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*Global Africana Review*

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
The Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies  
104 Battle Hall, CB# 3395  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Please contact us at [globalafricanareview@unc.edu](mailto:globalafricanareview@unc.edu)

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## Chair's Note

We are honored to announce the publication of the eighth volume of our undergraduate research journal, the *Global Africana Review*. Like previous editions, this volume highlights top scholarship produced by our students over the past year. This collection includes engaging articles that cover Africa and the larger diaspora, each piece having benefited from the hard work and perseverance of student authors, faculty mentors, and supportive editors. Professor Eunice Sahle has served as a very able executive editor, and we are again fortunate to employ the services of managing editor Angela Pietrobon. Also, we are thankful for the efforts of Rebekah Kati of Davis Library, who has been essential to the publication of this volume. Finally, we are especially appreciative for the support of the Dean's Office and our donors for helping to defray the cost of this year's edition.

Claude A. Clegg III, PhD  
Chair, Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies

## **Editorial Team: Global Africana Review, Volume 8, Spring 2024**

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## Contributors: Global Africana Review, Volume 8, Spring 2024

### Executive Editor Bio

**Eunice N. Sahle** is an associate professor with a joint appointment in the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies (AAAD) and the Curriculum in Global Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She previously served as Chair of AAAD (2012–2016 and 2017–2021) and is a Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences. Her publications include, but are not limited to, *The Legacies of Julius Nyerere: Influences on Development Discourse and Practice in Africa* (co-editor, 2002); *World Orders, Development, and Transformation* (2010); *Globalization and Socio-Cultural Processes in Contemporary Africa* (editor, 2015); *Democracy, Constitutionalism, and Politics in Africa: Historical Contexts, Developments, and Dilemmas* (editor, 2017); and *Human Rights in Africa: Contemporary Debates and Struggles* (editor, 2019). Her current research projects examine dynamics of human rights, transitional justice, constitutionalism, land issues, and the political economy of development.

### Author Bios

**Yaya Bakayoko** is originally from Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire, and migrated to the Bronx, New York, when he was 14. A senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he is majoring in Global Studies and minoring in Social and Economic Justice. He is also an athlete and member of the UNC Men's Soccer Team and has been advocating for the respect of student athletes' rights at the University. His academic interests surround the study of Globalization, the Aids industry, Afropolitanism, and the role of Africa and African Diasporas in global governance. He is hoping to pursue his soccer career professionally while also pursuing his studies in the fields of Social and Economic Justice and Global Affairs.

**Lwazi Bululu**, born and raised in Komani, South Africa, is a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill earning a BA in Global Studies focusing on international politics, nation states, and social movements. He has spent time working at the Mathare Social Justice Centre in the informal settlement of Mathare, in Kenya, and contributed to *New Bloom Magazine*, an online magazine covering activism and youth politics in Taiwan and the Asia Pacific.

**Robert Clay** is a senior from Durham, North Carolina studying philosophy. He is a Zietlow Civic Engagement Fellow through Carolina Public Humanities researching the US healthcare system following the passage of the Affordable Care Act and works as a Public Service Program Coordinator at the Carolina Center for Public Service. After five years working in pediatric ophthalmology, Robert developed a keen interest in increasing access to high-quality health care and addressing systemic barriers to health equity. Following graduation, he will be attending law school.

**Kevin Parris**, a student at UNC-Chapel Hill, is majoring in computer science and minoring in music. His academic journey has ignited a deep interest in African American history, motivating him to merge his passion for African American culture with his developing skills in computer science and music to uplift African American communities. Kevin leads Legacy Productions, a student music collective at UNC, fostering collaboration and networking among fellow artists. Originally from Wake Forest, North Carolina, he is an Honors Carolina student committed to leveraging his interdisciplinary pursuits for societal impact and community enrichment.

**Mars Quiambao** is a fourth-year undergraduate at UNC-Chapel Hill's College of Arts and Sciences, where she is pursuing a degree in American Studies and a minor in African, African American, and Diaspora Studies. In their studies, she is focusing on Asian American, Indigenous, and Black epistemologies while also furthering her involvement in her college's cultural organizations such as UNC Kasama (Filipino-interest collegiate organization) and the UNC Vietnamese Student Association. Upon completion of their undergraduate studies, she intends to apply to graduate school to further her knowledge of cultural studies and progress toward a career as a community advocate and in social work.

**Deseree Stukes** is a 2023 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Carolina) with dual degrees in African, African American, and Diaspora Studies (AAAD) and Information Sciences. Currently, she is working on her Masters of Library Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Deseree also works as the Repository Content Technician for Carolina Libraries' two digital repositories. She serves as the Incoming Convener of the African American Studies Librarians Interest Group for the Association of College and Research Libraries and is a member of the Library of Congress's African American Subject Funnel Project. Her research focuses on the creation and journey of Carolina's AAAD from a curriculum to a full-fledged department and reparative description in archives and special collections.

**Yonathan Taye** is an Ethiopian scholar and senior honors student at UNC-Chapel Hill majoring in History and Political Science with a minor in African American Studies. His research interests center on US foreign policy in Africa, global decolonization, radical liberation movements, and the role of transnational race in dictating North-South and South-South relations. Through his work, Yonathan seeks to center the agency and centrality of marginalized nations, individuals, and movements in global processes. After graduating, Yonathan will pursue a PhD in the field of international history. As a scholar, he draws great inspiration from pioneering African, African American, and Caribbean scholars in the field such as Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Merze Tate, and Ali Mazrui.

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## Introduction

**Eunice N. Sahle, PhD**

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

I am delighted to introduce this eighth volume of the *Global Africana Review (GAR)*. Like in previous volumes, the current one represents outstanding scholarship by undergraduate students who have taken courses in the Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies. Five articles and two book reviews comprise this volume of the *GAR*. The article by Deseree Stukes explores the role of the renowned scholar and political activist W.E.B. Du Bois in challenging dominant racist representations of African Americans using his work at the 1900 Paris World Fair as a case study. Stukes analyzes and demonstrates the power of Du Bois's deployment of visual data as a methodological and activist tool in contesting and generating a counter-hegemonic representation of African Americans' lived experiences and human agency in the context of constraining racial, political, institutional, and economic realities.

Yonathan Taye's work focuses on the emergence and practices of "Sankarism," the political, socio-cultural, economic ideology underpinning Thomas Sankara's social transformation vision of Burkina Faso during his presidency between 1983 and 1987. The article's analysis not only shows Sankara's commitment to departing from neocolonial oppressive state practices and to tackling patriarchy by promoting women's rights, but it also generatively situates his ideology in the genealogy of the African radical political tradition. Robert Clay's article foregrounds the pivotal contributions of Pauli Murray to constitutional jurisprudence in the United States. For Clay, Murray's intersecting identities played a key role in broadening the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. Murray's interpretation of that amendment made indelible contributions to human rights jurisprudence and to struggles for human rights in the United States.

Mars Quiambao's article examines dynamics of urban governance. Through the notion of walkable communities, Quiambao's analysis brings to the forefront the differentiated nature of urban citizenship, drawing on empirical examples from two communities in Chicago and a third one in California. By paying attention to how class, race, gender, and other identities shape walkability, the article deepens our knowledge of the politics of urban spaces and modes of citizenship. Next, an exploration of developments that contributed to Ivory Coast's economic crisis after an initial period of rapid economic growth following the end of French colonial rule is the focus of Yaya Bakayoko's article. Bakayoko's work attends to the interplay of local and external factors. In the process, the article provides a nuanced and historical understanding of the country's political and economic trends.

Two book reviews constitute the final contributions to this volume of the *GAR*. The first is Lwazi Bululu's review of Wangari Maathai's memoir, entitled *Unbowed*. From Maathai's role in the emergence of the influential environmental movement, the Green Belt Movement, to her work calling for the protection of forests, indigenous environmental knowledge, and Nairobi's Uhuru Park, to her promotion of rural women's livelihoods, in addition to her involvement in the mobilization against the violation of human rights during President Daniel Moi's authoritarian regime, Bululu's review sheds light on Maathai's numerous contributions in envisioning

transformative social change in Kenya. Additionally, Bululu's analysis highlights the pitfalls of the epistemological dualisms, for instance, the separation of nature and society, that underpin dominant development discourse and the importance of place-based mobilization against oppressive systems. Finally, Heather A. Williams's book *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* is the focus of Kevin Parris's review. Parris's analysis powerfully captures Williams's centering of emotions in her study of African Americans' search for family members after emancipation, an approach that demonstrates their everyday practices of resistance against white supremacy. At the theoretical level, Parris's review reminds us of Williams's important intervention in terms of challenging studies that have represented free and enslaved African Americans as devoid of emotion and emotional capacity. Overall, the review offers key insights from her work.

Eunice N. Sahle, PhD

Executive Editor, *Global Africana Review*

Department of African, African American, and Diaspora Studies and Curriculum in Global Studies

## **The Infographics of W.E.B. Du Bois at the 1900 Paris World Fair: A Form of Activism**

**Deseree S. Stukes**

### **ABSTRACT**

W.E.B. Du Bois, a scholar, activist, and visionary, used the power of infographics to challenge prevailing racial stereotypes and to provide an alternative narrative about the Black American experience at the 1900 Paris World Fair, known as the *Exposition Universelle*. This article explores Du Bois's groundbreaking use of infographics in the American Negro Exhibit. The exhibit was his attempt to confront the pervasive racism and discrimination that Black Americans faced in the United States after the Civil War and emancipation. Du Bois believed that visual data could be a powerful weapon against racial prejudice. Du Bois and his team used infographics to present complex socioeconomic data in an accessible and compelling manner as well as showcase the achievements and potential of Black Americans. The visualizations depicted various aspects of Black American life, such as education, employment, and homeownership, highlighting the significant contributions made by the Black community despite facing systemic obstacles. This article examines the broader impact of Du Bois's infographics as well as the legacy of the American Negro Exhibit. The exhibit received widespread attention and acclaim in Paris, sparking discussions about race, identity, and representation. Du Bois's work laid the foundation for future generations of Black American artists, scholars, and activists to use data visualization as a means of advocating for social justice and equality.

**Keywords:** W.E.B. Du Bois, infographics, American Negro Exhibit, 1900 Paris World Fair, activism

## Introduction



Image 1. “Exhibit of the American negroes at the Paris exposition.” Paris, France, November 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001697152/>.

The American Negro Exhibit, curated by W.E.B. Du Bois for the 1900 Paris World Fair, known as the *Exposition Universelle*, was a groundbreaking form of activism that challenged the prevailing narratives and stereotypes of Black Americans. Through photographs, data visualizations, and other media, Du Bois aimed to showcase the complexity and diversity of Black experiences in the United States. Du Bois employed infographics as a way of telling the Black American story of progress and uplift, as “stories resonate and stick with us in ways that data alone cannot” (Knafllic 2015, 16). This exhibit was aimed at challenging white supremacist ideologies such as Social Darwinism that permeated society and asserting the humanity and dignity of Black people. The visualizations depicted various aspects of Black American life, such as education, employment, and homeownership, highlighting the significant contributions made by the Black community despite facing systemic obstacles. Ultimately, the exhibit served as a

powerful tool for promoting civil rights and social justice for Black Americans, inspiring generations of activists and scholars to continue the fight for racial equality.

A sociologist, historian, and Pan-Africanist activist, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963) was the first Black American to earn a PhD from Harvard University (Lewis 1993, 3). Prior to earning his PhD, he attended Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin for graduate studies in social science (Lewis 1993, 130). As an assistant in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania (Lewis 1993, 182), Du Bois completed a groundbreaking sociological field study on Philadelphia’s Seventh Ward, published as *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899 (Lewis 1993, 207). It was the first case study of a Black community in the United States, which uniquely qualified him for his work on the exhibit. He would continue his sociology work at Atlanta University, producing papers and holding annual meetings through the Atlanta Conference of Negro Problems (Lewis 1993, 223). Du Bois would become a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and editor of *The Crisis* magazine (Lewis 1993, 3). He was also a prolific author and essayist, and his collection of essays in *The Souls of Black Folk* is considered a canonical text in Black literature.

