumph. Yet African Americans were not just passively encouraged by Ghana that someday their own troubles would end. They also sought to use Ghana actively as one of their rhetorical weapons in their fight to end racial discrimination. Numerous black leaders believed the example Ghana provided of black ability to wield power fairly, safely, and effectively in modern political, economic, and social systems would challenge the views of American whites who were indifferent to racial discrimination. Hard core racists would likely not be affected much by such arguments, but at least whites uncertain of their own racial views could perhaps be convinced that black participation in politics did not constitute a threat to the American social order.

²⁷⁷ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*; Phyl Garland, "Year of Sit-Ins, Boycotts, Violence; African Bid for World Recognition," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 31, 1960, p. 14. Operations Coordinating Board, "Operational Guidance for Nigeria," November 17, 1960, p. 1-2, RG 59, Bureau of African Affairs, Staff Papers on Country Posts, 1956-1959, Box 12, Folder "JCS & JKP Correspondence – December 1960," NACP; Need to find page in No Easy Victories for this description of ACOA.

Thus African Americans believed Ghana's example of black modernity would help weaken the color line at home. While Ghana did not stimulate the beginning of the civil rights movement and did not provide any substantial lessons in technique or mobilization for black leaders, African Americans considered Ghana a powerful symbol to point to in order to convince American whites that the time for change had come. Ghana's path to freedom did not just coincide with early civil rights events such as the Montgomery bus boycott, the murder of Emmett Till, Autherine Lucy's expulsion from the University of Alabama, and the crisis in Little Rock. Ghana provided both a visible example of black success and a powerful rhetorical weapon for African Americans struggling for equality.

The African American Role in U.S. Foreign Policy

By disaggregating the foreign policymaking apparatus in the State Department during the 1950s in order to focus on the actions, views, and experiences of mid-level officials, this work has demonstrated a level of domestic influence on foreign policy as well as the African American role in helping to shift American policy in Africa toward a "middle ground." Black Americans were even more influential in generating some of the events which led to the highest level of interaction between U.S. and Ghanaian leaders, including Nkrumah's meeting with Vice President Richard Nixon during the independence celebrations in Accra and Eisenhower's two meetings with Nkrumah when the latter visited the United States in 1958. This previously unexplored agency of African Americans illustrates one of the myriad channels along which race moved amid a world populated by decolonizing non-white nations and a black American population increasingly assertive concerning their civil rights. While Eisenhower and Dulles may

have consistently ignored or dismissed the concerns of non-whites, many assistant secretaries and desk officers in the State Department knew the importance of transnational racial connections. Certainly not all the ideas, concerns, and wishes of African Americans traveled up the chain of U.S. officialdom, but mid-level officials did feel pressure from black leaders and black public opinion. While the need to entice newly independent black African nations into the Western camp also played a role in the calculations of these mid-level members of the State Department, the activities, energy, and enthusiasm of African Americans constantly forced these officials to deal with Africa and Ghana. U.S. officials learned to listen to the voices of African Americans over the course of the 1950s and those voices were stimulated to talk especially by Ghana. Racist assumptions caused Eisenhower and many of his top policymakers to be wary of “premature” independence for unprepared non-whites they believed susceptible to communism, to be sure. Yet race, through the channels traced above, also served to heighten the importance of Nkrumah and Ghana in the eyes of mid-level officials and then, subsequently, top policymakers. The simultaneous presence of racist worldviews and transnational racial connections working at cross purposes to each other was a very real aspect of the tumultuous international environment of the 1950s.

At the same time, by focusing on the narrative of modernity African Americans sought to take from Ghana for their own domestic purposes, this work has also revealed the limits inherent in transnational racial identifications. First, during the 1950s African Americans consistently viewed Ghana through a lens centered on European-generated political models, whether capitalist or communist, which thus delegitimized traditional African societies and culture. Therefore, what African Americans took from Ghana

revealed the dominance of a mindset focused on modernization, which Nkrumah himself pursued for his nation through the Volta River Project, for instance. The vast majority of African Americans remained rooted in a Western-oriented worldview in which economic and social development of infrastructure mattered even more than political orientation, as long as the latter also appeared modern in any non-communist vein. As the process of globalization continues into the twenty-first century, however, the increasing strength of nations such as Brazil, Nigeria, India, and China may serve to challenge models of economic and political modernity centered solely on the West. This work thus in part explores an element of the long history of non-white encounters with forms of modernization generated by Europeans.

The way African Americans sought to use Ghana for their own purposes also further revealed among blacks in the United States a deeply ingrained American identity and a desire to be part of the American political mainstream. The refocusing on the domestic civil rights movement once the sit-in campaign began, the relative decline in attention to Ghana by the late 1950s, and the experience of Jeanne Noble and Dorothy Ferebee at the July 1960 Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent all indicated that the importance of Ghana lessened once it had played its assigned role for the black American freedom struggle. While a number of black radicals moved to Ghana during the 1950s and 1960s, as Kevin Gaines has shown, most politically mainstream black Americans remained in the United States to conduct the movement for civil rights. The words of the African American historian John Hope Franklin in an April 1960 *Pittsburgh Courier* article described the mindset of many black Americans. Part of Franklin's description of the African American position in the United States actually

revealed why a black nation demonstrating black capability was so important to black Americans during the 1950s, although Franklin did not make that connection clear in his article. He wrote, "If his [the African American's] services have not been more efficiently utilized, the fault lies not with him but with the racist considerations that have often consigned him to tasks below his capacities." Overall, however, when the African American was told he was better off than people in Russia, India, or South Africa, Franklin wrote, "He judges his condition by the condition of his fellow citizens and by the promises and guarantees his own country makes to him." Franklin also lambasted black radicals when he criticized "the haughty presumption of those who invite him ['the Negro'] to 'go back to Africa'...It is like inviting your next door neighbor to move when he complains that your overgrown son persists in bullying his children." Franklin described the African American as "too much of an American" to leave the United States. He argued blacks should seek to exert any effort in order "to grasp the magnificent implications of the American dream with its promises of justice and equality." Despite excitement over decolonizing African nations and despite Franklin's own recognition, by mentioning the incident involving Gbedemah, that American racism hurt the U.S. image abroad, full integration into American society remained the primary goal for the vast majority of African Americans. Ghana thus provided black Americans with both inspiration and a powerful rhetorical weapon during the beginning of the civil rights movement. This is not to diminish the very real accomplishments of African Americans in the realm of U.S. foreign policy towards Africa based on their transnational racial identification with Ghana. There were simply limits to such identification. Overall, given the Cold War climate as well as the pro-European outlook and latent racism of

Eisenhower and his top policymakers, African Americans probably achieved as much as they possibly could in the realm of U.S. foreign policy towards Africa during the 1950s.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*; John Hope Franklin, "The Negro's Dilemma: The Negro Must endure inhospitality in a land that is his by right of birth and toil," *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 15, 1960, p. B14.

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