Du Bois introduced two important concepts in *The Souls of Black Folk*. The first was the “Talented Tenth,” which refers to the idea that the top ten percent of Black Americans should be educated and trained to become leaders and agents of change within the Black community. Du Bois believed that the Talented Tenth could use their knowledge and influence to uplift the rest of the community and fight against racism and discrimination (Du Bois 1989, 8–12). The second concept was “double consciousness,” which describes the psychological experience of being both Black and American in a society that often views these identities as incompatible. According to Du Bois, Black Americans must navigate between their own sense of self and the expectations and stereotypes placed upon them by white society. This creates a sense of division and conflict within the individual, as they try to reconcile their own identity with the way they are perceived (Du Bois 1989, 38–47). Both concepts are relevant to the exhibit at the Paris World Fair. The exhibit highlighted the ways Black Americans were forced to navigate their double consciousness, presenting a carefully curated image of Black culture designed to appeal to European sensibilities. At the same time, the exhibit showcased Black professionals, artists, and intellectuals who had achieved success despite the systemic barriers.

Sociology emerged out of the Enlightenment era. John Scott, in *A Dictionary of Sociology*, indicates that the term sociology was coined by French philosopher Auguste Comte in 1838. Early pioneers in sociology included Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim (Morris 2017, 167). In the United States, the first sociology course was taught at Yale University in 1875 by William Graham Sumner (Morris 2017, 225). In 1892, the University of Chicago established the first graduate department (Morris 2017, 1). With his work *The Philadelphia Negro* and the Atlanta Conference studies, Du Bois was a pioneer in sociology. According to Simon Ings, “his students were decades ahead of their counterparts at the [University of] Chicago school” (2020, 42).

Ira Katznelson notes that academic sociologists,

paid no heed to *The Philadelphia Negro*. It became a nonbook. The flagship of the Chicago School, the *American Journal of Sociology*, did not review it, and so far as we know the volume never made its way into their curricular or scholarly references (1999, 465).

Katznelson characterized the book as the “first full-scale empirical community study and the first instance of ambitious academic survey in the social sciences” (1999, 464).

While Marx, Weber, and Durkheim are usually cited as the main architects of modern sociology, some individuals like English philosopher Herbert Spencer used sociology to perpetuate scientific racism. In 1859, Charles Darwin published his book, *On the Origin of Species: By Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. In addition to discussing the evolution of species, the book also addressed the concept of “natural selection”—that those who adapt best to their environment will prosper and those who do not will not survive and will eventually become extinct. Spencer took the concept of natural survival further and created the term “survival of the fittest,” and is credited with developing Social Darwinism (Fisher 2005, 758). Social Darwinism is based on the notion that certain races or groups of people are inherently superior to others and therefore have a natural right to dominate them (Morris 2017, 10–11), and was often used to disparage Black people, who were considered to be intellectually inferior to whites (Morris 2017, 11). W.E.B. Du Bois was a vocal critic of Social Darwinism and its application to Black Americans. Aldon D. Morris indicates that Social Darwinism was “reprehensible to Du Bois because it defined black people as inferior. Thus, on scientific and ideological grounds, Du Bois elevated racial analysis to the sociological plan and discarded social Darwinism explanations of race” (2017, 45).

Sociologists would come to use charts and graphs in their work to visually communicate data and statistics. Early users of data visualizations include William Playfair, who invented bar and pie charts and was the first to publish statistical graphs in 1786. It was the first time “anyone had tried to visualize an entire nation’s economy” (Ings 2020, 42). Playfair’s work was inspired by Joseph Priestly’s “timeline charts of people’s lives and relative lifespans” (Ings 2020, 42). Annotated maps that revealed the source of London’s cholera outbreak were created by John Snow, who founded modern epidemiology, and Florence Nightingale created rose diagrams to convince Queen Victoria to improve conditions in military hospitals. Therefore, visualized data helped create change in policy and social conditions from the beginning (Ings 2020, 43). Du Bois hoped that his infographics would bring about social change by dispelling prevailing stereotypes about Black Americans and highlighting their contributions to society.

To understand the need for the exhibit, historical background and context on what was happening in the United States and the rest of the world is necessary. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the United States had just emerged from the Gilded Age (approximately 1877–96). The Gilded Age saw the rise of extreme wealth concentrated in the hands of a few while the needs of the working class and poor were ignored. Black Americans, thirty-five years after emancipation and the brief period of Reconstruction, were being subjected to the segregation and racial violence of the Jim Crow era. The 1896 Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized Jim Crow by declaring the “separate but equal” doctrine legitimate.

Internationally, the United States and European powers were launching imperial ventures. In 1898, the Spanish–American War saw the United States intervene in Cuba’s war for independence. The United States was also asserting its imperial power in the Philippines. At the Berlin Conference of 1884, several Western European countries divided up and colonized parts of Africa. From October 1899 to May 1902, the British engaged in conflict with the two Boer Republics (the South African Republic and the Orange Free State). In this hostile environment, representatives from Africa, the West Indies, and the United States met in London for the First Pan-African Conference. Many attendees also took the opportunity to visit the Paris World Fair.

## The “American Negro Exhibit”

In 1897, President William McKinley asked Congress to approve a budget for US participation in the Paris Exposition. “The aim was to offer proof to the world of American greatness,” and toward this end the United States pushed for a prominent spot on the Seine, rather than being placed behind other pavilions (Bini 2014, 44). The initial budget of \$1.25 million did not include funds for an exhibit for Black Americans, even though Black Americans had been working to be included in the previous world fairs (Lewis 2003, 15). Black Americans were absent from the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Several Black leaders including Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells wrote a pamphlet, *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition*, highlighting Black contributions to America. The pamphlet also critiqued the demeaning representations of Africans in the exhibit of “native villages” that presented them as primitive and uncivilized and implied their inherent inferiority to whites. This played into the idea of Social Darwinism. At the 1895 Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition and the 1897 Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition, Booker T. Washington and other Black leaders raised funds for exhibits in a separate Negro Building. The need for a separate building is an example of how segregation was institutionalized during the Jim Crow era, reinforcing the ideas of a racial hierarchy. It was at the opening to the 1895 Atlanta Exposition that Washington delivered his famous “Atlanta Compromise” speech, which has been characterized as supporting segregation in its contention that “In all things that are purely social we [Blacks and whites] can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress” (quoted in Bini 2014, 44–46).

The American Negro Exhibit in 1900 was advocated for and organized by lawyer Thomas J. Calloway (Provenzo 2013, x). With the help of Washington and former Fisk University classmate Du Bois (Provenzo 2013, xii–xiii), the exhibit would marry the industrial philosophy espoused by Washington and the concepts of the Talented Tenth and double consciousness developed by Du Bois. With the support of Washington,<sup>1</sup> who personally visited President McKinley to petition for an exhibit on Black Americans, Calloway was allocated a budget of \$15,000 (Calloway 1900, 2) and designated as special agent in charge on November 15, 1899 (Provenzo 2013, xi). Du Bois would be allocated \$2,500 of this budget to create the data visualizations (Provenzo 2013, xii).

On October 4, 1899, Calloway wrote to one hundred Black leaders asking for support of a Negro Exhibit, alluding to stereotypes held by Europeans of Black Americans as “a mass of rapists, ready to attack every white woman exposed, and a drug in civilized society” (Calloway 1900, 2). Calloway’s ten goals for the exhibit were as follows:

It was decided in advance to try to show ten things concerning the negroes in America since their emancipation: (1) Something of the negro’s history; (2) education of the race; (3) effects of education upon illiteracy; (4) effects of education upon occupation; (5) effects of education upon property; (6) the negro’s mental development as shown by the books, high class pamphlets, newspapers, and other periodicals written or edited by members of the race;

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<sup>1</sup> Booker T. Washington’s role in support of the exhibit is usually not discussed, and according to Bruce (2012), Washington tends to be erased from this project. However, Bruce contends that the exhibit could not have happened without Washington’s support as the “preeminent African American leader in the nation” and that Washington was “visibly absent from Du Bois’s subsequent accounts of the event” (2012, 208, 210).

(7) his mechanical genius as shown by patents granted to American negroes; (8) business and industrial development in general; (9) what the negro is doing for himself through his own separate church organizations, particularly in the work of education; (10) a general sociological study of the racial conditions in the United States (1901, 463).

In Du Bois's article "American Negro at Paris" in which he discussed the exhibit in detail, he offered four goals of his own: to showcase "(a) The history of the American Negro, (b) His present condition, (c) His education, (d) His literature" (1900, 575). With these goals in mind, the exhibit featured contributions of students and faculty from several historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), including the Tuskegee Institute, Howard University, Hampton Institute, Fisk University, and Atlanta University.<sup>2</sup> The schools reflected a mix of the industrial and intellectual approaches. The exhibit featured:

framed photographic portraits of prominent African American leaders and politicians; tools, harnesses, and other agricultural products from black industrial schools; a bronze statuette of Frederick Douglass [a replica of the statue in Rochester, NY]; and an on-site collection of over two hundred and fifty publications authored by African Americans and compiled by Daniel Alexander Payne Murray, a black intellectual, bibliographer, and librarian at the Library of Congress (Battle-Baptiste and Rusert, 2018, 9).

The exhibit also contained 500 portraits representing a narrative to counteract the stereotypes by the media about Black Americans. Many were by Black photographers Thomas Askew, Cornelius Battey, and James Ball, and also by white photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston. Several mixed-race portraits challenged the idea of a uniform Negro type. Also present in the exhibit were 150 periodicals; 400 handwritten pages transcribed from Georgia's Slave and Black Codes from the colonial period to 1900 to provide "evidence of how the law was systematically used to deprive African Americans of their legal rights both before and after the Civil War" (Provenzo 2013, 187); and a list of 350 patents granted to Black inventors. The list also showed that "nearly as many more such persons had completed inventions of various kinds, and had applied...for assistance...but lacking money to cover necessary expenses, they had finally abandoned all efforts to obtain patents for their inventions." The inclusion of these patents was to counteract the belief that "the negro [was not] capable of inventing anything but lies" ("Inventions of Negroes" 1905, 556).

### Du Bois's Methodology

As Calloway (1901) discussed, Du Bois was specifically tasked with creating a sociology study for the exhibit, and he started work on December 28, 1899. He and his team, consisting of unnamed Atlanta University students and alumni, including women, created two sets of data visualizations. The first was entitled *The Georgia Negro: A Social Study* and focused on Black people in Georgia, which had the largest Black population at the time. Calloway indicated that Georgia was also a leader in "Southern sentiment" (1901, 465). The second data set, *A Series of*

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<sup>2</sup> Contributions came from other HBCUs including Agricultural and Mechanical College (now known as NC A&T), Berea College, Roger Williams University, Central Tennessee College, Pine Bluff Normal and Industrial School, Haines Normal and Industrial Institute, and Claflin University (Provenzo 2013, 67).



*Statistical Charts Illustrating the Condition of the Descendants of Former African Slaves Now in Residence in the United States of America*, was more global in scope, illustrating progress by Black communities at the state, national, and global levels in the areas of literacy, education, and land ownership, among others.

Du Bois's methodology for creating the infographics utilized both empirical research and artistic vision. Du Bois's experience in empirical research was evident in his groundbreaking sociology study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, published in 1899. His detailed analysis of the social and economic conditions of Black Americans in Philadelphia's Seventh Ward came out of surveys of Black American households using interviews, observations, and data collection. As Morris indicated,

Indeed, Du Bois emerged from *The Philadelphia Negro* as the first number-crunching, surveying, interviewing, participant-observing and field-working sociologist in America, a pioneer in the multimethods approach. He cross-checked his quantitative and qualitative data to ensure accuracy by eradicating undetected errors associated with a particular method. Thus he also pioneered the data-gathering technique known as triangulation (2017, 47).

For the exhibit, Du Bois gathered data on a range of social, economic, and political indicators related to Black American life, such as population demographics, education levels, employment rates, and land ownership. He then created a series of charts, graphs, and maps that visually represented the information. Colors, fonts, and other design elements were used to enhance readability and impact. The infographics were "hand-colored by Du Bois and his students" (Provenzo 2013, 90), using "ink, gouache watercolor, graphite and sprinklings of photographic prints" (Battle-Baptiste and Rusert, 2018, 45). Silas Munro indicated that the designs predated European avant-garde movements such as Russian constructivism, De Stijl, Italian futurism, and the German art form Bauhaus by more than a decade (2018, 45–46). The infographics used visual strategies including maps and geometric shapes, in addition to the standard bar and area charts commonly used for comparative data. The data sources were from the United States Census, Atlanta University sociological reports, and government reports compiled by Du Bois and his group for the United States Bureau of Labor (Provenzo 2018, 90). Du Bois and his team also conducted new surveys in Georgia (Olman 2021, 139). According to Munro, the infographics were intended to be read in a specific order to build a "persuasive narrative through visual data over time" (2018, 49). Many infographics were placed in movable wing frames, allowing visitors to flip sequentially through the visuals. Du Bois and his team only had four months to create, ship, and set up the entire exhibit, which ran from April to November 1900.

## Infographics

Illustrative of the team's work, the first infographic shown below is from the Georgia data set and features a graphic of two globes, with the Americas on the left-hand side and Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia on the right-hand side, and the state of Georgia represented by a star (see Image 2). Connecting the two globes are lines representing the routes of the transatlantic slave trade and the distribution of enslaved people from Africa to the Americas. This visual is like the cartographic approach utilized by David Eltis and David Richardson (2022) on their *Slave Voyages* blog, which shows the volume and direction of the transatlantic slave trade from Africa to the Americas.

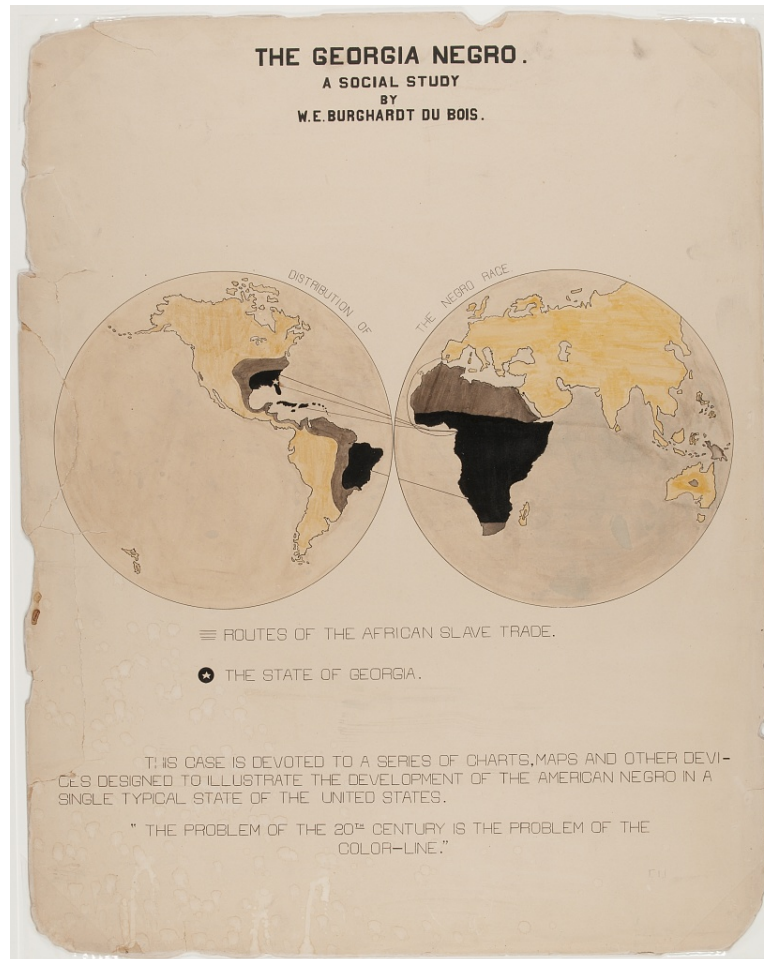


Image 2. "The Georgia Negro. A social study by W. E. Burghardt Du Bois." Paris, France, 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013650420/>.

Another interesting aspect of this infographic is the quote at the bottom: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line." This was the first public use of the now famous quote. Du Bois also used it in his closing address at the First Pan-African Conference in 1900, entitled "To the Nations of the World." Most identify this quote with Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903. Du Bois used this quote to argue that the most pressing social and political issue of his time was the divide between people of different races, and that addressing this divide and the accompanying racism was crucial for building a more just and equitable society. Du Bois's use of colors that resemble different gradients of phenotype (black, brown, and beige) emphasized this narrative. He would also use a similar palette when talking about the effects of miscegenation in Georgia and the United States (see Image 3).

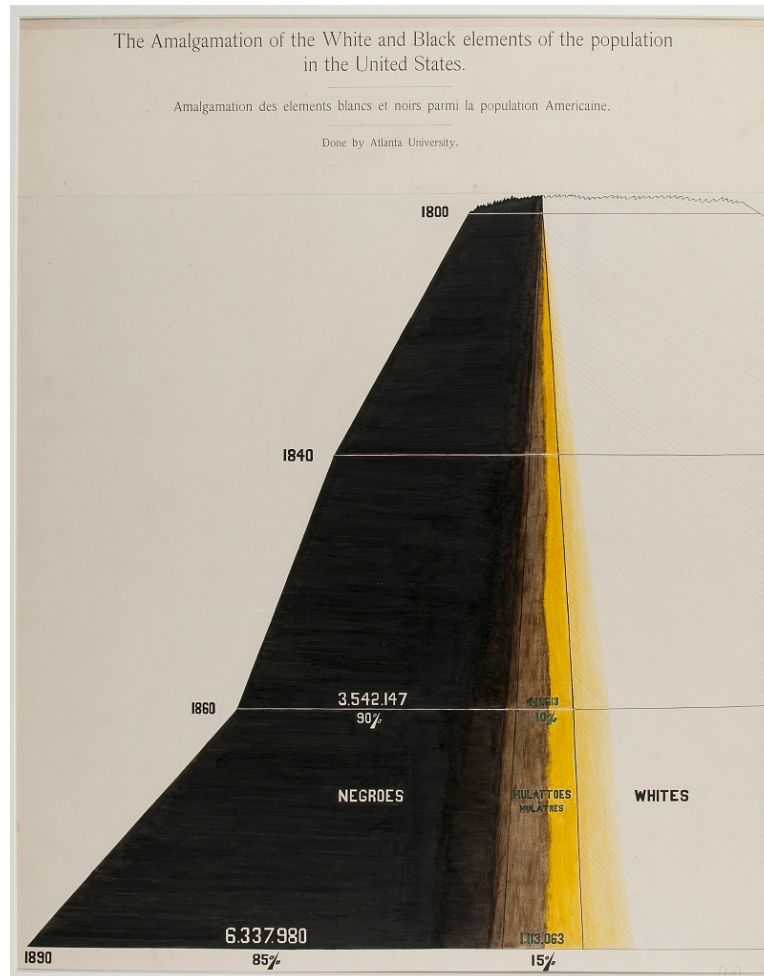


Image 3. “[A series of statistical charts illustrating the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now in residence in the United States of America] The amalgamation of the white and black elements of the population in the United States.” Paris, France, ca. 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014645360/>.

Image 3 shows “rapid growth in the black population, particularly during Reconstruction, and the comparatively minor growth in mixed-race populations,” with the data for white Americans left out to “visually exaggerate both the percentage and the rate of growth of the black population” (Fusco and Olman 2021, 175). This is a direct rebuttal of the Social Darwinist argument that Black Americans would die off because of the “survival of the fittest” axiom.

Du Bois utilized a stacked bar chart to visualize the rise of Black Americans since emancipation over a generation in Image 4, and Image 5 illustrates his use of an area chart to compare the proportion of free Blacks to those enslaved from 1790–1870. For both images, Du Bois adopted the Pan-African palette of red, black, and green. In several infographics, Du Bois utilized vivid red for emphasis and to show contrast. In addition, in several infographics, the typography is rendered in both English and French with a nod to the host country. Du Bois was aware of his international audience and the French (white) gaze. The fair attracted 45 million visitors—mainly European.

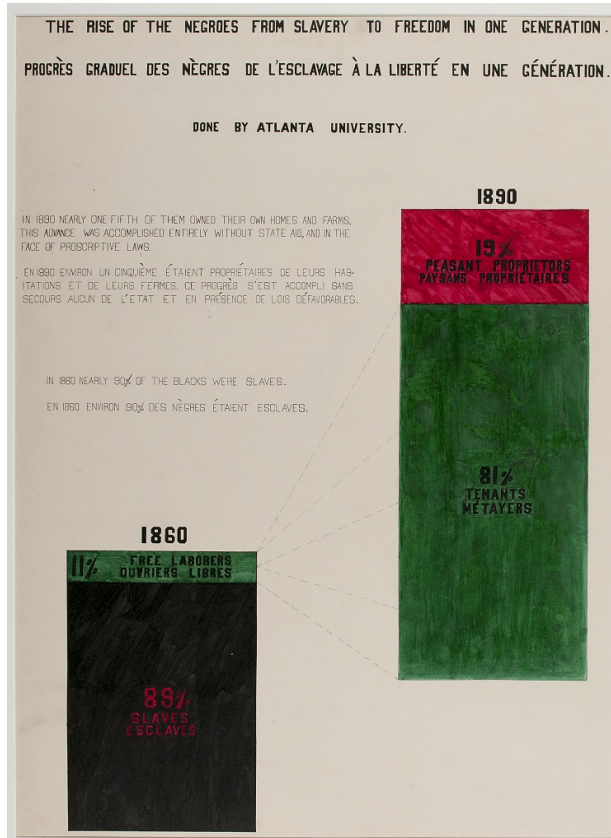


Image 4. “[A series of statistical charts illustrating the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now in residence in the United States of America] The rise of the Negroes from slavery to freedom in one generation.” Paris, France, ca. 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014645355/>.

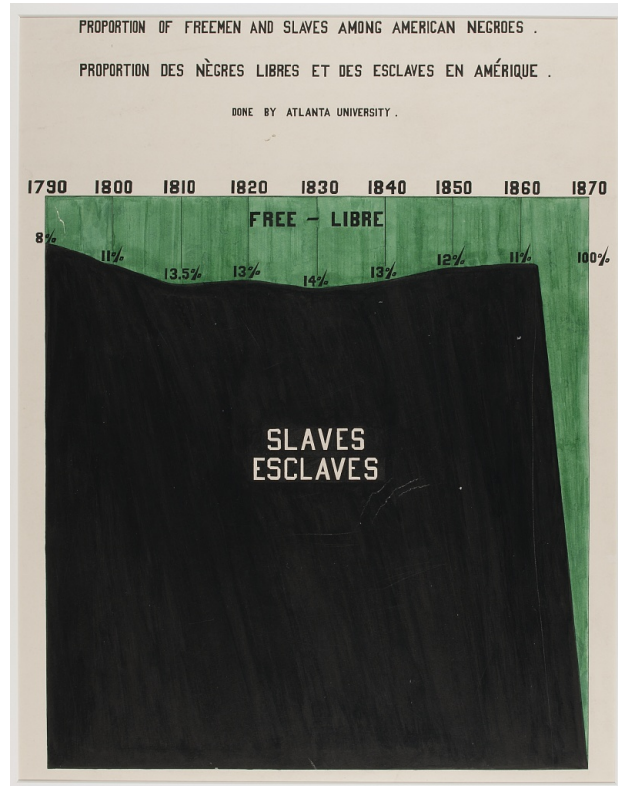


Image 5. “[A series of statistical charts illustrating the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now in residence in the United States of America] Proportion of freemen and slaves among American Negroes.” Paris, France, ca. 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014645356/>.

In images 6 and 7, the scope of the infographics was expanded by using bar charts to compare Black Americans with people in other countries. By comparing Black Americans with Europeans, Du Bois used data and statistics to demonstrate that Black Americans were not fundamentally different from their white counterparts. For example, he showed that the illiteracy rate was lower among Black Americans as compared to several European countries (see Image 6), using the color red to represent Black Americans. In Image 7, age distribution among Black Georgians is compared with that of the French, illustrating that Black Americans had a younger populace as compared to France.

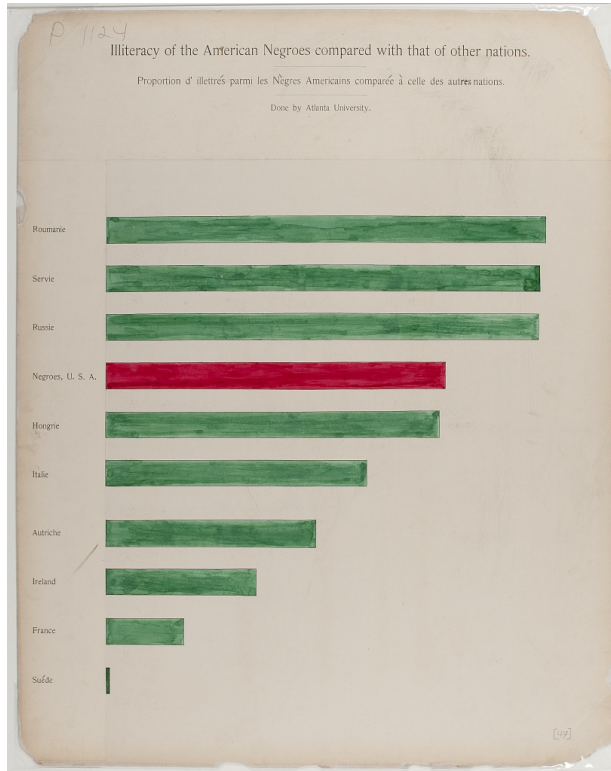


Image 6. “[A series of statistical charts illustrating the condition of the descendants of former African slaves now in residence in the United States of America] Illiteracy of the American Negroes compared with that of other nations.” Paris, France, ca. 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014645352/>.

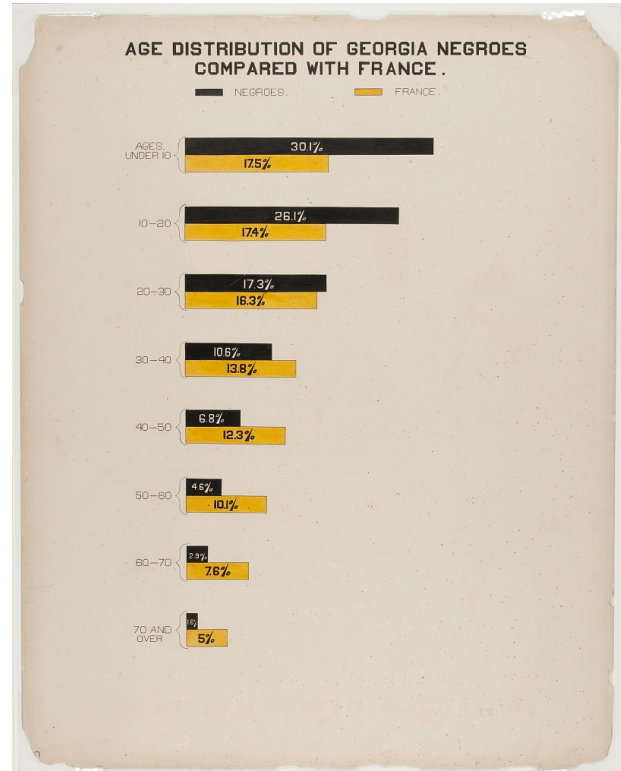


Image 7. “[The Georgia Negro] Age distribution of Georgia Negroes compared with France.” Paris, France, ca. 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013650428/>.

Du Bois’s concept of double consciousness added a layer of complexity to these comparisons. Black Americans were constantly aware of their racial identity and how it marked them as different from white Americans, and this meant that even when they achieved success in education, employment, or other areas, they were still subject to discrimination and marginalization because of their race. This double consciousness made them acutely aware of the injustices and inequalities they faced.

Du Bois did not limit himself to bar and pie charts. Image 8 has a modified bar chart to represent the urban and rural population in 1890. This chart cleverly utilizes a combination of a bar chart, line graph, and spiral. Again, red is used for the spiral to emphasize the extremes in population between rural and urban Blacks. Normally, in a typical bar chart, the quantity for the rural population would exceed the boundaries of the infographic and would be “indicated by a broken bar and an annotation. Du Bois, however, chose to preserve the proportional length of the line and spiral it in upon itself within the space of the graph” (Olman 2021, 147). This is the most well-known of the Du Bois infographics, and is named the Du Bois Spiral by data visualization expert Elijah Meeks, who writes:

I call it a Du Bois Spiral. It’s aesthetically compelling in the way it encodes urban to rural demographics....Du Bois knows you cannot precisely compare the lengths of those diagonals

and spirals, and so he writes the number to go along with them. It provides the exact number of African Americans living in the various parts of Georgia as well as a more striking summary: the almost absurd ratio of red to any other color (2017).

Image 9 has a modified pie chart that compares the occupations of Blacks (top of the pie) and whites (bottom of the pie) in Georgia. Again, red is used for the bigger slices of the pie (agriculture and fisheries). Today, experts in the field of infographics warn against data being represented by pie charts, because they may not easily convey differences to the audience (Yoose 2022). In this example, the yellow and blue clearly indicate that Black Americans worked as domestics more than whites (yellow), and that whites held more occupations in the manufacturing and mechanical industries (blue). However, without the percentages, the eye can perceive that Blacks and whites are even in the red slices, when in fact there is a miniscule difference of 2 percent.

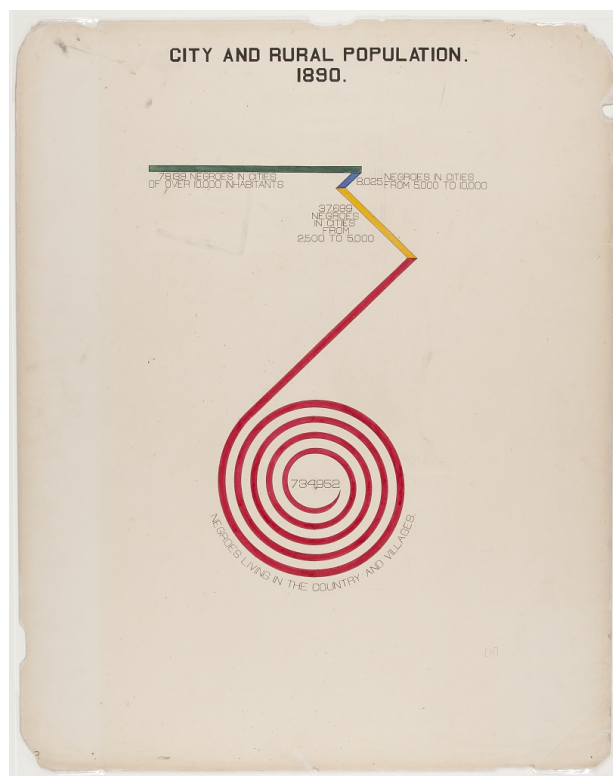


Image 8. “[The Georgia Negro] City and rural population. 1890.” Paris, France, ca. 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2013650430/>.

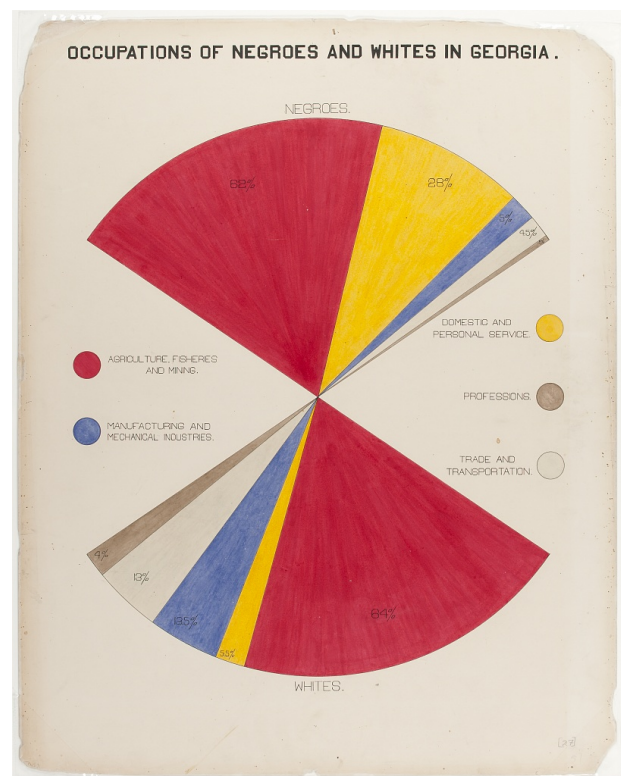


Image 9. “[The Georgia Negro] Occupations of Negroes and whites in Georgia.” Paris, France, ca. 1900. Photograph. From Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005676812/>.

Du Bois’s exhibit challenged prevailing racist stereotypes and presented a positive image of the Black community to an international audience. Additionally, the exhibit won over a dozen medals, including a Gran Prix medal, for its comprehensive presentation of the history and culture of Black Americans, as well as for its contributions to the field of sociology. Both Du Bois and Calloway were awarded gold medals for their efforts, and Booker T. Washington received a silver medal for his monograph on education. Several HBCUs also received medals for their contributions.

After the world fair, the exhibit was displayed at several venues across the United States, including the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta and the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, both held in 1901. Contents from the exhibit are currently housed at the Library of Congress, although some artifacts have been lost.

The exhibit received coverage in the Black press before and after the fair, mainly in the *Colored American* (Calloway 1900). Dr. Anna Julia Cooper wrote an account about the exhibit, which she visited after attending the First Pan-African Conference (1900, 2; see also Anacostia Community Museum n.d.). Other than his article in the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* (1900), Du Bois rarely spoke about the exhibit. He expressed the sentiment that sociology alone could not achieve social change for Black Americans and that he could not be a “calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered, and starved” (1989, 11). Writing in his autobiography, Du Bois felt a sense of failure about the exhibit:

I was pleased and satisfied. I sat back quietly to hear the commendation and it came not only for this particular exhibit but for the work of the Atlanta conferences in general. I was sure that the work I had planned was certain of support and growth. But it was not. Within less than ten years it had to be abandoned because \$5,000 a year could not be found in this rich land for its support. Where had I failed? There were many answers, but one was typically American, as the event proved; I did the deed but I did not advertise it (1992, 11).

Du Bois would take a more activist stance to bring about change through his efforts in the Niagara Movement and the establishment of the NAACP in 1909.

## Conclusion

The American Negro Exhibit at the 1900 Paris World Fair was a landmark event in the history of African American culture and activism. It was a platform for Black American artists, scholars, and activists to showcase their work and challenge prevailing stereotypes and prejudices about Black Americans. Early infographics had the power to force social change. For example, Florence Nightingale’s rose diagram, which depicted mortality rates during the Crimean War, won more medical support from Queen Victoria. Similarly, Charles Booth’s maps on poverty in London won sympathy and support for social reform programs (Olman 2021, 133). Unfortunately, Du Bois’s efforts did not bring about similar social change in policies and attitudes toward Black Americans.

However, the efforts of Du Bois, Calloway, and other members of the team left an important legacy. It resulted in an important archival record and snapshot of Black Americans in Georgia and the United States at the turn of the century. Parts of the exhibit are housed at the Library of Congress and have been displayed at the Science and Engineering Library at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Cooper Hewitt’s *Recharting Modern Design* exhibition (Cooper Hewitt 2022; University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries 2020).

Since the 2018 publication of Battle-Baptiste and Rusert’s *W.E.B. Du Bois’s Data Portraits*, interest in and awareness about the exhibit, and Du Bois’s infographics specifically, have increased. Data scientists and data visualization designers have been studying and re-creating the infographics in modern visualization and statistics applications, including Microsoft Excel, Python, R, and Tableau, as part of the #DuBoisChallenge on the social media platform X (previously Twitter) (Dignity + Debt n.d.). Tableau, an interactive data visualization software company, has sponsored two webinars as part of their Data + Diversity series (Tableau 2021;

Tableau 2022). There have also been academic panel discussions, including one at Columbia University’s Institute for Research in African-American Studies (2018).

Du Bois’s data visualizations have had a profound and lasting impact on the issues of race and utilization of technology today. His work has paved the way for scholars like Ruha Benjamin and Safiya Umoja Noble. Benjamin wrote the book *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (2019a), and she has mentioned Du Bois as an inspiration, stating: “From his modernist data visualizations representing the facts of black life to Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s expert deployment of statistics in *The Red Record*, there was a long tradition of employing and challenging data for justice” (Benjamin 2019b). In fact, she commissioned artwork for her official website by combining three of his infographics (Benjamin 2021). Noble wrote the book *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. Benjamin, Noble, and others analyze and use technology to advocate for social justice and combat discrimination. Du Bois’s infographics are recognized as a powerful example of the ways in which data can be used to tell stories and inspire change. Even today, Du Bois’s infographics can be found in surprising places, such as the Afrofuturism exhibit at the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C.



Image 10. Afrofuturism exhibit at the NMAAHC. Photograph by Deseree Stukes, April 24, 2023.

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## **A Revolutionary Counterrevolution: Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso, and African Radicalism in Context, 1983–87**

**Yonathan Taye**

### **ABSTRACT**

On August 4, 1983, Burkina Faso's (then Upper Volta) military officer Thomas Sankara rose to power in a popular coup that overthrew the corrupt, authoritarian president Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo. Sankara promised profound revolution to a country grappling with global 1980s conservatism. Post-colonial governments, which had declared an indigenous "African socialism," had instead exploited the masses for personal enrichment; the rise of neoliberalism had imposed austerity measures that impoverished the Global South; and the policy of Cold War "non-alignment" had proved ineffectual in supporting anticolonial liberation. In this context, in Sankara's four-year reign, he championed orthodox Marxism and Pan-Africanism; conducted vaccination, literacy, and land reform campaigns; championed women's rights; pursued economic justice and democratic mobilization; and supported global liberation movements against imperialism. This article examines Sankara, "Sankarism," and how Burkina Faso fomented revolution in an innately anti-revolutionary climate, analyzing the late revolutionary's speeches, interviews, and published texts to answer the following: who exactly was Thomas Sankara? What were his beliefs and ideology, and what made his message so salient? Furthermore, to what extent was the "Sankarist" phenomenon a reaction to historical and contemporary conditions, both in Burkina Faso and Africa? This article asserts that the profundity of Sankara's philosophy came from its rejection of early African "radical" thought, a willingness to learn from the lessons of revolutions elsewhere, and transformative commitments to proletarian internationalism. Sankara's assassination in October 1987 ended Burkina Faso's revolution, but the durability of his memory represents a struggle largely unfinished today.

Keywords: Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso, African decolonization, Marxism-Leninism, anti-imperialism

### **Introduction**

Everywhere today, in the four corners of the continent, there are [Kwame] Nkrumahs, [Patrice] Lumumbas, [Eduardo] Mondlanes, etc. Should [Thomas] Sankara be physically eliminated today, there will be thousands of Sankaras to take up the challenge to imperialism. With regards to our [Burkina] Faso, the determination of our people, of our youth removes any worry as to the pursuit of the struggle for the dignity of Burkina and our continent (Sankara 2007a, 240).

This was how Burkina Faso's revolutionary president Thomas Isidore Noël Sankara summarized his legacy in a November 1985 interview. After his rise to power in a popular military coup in

August 1983, Sankara's four-year reign was a source of great inspiration for both Burkinabès and Africans at large. Despite his short tenure, the revolutionary leader oversaw sweeping vaccination, literacy, reforestation, anti-corruption, and land redistribution campaigns; channeled state resources into infrastructure, healthcare, and food sovereignty; and championed women's rights, overseeing the rise of numerous women to high governmental positions while outlawing practices like female circumcision, dowries, and forced marriages. However, perhaps even more inspiring than Sankara's practice was his ideology. He was a self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist, a Pan-Africanist, a Third Worldist, a proletarian internationalist, an anti-imperialist, and a democrat in every sense of the word.

Coming just two years before his assassination, Sankara's words would prove prophetic in that 1985 interview. Thousands of Sankarists in the years since have taken up the banner of the late revolutionary in the cause against corruption, neocolonialism, and authoritarianism. After the assassination of investigative journalist Norbert Zongo in 1998, who played a crucial role in unearthing extortion and corruption in the post-revolutionary government in Burkina Faso, thousands took to the streets donning Sankara t-shirts, iconography, and signs protesting what was perceived as an extrajudicial political murder (Peterson 2021, 6). In 2013–14, an even wider protest movement challenged the corrupt and autocratic regime of President Blaise Compaoré, this time appropriating not only Sankarist clothing and merchandise, but also his famous revolutionary slogans. After months of unrest and violent conflict, the protesters finally forced Compaoré's abdication—an ironic ending for the man who himself had orchestrated the overthrow of Sankara three decades prior (Peterson 2021, 7). Since that ebullient day in October 2014, Burkinabès have taken to the streets time and again to protest any and all injustices, from French neocolonialism to further authoritarian challenges to true national democracy. The reverberations of the legacy of Ouagadougou's most popular leader are truly being felt, as “thousands of Sankaras” continue to take up his revolutionary mantle.

This article explores the rise and fall of one of Africa's greatest postcolonial leaders, the surprising durability of his ideology and message, and the near hagiographic memory that has evolved of the man known as “Africa's Che Guevara.” Informing the following analysis are questions such as: who exactly was Thomas Sankara? What were his beliefs and his ideology, and what made his message so salient? Furthermore, to what extent was the historical phenomenon that was “Sankarism” a reaction to historical and contemporary conditions, both in Burkina Faso and Africa more generally? This assessment of Sankara and “Sankarism” is predicated on an analysis of his since published and translated speeches, interviews, writings, and other notable works, many of which have been preserved in digital archives.

### **From “African Socialism” to Militant Marxism: The Politics of Independence**

Decolonization in Africa was a dynamic and unpredictable process that varied from country to country. Some gained their independence through entirely peaceful means (e.g., Ghana), while others only achieved independence through the outright defeat of the colonizing power through national liberation wars (e.g., Algeria). Regardless of their respective paths, millions were optimistic about the prospect of self-government and local rule. At the center of debates among radical African leaders and intellectuals was the program of development that countries should adopt in pursuit of nation building. The escalating Cold War played an indisputable role in shaping these debates, as Western liberalism and Eastern communism vied for influence in the “Third World.” Victimized by colonial capitalist exploitation, most Africans were drawn more to the concept of socialism, especially with its promises of rapid economic development. However,

the socialism of Marx, Engels, and Lenin was utterly repudiated as a Eurocentric model unsuited to African conditions. Marxism foresaw the transition to socialism taking place first in the industrialized world in countries with a developed proletariat, which was hardly true in Africa. Engels, in his “Principles of Communism,” declared that revolution would first take place “in all *civilised* countries, that is, at least in England, America, France and Germany” (2020, 90; emphasis original). Revolutions in feudal Russia in 1917 and China in 1949 had done much to discredit the founders’ initial prophecies, but general sentiments still dictated a need for a distinct post-capitalist model appropriate for indigenous circumstances.

The solution was what became known as “African socialism.” The foundations of this theory are most closely associated with the works of Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere, and his conceptions of *Ujamaa* (“familyhood”). According to Nyerere (1968), Africa’s precolonial history meant its people were naturally predisposed to socialist fraternity and cooperation. “In traditional African society *everybody* was a worker,” Nyerere asserted, since “the African had never aspired to the possession of personal wealth for the purpose of dominating his fellows. He never had labourers or ‘factory hands’ to do his work for him” (1968, 4, 6; emphasis original). Indeed, he wrote, it was only foreign colonization that brought the “capitalist attitude of mind,” introducing concepts of wealth, commodification, and a new “class of parasites”—landlords and loiterers (1968, 5). The solution was not Europe’s “doctrinaire socialism,” but rather, left to their own devices, Africans would naturally “regain our former attitude of mind—our traditional African socialism—and apply it to the new societies we are building today” (Nyerere 1968, 8).

These formulations were quickly adopted and expanded upon by other radical leaders. Senegal’s Léopold Sédar Senghor advocated for a “socialist humanism,” arguing that Africa had “already achieved socialism before the coming of the European...[and] our duty is to renew it by helping it to regain its spiritual dimensions” (2017, 245). Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah described socialism as “the restitution of Africa’s humanist and egalitarian principles” (1970, 77). Interestingly, despite rejecting many of the premises of Marxism-Leninism, many co-opted the one-party state—not due to the “fragile perennial argument that Parties are the expression of social classes,” but rather because the African people’s “unity, coherence, and homogeneity” deemed political splintering a largely foreign concept, according to Kenya’s Jomo Kenyatta (2017, 238).

In terms of foreign policy, these new regimes also became part of the budding Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Originating with the Bandung Conference in 1955, the NAM was a conglomeration of Third World states that rejected global bipolarity and superpower alliance systems and sought to amplify their own voice in international affairs. As more and more African countries gained independence, each eagerly joined the NAM; at the second NAM conference in Cairo in October 1964, almost thirty African heads of state were in attendance affirming the struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, and apartheid.

However, as years passed, many grew disillusioned with the politics of African independence. The new regimes were corrupt, inefficient, and increasingly authoritarian. While preaching a classless history, a new caste of elites was sprouting among native rulers. As argued by Frantz Fanon, rather than new regimes overhauling existing colonial structures, power was transferred to the “national bourgeoisie,” who preserved these systems and instead oversaw the “Africanization of the ruling classes,” simply “step[ping] into the shoes of the former European settlement” (1963, 152, 155). Former imperial powers continued to dictate local economic and political policy through direct and indirect influence, in what Nkrumah dubbed “neo-

colonialism”—“imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage” (1965, ix). Indeed, decolonization was proving to be little more than a myth.

When analyzing what “went wrong,” many questioned the political underpinnings of the post-colonial state. Bissau-Guinean revolutionary Amílcar Cabral (1966) highlighted “ideological deficiency...within the national liberation movements” as constituting “one of the greatest weaknesses of our struggle against imperialism.” While not explicitly stated, this was first and foremost a critique of “African socialism,” as it quickly became clear this was socialism in name only. Indeed, there were little changes in the social and productive relations in society, and at best, the public sector was just enlarged, all while leaders internally railed against the “Communist threat,” enriched themselves, and purged leftists from government. This spawned vociferous critiques from those inside and outside the movement. Even Nkrumah (1967), one of the ideology’s initial proponents, later criticized the “fetish[ization] of the communal African society” and reiterated that “to suppose that there are tribal, national, or racial socialisms is to abandon objectivity in favor of chauvinism.”

The most scathing critique was Tanzanian Marxist Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu’s *African Socialism or Socialist Africa?* Babu labeled African socialism an “illegitimate, ahistorical beast” and expressed the need to “fight tooth and nail against advocates of this erroneous and backward-looking doctrine” (1981, xv). Babu criticized the reluctance among leadership “to accept the reality of the emergence of social classes and class contradictions within our societies for the simple reason that they are themselves rapidly developing into a comprador class serving the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie” (1981, 5). Babu and others also became critical of the policy of non-alignment. Initially understood as a policy of solidarity with the world’s anti-imperial masses, the movement was criticized for fence-sitting, especially when it proved impossible to decouple decolonization from Cold War dynamics (e.g., Vietnam). What was urged instead was solidarity with the socialist bloc, especially for those who had contributed to global liberation movements.

Ultimately, as explained by Marina and David Ottaway, “By the mid-1970s...African socialism was totally discredited intellectually and politically, and its early proponents were rethinking their choices” (1986, 9). A new school of radicals was quickly forming, tracing socialism back to its Marxist-Leninist, “scientific” roots. The Ottaways write:

Their ideal was not the idyllic African village community of olden times but the modern factory, the mechanized state farm or, in some cases, the Chinese-style commune. They did not share the African socialists’ illusion that conflict was avoidable but instead accepted, and even welcomed, class conflict as a means of promoting radical change....Altogether, they were far less romantic about revolution and more aware of the need for blood, sweat, and tears, and above all a systemic approach to engineering the process (1986, 10).

This revolutionary fervor manifested first in the Horn of Africa, as military coups in Sudan (May 1969), Somalia (October 1969), and Ethiopia (September 1974)—led by councils of radical officials—declared Marxism-Leninism as their creed and put their countries on track to socialist development. Marxist revolutions followed in Benin, Madagascar, and Congo-Brazzaville (Markakis and Waller 1986). These socialist revolutions were often pioneered by the army, given how the post-colonial state oversaw “a spectacular expansion of the state apparatus, particularly the military and security branches”—a development that these institutions used to their advantage (Markakis 1986, 3). Military academies also served as channels to propagate Marxist theory, often creating a divide between the armed forces’ conservative old guard and emergent

radical youth. Given how thoroughly discredited civilian elites had been post-independence, the radical agendas of Africa's new regimes were largely championed by the people and further legitimized military rule. It is in this context that Burkina Faso underwent its own process of revolutionary upheaval.

### **Sankarism: Revolution as Reaction**

The former Upper Volta did not have the luxury of a radical independence movement. Indeed, as it was one of Africa's poorest and least educated countries, the intelligentsia and popular mobilization that spearheaded anti-colonial movements elsewhere were largely absent (Harsch 2017, 17–18). The country's elites and politicians themselves, as beneficiaries of the old order, "had little to gain from independence" and sought to continue status quo relations (Englebert 1996, 35). When self-government was achieved in 1960, the country was reluctantly thrust into it, and one Voltaic politician recalled the irony of independence being proclaimed by "those who had been its fiercest enemies, who today, as yesterday, are ready to sabotage it" (Harsch 2017, 21).

While the successive post-colonial governments in Upper Volta were praised by Western observers as the bastion of "freely elected Government" and pluralism in "a continent where a hundred million people live under military rule and where most of the civilian regimes allow only one political party" (Borders 1971), the reality of Voltaic politics was more depressing. The country frequently alternated between military and civilian rule and between single-party and multi-party (and no-party) systems. Regimes often suffered from crises of legitimacy, and there was never a peaceful transition of power between governments. When "democracy" was practiced, citizens were so dissatisfied with the process that military coups (there were five after 1966) that suspended constitutions and civil rights were often championed by the people (Englebert 1996, 43–55). Voltaics viewed politics as "games of lies and deceit," and the exposure of widespread corruption, patronage, and embezzlement among state officials only furthered these beliefs (Harsch 2017, 32–36).

Ultimately, this chronic instability made Voltaic society ripe for revolution. At this time, a young soldier, Thomas Sankara, had gained acclaim for his heroics in the 1974 border war with Mali. His popularity in the armed forces led to him being appointed minister of information in the military government in September 1981, where he was renowned for his honorable character and critiques of corruption, even encouraging the journalism that unearthed massive embezzlement scandals in 1982. After resigning in protest of federal crackdowns on the press, Sankara was arrested by the regime and jailed until he was freed by another coup on November 7, 1982. Sankara was appointed prime minister of the new government in January 1983, furthering the work of anti-corruption and transparency in government. However, his progressivism lost him the favor of conservative president Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo. He was arrested again on May 17, 1983, but thousands took to the streets on May 20 in "the largest mass gathering in the country's history" to free Sankara (Peterson 2021, 104). This mobilization ultimately paved the way for another on August 4, 1983, this time in a popular coup that brought Sankara and his associates firmly into power.

### ***"Heirs of the World's Revolutions": Building Sankarism at Home***

With Sankara's rise to power, revolutionary upheaval in Voltaic society was inevitable, but the path of radical thought he and his associates would follow was unclear. During their time in the

military academy, Sankara and his associates had read the works of earlier revolutionary thinkers like Nyerere and Senghor, but also the works of Africa's new brand of Marxist radicals, including Amílcar Cabral and Samora Machel. However, they found themselves inspired more by the latter. Sankara's associate Valère Somé expressed how, at a young age, the pair concluded that "the African socialism of Senghor was just rhetoric" (Peterson 2021, 59). Indeed, as president, Sankara denounced the "now-dated concepts of Negritude and African [socialism]" while criticizing those who, "under cover of tradition, are exploiting the people...instead of genuinely serving their social interests" (2007a, 53, 157). While stationed in Madagascar for military service in the early 1970s, Sankara witnessed firsthand the early stages of the Malagasy socialist revolution, pioneered by the country's Military Directorate and officer Didier Ratsiraka. It was this development that confirmed for Sankara not only the relevance of Marxist orthodoxy, but also "the potential role of the military" in ushering in radical transformation (Peterson 2021, 61).

Much like the African socialists before him, Sankara did seek a model fit for indigenous conditions, but his search for a "Third World" socialism did not rely on abstract theory. Rather, Sankara looked pragmatically toward Marxist-Leninist experiments in the post-colonial world—primarily in Cuba and China. In one of his first speeches after coming to power, Sankara spoke of perceiving Voltaic society as being divided into two classes of citizens—not bourgeoisie and proletariat, but rather "the people" and "the enemies of the people." The enemies abroad were "neocolonialism" and "imperialism," he noted, while those inside the country were the corrupt public officials who "enrich themselves dishonestly through fraud and bribery." Indeed, Sankara counseled not a perennial class struggle against all bourgeois elements, but rather one explicitly against "this section of the bourgeoisie" (2007a, 52–53). This struggle *for* the people and *against* their enemies would come to define the 1983 revolution, in a clear repudiation of the unconflictual character of early independence politics.

In his quest to rebuild his country, Sankara's pre-eminent objective was elucidated in an October 1983 speech: "The primary goal of the revolution is to transfer power from the hands of the Voltaic bourgeoisie allied with imperialism to the hands of the alliance of popular classes that constitute the people" (Sankara 2007a, 93). Indeed, Sankara believed not in a top-down imposition of will, but in a bottom-up expression of "democratic and popular power" (2007a, 93). While a devout Marxist-Leninist, Sankara was hesitant about granting a "vanguard" role to any party or, like his contemporaries, the military, seeing this as "open[ing] the door to all kinds of opportunism" (2007a, 220–21). However, he had no love for Western parliamentarism either. According to Sankara, "Ballot boxes and an electoral apparatus in and of themselves don't signify the existence of democracy," a claim most Voltaics would have testified to, given their experiences under the country's three post-colonial republics. Rather, true democracy was when "total power [was] resting in the hands of the people—economic, military, political, social, and cultural power" (2007a, 384–85).

In applying his proletarian democratic vision, Sankara saw Cuba as the ideal model to be replicated. Fidel Castro's Cuba had earned many friends on the continent through its support of African liberation movements. However, the bond between Ouagadougou and Havana went further, with Sankara actively drawing on what he dubbed the "positive examples" of the 1959 Cuban Revolution (Sankara 2007a, 142). To counter corruption and purge old officials, Sankara established "People's Revolutionary Courts," mimicking the early Cuban tribunals. Much like in Havana, verdicts were issued through massive popular mobilization, and the judges were allegedly chosen "from among workers and by workers only, with the mission of carrying out the



people's will" (Sankara 2007a, 112). Sankara also drew great inspiration from Cuba's mass land reform, vaccination, and literacy campaigns. With the help of Cuban volunteers, by 1987, two million children had been vaccinated against major diseases, the literacy rate had increased more than at any point since French colonial rule, and all major landholdings were nationalized (Harsch 2013; Zeilig 2018). To implement these programs, Sankara established Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs)—another Cuban import—to "carry the revolution into every province, every village, every public or private business, every home, everywhere" (Sankara 1985, 53). CDRs were open to public membership and were responsible for implementing all local initiatives, as well as transmitting suggestions to the regime. As highlighted by Ernest Harsch, CDRs were transformative in their "popular character" and incorporation of those "who previously had never taken part in any political or associational activity"—primarily, the peasantry and the poor (2013, 366).

Given the participatory nature of the political system, Sankara believed the revolution would form a "new Voltaic man"—undoubtedly influenced by Che Guevara's (1965) "new socialist man" (*El nuevo hombre*). This Voltaic man's "exemplary morality and social behavior" and "new consciousness" would define the revolution and set the example for the masses. Indeed, Sankara found it impossible to pursue radical change without "a qualitative transformation of the very people who are supposed to be the architects of the revolution"; only then could a new society "rid of corruption, theft, lies, and individualism" be crafted (2007a, 97). It was a complete repudiation of both Western liberalism and early African socialists' autocratic rule, and was, above all, exemplary of Cuba's imprint on Burkina Faso's transformation. Even the slogan of the 1959 revolution ("Homeland or death, we will win!") would be adopted as Burkina Faso's national motto and serve as the final rallying cry in all of Sankara's speeches.

This is not to say that Sankara was entirely unoriginal, but rather that he was a revolutionary pragmatist, seeking to apply programs rooted in historical success. However, one front in which Sankara's philosophies were truly transformative was his devout feminism. Early African socialists' obsession with "tradition" meant they often maintained oppressive colonial gender roles. Marxists, while more progressive, saw the gender struggle as subsidiary to that of class and failed to recognize the unique plight of women. However, Sankara understood the dismantling of patriarchy as integral to the larger struggle. On International Women's Day in 1987, he explained how "both the woman and the male worker are condemned to silence by their exploitation" under capitalism, but "the worker's wife is also condemned to silence by her worker-husband" (2007b, 30). He did not see liberation as coming through women entering the workforce while retaining all household and childrearing duties, but rather envisioned a society where "men and women have the same rights and responsibilities" (2007b, 42). Forced marriages were outlawed during his rule, and Sankara went as far as to actively encourage singlehood. In speaking about marriage, he argued that "if it...does not bring [women] happiness, [it] is not indispensable and should even be voided. To the contrary, let's show them our many examples of...single women with or without children, who are radiant and blossoming" (2007b, 49). Sankarism was, for many, the capstone of the global feminist struggle, and women were indubitably among the foremost beneficiaries of Burkina's mobilization-oriented revolution.

At the UN General Assembly in 1984, Sankara proclaimed that he sought to make the people of Burkina Faso "the heirs of the world's revolutions"—from those in Russia and Cuba, to those in France and America (2007a, 165). Indeed, much of Sankarism's popularity came from the unapologetic willingness to learn from historical radical processes, adopting, rejecting, and supplementing with discretion. Theories like African socialism were fundamentally rejected,

given their intrinsic shortcomings that made attempts at revision futile. However, today, Sankara is probably more renowned for his stances on international affairs, which earned him the renowned nickname “Africa’s Che Guevara.”

### ***Anti-Imperialism to the Highest Degree: Exporting Sankarism Abroad***

The foreign policy of the Sankara regime was quite simple: combating neocolonialism at home and global imperialism abroad. The former was inextricably linked to Sankara’s domestic policy, as the inefficiencies of the post-colonial order were primarily the product of nefarious neocolonial influence. While some early leaders like Nyerere genuinely made pushes toward “self-reliance” (see Nyerere 1968, 17–25), most quickly accepted imperial terms regarding the nature of post-colonial relations between Europe and Africa. Senghor and others even lauded a close union (*Françafrique*) as the expression of a shared history that ought to be continued after independence. Paris, with its fostering of crippling dependence and penchant for frequent interventions, was especially egregious in its imperial impulses. While the election of France’s first socialist president François Mitterrand made Sankara and others hopeful for a fundamental reform of neocolonial policy, this optimism was naïve. “As far as France’s relations with Africa are concerned...May 1981 changed nothing,” Sankara remarked, making the push toward true independence all the more urgent (2007a, 132).

In Sankara’s view, challenges to neocolonialism needed to come primarily with achieving true economic self-sufficiency. The revolutionary was especially mistrustful of European aid and loans programs. “Aid must go in the direction of strengthening our sovereignty, not undermining it,” he proclaimed during one 1984 press conference (2007a, 125). Indeed, the 1980s were the pinnacle of power for Western-led institutions like the IMF, which utilized economic crises in Africa to secure “structural adjustment” loans and to privatize economies to favor multinational corporations while exacerbating local poverty (Ferguson 2006). Despite a steep budget deficit in 1985, and Burkina’s economy bordering on collapse, Sankara refused to partake in such programs: “They give us less than a year...before our coffers are empty—before we’re no longer able to pay government employees and have to run to the [IMF] or some other organization for help...But struggling along...we’ll get through this storm” (2007a, 203). However, Sankara was often limited on this front. While making significant progress toward food self-sufficiency during his presidency, his abhorrence of the IMF only made him more reliant on unilateral French aid than his African contemporaries.

At any other point in the Cold War, Sankara’s ideological convictions would have made Eastern bloc aid almost a guarantee, but Soviet overcommitments and economic stagnation made this less feasible. Sankara expressed frustration with the Soviets’ “wait-and-see policy” and general “lack of urgency to help” (2007a, 201–202). However, this only radicalized Sankara further, culminating in arguably his most famous speech (“A United Front Against Debt”) before the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1987. In it, Sankara castigated debt as “a skillfully managed reconquest of Africa, intended to subjugate its growth and development through foreign rules.” The only solution was a collective refusal to pay these loans: “We cannot repay because we don’t have any means to do so.” Indeed, according to Sankara, a united African front was especially essential, if for no other reason than to “prevent us [all] from being individually assassinated.” This collective spirit had to extend beyond non-compliance with debt policy to a continental economic interdependence that replaced European hegemony: “Let’s also make the African market be the market for Africans: produce in Africa, transform in Africa, consume in

Africa. Let's produce what we need and let's consume what we produce instead of importing" (Sankara 1987). It was a bold vision, yet one that largely went unheeded.

Sankara knew that challenges to imperialism needed to be global and systemic. The official decline of the early Non-Aligned Movement came with the push toward Cold War *détente* in the 1970s, which effectively removed its primary *raison d'être*. However, the NAM was discredited well before that, as ideological divisions and timidity regarding involvement in Cold War conflicts made it an ineffectual anti-colonial vehicle. Despite this, upon coming to power, Sankara was quick to declare Burkina Faso's "non-alignment." He spoke at both the seventh NAM summit in India (1983) and the eighth summit in Zimbabwe (1986) (Peterson 2018, 40–41). However, he had very different conceptions of the duties of nations in the NAM. His speech in Harare emphasized, above all, "the pressing theme of the close relationship between Non-alignment and the concrete demands of liberation struggles." Sankara recalled the optimism he held for the NAM as a youth in 1961, and how this initial hope was now replaced with feelings "of disappointment, of failure, and of frustration" (2007a, 303–304). The movement had not effectively challenged racism, imperialism, and neocolonialism, and it was its obligation to do so.

Over the course of his presidency, Sankara lived up to his word and more, passionately advocating for global liberation. At the forefront was the struggle against apartheid, which Sankara (1986) dubbed "a form of modern Nazism" and "a living element of the imperialism of our times." Outside of Africa, he expressed solidarity with revolutionaries in Latin America in their campaigns against US imperialism. Alongside Cuba, Sankara supported both Grenada's New JEWEL Movement and Nicaragua's Sandinista Front, developing close relations with respective leaders Maurice Bishop and Daniel Ortega. After Bishop's assassination and the subsequent US invasion of Grenada in 1983 to topple its Marxist-Leninist government, anti-imperialists everywhere became acutely aware of the regional *Yanqui* threat. Sankara thereafter vociferously defended the Sandinistas, themselves engaged in a prolonged war against US-backed terrorist guerrillas known as the Contras (*la contrarrevolución*). In Managua, Sankara denounced the Contras as "vultures that must be crushed" and "jackals that do not deserve respect," thereby promising to "support Nicaragua" and "make [its] struggle known throughout the world" (2007a, 323). In the Middle East, Sankara supported Palestine, likening Zionism to a form of "aggression, occupation, [and] domination" that sought to "replace [Palestinians] with another people—a people martyred only yesterday" (2007a, 164). Sankarism truly embodied anti-imperialism to its highest degree.

On the surface, Sankara's liberation theology appears to impinge on another crucial aspect of his ideology—Pan-Africanism. He certainly checked all the metaphorical Pan-African boxes. When an OAU alternative specific to Black African states was proposed by Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, Sankara vehemently rejected this: "With regard to how we conceive of the OAU, there is no room for the color-sensitive. There is only one color—that of African unity" (2007a, 128). He even showed solidarity with the diaspora, famously traveling to New York and declaring "[Africa's] White House is in Black Harlem" (2007a, 149). However, Sankara's challenges to the neocolonial order fostered mistrust among other African leaders, particularly West African Francophiles, and for good reason. His harshest critiques were often directed toward those on his own continent—as when he declared in 1985, "Only revolution will allow [Maliens] to free themselves," a line so inflammatory it contributed to the outbreak of a border war between Ouagadougou and Bamako in December of that year. Indeed, in this speech, Sankara went even further, explicitly naming a whole host of right-wing dictators, from Côte d'Ivoire's Félix

Houphouët-Boigny to Niger's Seyni Kountché, and affirming that “all the just struggles of their peoples”—and presumably against these leaders—“will be our struggles” (2007a, 236–38).

Much like non-alignment, this traced back to Sankara's differing interpretation of “Pan-Africanism.” While early postcolonial leaders stressed Pan-African unity between governments and elites in pursuit of joint nation-building, Sankara viewed Pan-Africanism as unity among the people, geared toward a common struggle—of class, and against imperialism. This related to Sankara's abhorrence of Africa's neocolonial regimes, but also his liberation-oriented views on international affairs. Whether a once-radical African socialist or an avowed pro-Western puppet, the result was the same—they were an enemy of the people. While nominally maintaining “non-alignment” and a Pan-African identity, Sankara undoubtedly went against orthodox thinking within these movements. He was, above all, a traditional proletarian internationalist, dedicated to class and anti-imperial struggles and to the liberation of the masses. At its foundation, Sankarist foreign policy was hopelessly idealistic, but nevertheless inspiring.

### **Conclusion: An Unfinished Struggle**

On October 15, 1987, armed forces in Ouagadougou stormed the main government compound, seizing power and assassinating Sankara at the age of thirty-seven, as well as dozens of his loyalists. It was the end of the four-year Burkina Faso Revolution. Sankara's ideology was naturally prone to making enemies, and the events on October 15 were the manifestation of this estrangement—the predictable counterrevolution. A host of actors were essential to the orchestration of the 1987 coup. Domestically, it was the military “old guard”; the police and *gendarmes*; CDRs, which were prone to infiltration; former Sankarist officials like Blaise Compaoré, who wanted to use their power for personal enrichment; discontented civilian factions, like trade unions and the Communist Party, who briefly rallied behind Compaoré when he marketed himself as the “true revolutionary” before being targeted, imprisoned, and killed themselves; and all the former officials displaced four years prior. The coup was also aided and encouraged by a range of international actors: the United States, under President Reagan; Mitterrand's France, showcasing its status quo resumption of a hawkish foreign policy; and many of the African countries Sankara had denigrated—primarily Côte d'Ivoire (Jaffré 2018).

Sankara was both a reaction to and product of the post-colonial African state. In the sense that independence was achieved through a continental “revolution,” Sankarism was its counterpart—a “revolutionary counterrevolution.” Sankara replaced the African socialism of yesteryear with a version of its orthodox, Marxist-Leninist foil. He redefined what it meant to be “non-aligned” and a “Pan-Africanist,” blending them with his unique proletarian internationalism. Further, he issued the greatest fundamental challenge to neocolonialism feasible in the 1980s, and above all, he inspired millions. However, if Sankara represented the greatest threat to the post-colonial system, the 1987 coup represented retaliation to the highest degree, the “empire striking back,” illustrating how thoroughly entrenched this apparatus remained. It is only fitting that—just as with the slave trade, colonialism, and neocolonialism—the coup was only possible with the joint collaboration of foreign imperial powers and regional collaborators.

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## **Identity: The Shaping of Pauli Murray and the Fourteenth Amendment**

**Robert Clay**

### **ABSTRACT**

The US Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment has been the basis for an abundance of civil liberties and rights that are cherished by Americans. Although it is currently considered one of the most impactful amendments, that has not always been the case. For decades, the Court's interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment was so narrow that it was rendered effectively useless. The work of one person helped to fundamentally shift American jurisprudence to allow for a more expansive reading of the Amendment: Pauli Murray. I argue that it was Murray's identity, and in-betweenness, that influenced her interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment. In fact, at a time when her interpretation seemed outlandish, Murray was convinced of the obvious nature of her intuitive understanding that the American Constitution was powerful enough to protect her, regardless of her identity.

Keywords: Pauli Murray, Fourteenth Amendment, identity, gender, race

### **Introduction**

Over 150 years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that America was "another name for opportunity" (quoted in Neklason 2019). It is quite imaginable that while Emerson penned those very words, an enslaved person just a few states away endured grueling labor, mistreatment, and abuse, all while wondering what sin he had committed, what wrong his ancestors had done to deserve such treatment. Just as he became lost in contemplation, an overseer kicked him in the ribs, berated him, and demanded that he work faster, harder. This scenario illustrates the dual realities that have always made up America. While many of the white inhabitants of the United States have viewed it as a land rife with opportunity, those occupying positions further down the color line have perceived no such thing. They have heard those oft-repeated, grandiose words penned in the Declaration of Independence that "All men are created equal...endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," and heard nothing but hypocrisy (Jefferson 1776). Liberty? Happiness? Equality? It is doubtful that any enslaved person would ever consider themselves to be in the possession of any of these things, and even more unlikely that they would view America as a land rife with opportunity. Emerson's view was undoubtedly shaped by his identity, which in turn shaped his reality. It was Emerson's identity as a white man that enabled him to view America as full of opportunity. Mr. Jefferson's reality was one in which he *was* able to freely attain liberty and happiness. Because of these differences in experience and perceived reality, it is difficult to imagine that a beneficiary of such systems—such as Mr. Jefferson, who profited from exploitation—would work to remove inequality, especially not with the same vigor as someone at the bottom. As the philosopher Paulo Freire stated, "the oppressors who oppress...by virtue of

their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate” (Friere 1993, 6). Rather, it is only the power coming out of the weakness of the oppressed that is sufficient to promote change.

The America of the twenty-first century is a fundamentally different place than the one inhabited by Jefferson, undoubtedly because of the exertions of the oppressed. Their identity, as oppressed individuals, led them to demand changes to their own circumstances. These demands for change have, in turn, expanded the promises made by Jefferson some 240 years ago to apply to all Americans. Black people have been granted equality before the law. Women are no longer confined to housework, and sex discrimination has been outlawed. Discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation has been prohibited. Many of the expansions of rights over the last century have been the result of the Fourteenth Amendment. Unbeknownst to many, the identity of one individual played a key role in the acquisition of these cherished rights: Dr. Pauli Murray.

It was Murray, as a burgeoning legal thinker, who argued that the Fourteenth Amendment as interpreted by the Court in *Civil Rights Cases* (1883) and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) was inconsistent with the idea of equality before law and civil freedom. That same reasoning was later used by Thurgood Marshall to argue *Brown v. Board* (1954) before the Court, resulting in the overturning of the separate but equal doctrine. It was Murray who first argued that arbitrary sex discrimination was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause. Again, as this article will discuss, her reasoning was used by the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg to argue before the Court in *Reed v. Reed* (1971), resulting in sex discrimination being ruled as unconstitutional.<sup>1</sup> It is no coincidence that Murray interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment in such an expansive way. Rather, it was Murray’s identity,<sup>2</sup> and her unique intersectionality on multiple planes, that informed her opinion that the guarantees offered by the Fourteenth Amendment were broad, rather than narrow, in application and her belief in unalienable human rights.

To appreciate Murray’s contributions to modern jurisprudence, it is important to understand some of the history of the Fourteenth Amendment. Passed in succession, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments were designed to extend federal protections of civil rights to Black Americans. However, as Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes said so candidly, “the Constitution is what the judges say it is” (Kurland 1981, 585). Regardless of the intent of these constitutional amendments, the Court’s interpretation of the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment rendered it effectively useless in protecting the rights of African Americans. The majority ruling of the *Slaughter-House Cases* of 1873 argued that the Fourteenth Amendment did not give Congress the power to regulate civil rights and established a distinction between US citizenship and state citizenship. The opinion then posits that the rights contained earlier in the Constitution, in Article IV, Section 2, were rights of state citizenship, and the rights protected by the Fourteenth were only the rights of national citizenship (quoted in Stahl 2015). This decision effectively rendered the privileges and immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment useless.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray employed she/her/hers pronouns throughout her life, and this article will refer to her using those same pronouns. The Pauli Murray Center (n.d.) endorses the use of she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs to embrace the fluid nature of gender.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of identity is deeply complex, with numerous definitions that can be vastly different and even at times contradictory. For the purposes of this article, the definition of identity that will be used is the one provided by political scientist James D. Fearon in his 1999 article “What is Identity (As We Now Use the Word).” There, he states that “identity means either (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and allegedly characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b) a socially distinguishing feature that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or both a & b at the same time)” (Fearon 1999, i).



The Fourteenth Amendment was further eroded just ten years later in the *Civil Rights Cases* (1883), which ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment only barred legal discrimination, allowing private individuals to discriminate at will. Putting the nail in the coffin for equality, the famous *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision (1896) held that state-mandated segregation was not a violation of the Equal Protection Clause because separate does not necessarily mean unequal (quoted in Foner 2009, 424). Together, these decisions left states free to nullify the Reconstruction amendments at will, resulting in the ongoing subordination of Blacks in the South, all with the blessing of the Supreme Court (Gaffney 1976, 220–23).

Instead of interpreting the Fourteenth Amendment in a way that more accurately reflected its original intent, the Supreme Court of the Gilded Age interpreted the Amendment as a protection for corporate action in the three aforementioned cases, preventing government regulation by declaring that a corporation was a “person” unable to be deprived of “privileges and immunities” (quoted in Gaffney 1976, 222). Interestingly, this interpretation reflects the identity of many of the men on the Supreme Court at the time, as most of the justices were lawyers prior to being appointed to the Court, a profession that notoriously produces individuals who are “eminently conservative and anti-democratic” (Tocqueville et al. 1945, 285). Further, many of the justices earned their living prior to their appointment to the Court by protecting corporate interests, resulting in their adoption of a business mentality (Gaffney 1976, 223). Therefore, this series of rulings interpreting the Fourteenth Amendment reflects the justices’ own identities. With this background established, an examination of Murray’s life and the various attributes and experiences that formed her identity will shed light on how she may have arrived at her interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment and the meaning of equality.<sup>3</sup>

### Aspects of Identity

The first key factor to understanding Murray’s intersectionality is her race. Born in Maryland, Murray soon moved to Durham, North Carolina to live with her grandparents, Cornelia and Robert Fitzgerald. As Murray reports in her 1956 autobiography, her grandfather was the product of an interracial couple, as his mother, a white woman, had married a Black man who purported to be of mixed ancestry. For most of her life, Murray was under the firm impression that her great-grandfather was a descendant of a distinguished family who hailed from Ireland, a story told to each successive generation with pride. It was not until her adulthood, when Murray stumbled upon her great-grandfather’s deed of manumission in the Wilmington, Delaware courthouse, that this fiction would be ruptured, as the document revealed that her great-grandfather was actually born in bondage (Murray 1956, 57).

It is likely that Murray’s great-grandfather did not view himself as ever having been enslaved in the traditional sense, as he was owned by a Quaker family, whose faith forbade them from participating in the slave trade. The Quaker custom was to release an enslaved person at the age of twenty-four, often even compensating them for their labor. In attempting to wrestle with why

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that Murray’s interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment was not completely novel. Justice Harlan, a member of the Gilded Age Court known for his riveting dissents, also seemed to interpret the Fourteenth Amendment in a way that was more expansive and protective of the rights of Blacks. However, he still was a man of his time and did not interpret the Amendment to be as expansive as Murray, whose reading applied the Fourteenth Amendment to women and other disadvantaged members of society. Therefore, it seems appropriate to attribute this to Murray, not only because she resurrected Harlan’s interpretation, but also because she was able to expand upon even his understanding of the Amendment.

her great-grandfather had found it necessary to create this fiction about his lineage, Murray came to the conclusion that regardless of the fact that he was treated humanely, he had likely tried to reconcile the status placed upon him, that of a powerless piece of property, with his own understanding of his humanity. Murray posited that “slavery had done such violence to the human spirit that the very memory of it was intolerable long after people had outlived it” (1956, 24). Therefore, his son, Murray’s grandfather, had sought to prevent his children from carrying the same burden, instead instilling in his descendants a sense of pride in their own identities. This fiction allowed the Fitzgeralds to walk with their heads held high during a period when the environment surrounding them demanded that they do anything but.

Murray’s grandmother was also incredibly proud of her own lineage, as her father, a white man who had brutally raped the enslaved person who would become Murray’s great-grandmother, had taken great pains to convince her that she was seven-eighths white, with the remaining one-eighth of her blood being composed of Native American rather than African heritage. This was only fitting because, as members of a very prominent household in North Carolina, they had an image to uphold. Murray argues that her grandmother projected pride concerning her Smith pedigree, likely to prevent herself from feeling like any other oppressed Black person. She was proud to reinforce in her granddaughter her own connection to aristocrats, spanning generations (Murray 1956, 24).

Taken together, Murray’s family tree and the accompanying fictions on both sides seem to have strengthened her sense of pride in her own heritage and mixed-race status. She wrote in her first memoir, *Proud Shoes*, that her “dual-family inheritance made a deep impression on [her] as a child,” instilling her with a “strong sense of personal identity” that gave her the ability to counter common misconceptions (Murray 1956, 57). This strong sense of identity was further strengthened by the pride her grandfather, Robert, took in his service in the Union Army. Taking great care to raise Pauli with a military-like strictness, he also made efforts to inculcate in her a sense of pride in her Americanness. Murray wrote that it was because of her grandfather that she felt she “had a stake in [the] country’s future, and [she] clung to that no matter how often it was snatched away from [her].” The country, she felt, belonged as much to her as it did to anyone else. Her view was further validated after visiting Africa as an adult, after which she reported feeling “irrevocably bound to the destiny of [her] native America” (Murray 1956, 57). Her mixed-race identity made her well aware of the difficulties, and inexactitudes, inherent in attempting to define individuals by the simple dichotomy of Black and white, an awareness that undoubtedly influenced her belief in the indivisibility of human rights. In addition to feeling forced into a mold based on her racial composition, Murray also felt this pressure regarding her gender identity and her sexual orientation.

In 1928, Murray decided to get away from the segregated universities of the South, choosing instead to attend Hunter College in New York. It was at this time that Murray began to toy with gender norms, choosing to shed her birth name, Anna Pauline Murray, and trading it for the name Pauli for its gender neutrality. In one photo album, tellingly titled “The Life and Times of an American Called Pauli Murray,” Murray can be seen wearing male attire and posing romantically with a woman named Peggy Holmes, with whom she was thought to be romantically involved (Drury 2000, 61). In a personal journal from that period, Murray wrote that she preferred to identify as a “boy-girl”—more boy than girl—and that she often wrestled with her romantic attraction to women. She wrote in a letter that her “little boy-girl personality...gets [her] into trouble” because “few people understand [and] the world does not accept [her] pattern of life” (quoted in Azaransky 2011, 22). Eventually, this feeling—as if she

did not fit into the neat categories of male or female, gay or straight—along with the volatile nature of her feelings, resulted in Murray being hospitalized three times for emotional breakdowns between 1937 and 1947. Each time she was hospitalized, Murray pleaded with doctors to search her for hidden testes, as she thought this must be the explanation for her feeling more like a boy than a girl. It was not until 1954, when she was to undergo an appendectomy and asked the surgeon to look for the suspected hidden testes, that she received a conclusive answer concerning their nonexistence (Dorrien 2017).

Considering some of the factors influencing Murray's identity along racial, gender, and sexual lines, it is easy to see how they could have influenced her world view, especially when her own understanding of the meaning of personhood clashed so readily with the outside world's view. Her mixed-race status, along with her sense of pride in her family heritage, made her challenge the validity of segregation, as she considered herself to be both white and Black (Murray 1956, 28). As a member of a family with a wide range of phenotypical appearances, she understood that race is too complex to be reduced into the dualism of Black and white. Her understanding of her gender, of feeling "more boy than girl," combined with her family's lack of emphasis on gender roles made it impossible for her to understand why she would be excluded from opportunities that she knew herself to be imminently qualified for, such as leadership roles in the Civil Rights Movement—or when she was rejected from Harvard on the basis of her sex (Murray 1935, 90). As a woman who experienced feelings of sexual attraction to other women, yet did not consider herself to be homosexual, she refused to be summed up by any one identity marker. As Serena Mayeri states, Murray's struggles with her sexual identity "likely influenced her intuition that sex, like race, was a complicated social construction rather than a fixed biological category" (Mayeri 2014, 16). Such intuitions were undoubtedly strengthened by her grandparents' attempts to instill in her a sense of pride in every aspect of her being. This pride, along with her strong sense of identity, appeared to support her belief that there could not be anything wrong with her own understanding of herself. Rather, her writings show Murray firmly believed that there was something fundamentally wrong with discrimination based on these markers that she considered to be arbitrary. Living a life at the intersection of numerous categories helped to influence her understanding of true equality, and the path America needed to take to achieve it.

### **Murray's Reading of the Fourteenth Amendment**

Murray first began thinking about the Fourteenth Amendment as an instrument for overturning racial and sex discrimination as a young law student at Howard University. After writing her senior research paper entitled "Should the *Civil Rights Cases* and *Plessy v. Ferguson* Be Overruled?" (1944), she became so confident in the validity of her understanding of the Fourteenth Amendment that she made a wager with her professor that within twenty-five years *Plessy* would be overturned (Dabscheck 2019, 572). In her paper, Murray came to the conclusion that the "arbitrary separation of citizens on the basis of race...is a badge of servitude wholly inconsistent with the civil freedom and the equality before the law established by the Constitution. It cannot be justified upon any legal grounds" (quoted in Dabscheck 2019, 577). In other words, for Murray, racial separation was a direct violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and its guarantee of equal protection under the law.

Murray became confident that challenging the judicial interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment was the best option for the country to break free from racial discrimination after working as a research assistant on *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946), a case that challenged the

constitutionality of segregating children based on their Spanish surnames. The Appeals Court found that the treatment of Mexican students was unconstitutional, as it violated both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause (quoted in Rosenberg 2017, 170). Following the favorable ruling of *Mendez*, NAACP lawyers recalled Murray's senior thesis and decided to use the reasoning contained within it as the basis for overturning *Brown v. Board*. Previously, NAACP lawyers had been focused on attempting to make the separate educational facilities provided to Black children equal to the facilities of white children. However, after being convinced of the possible effectiveness of Murray's reasoning, especially after the successful challenge to segregation using the Fourteenth Amendment in *Mendez v. Westminster*, NAACP lawyers decided to attack segregation head on, challenging its constitutionality based on the Fourteenth Amendment (Rosenberg 2017). It is easy to see how Murray would have fundamentally disagreed with the ruling of *Plessy* (1896), in which the Court majority argued that the legal distinction between the races "must always exist so long as white men are distinguished from the other race by color" (*Plessy* 1896, 543). If, according to the Court, a legal distinction between the races must exist where white people can be distinguished from Black people, what is the justification for distinguishing between races when that is not possible? This was the case in Murray's family, in which some members were indistinguishable from white individuals, not to mention the racial ambiguity of Homer Plessy, the plaintiff in the *Plessy* case, who was picked due to his appearance as an octoroon. Rather than race itself being the marker of inferiority, it was the laws that marked Black people with "a badge of inferiority," even when their phenotype did not (*Plessy* 1896, 551). As Murray wrote in her 1987 autobiography, she believed that segregation did "violence to the personality of the individual affected," a position that she embraced after being denied various opportunities in the legal world on account of her sex. Murray's identity and formative experiences likely assisted her in coming to such conclusions, even when her male colleagues ridiculed her for positing an approach using the Fourteenth Amendment that to her "seemed...an obvious solution" (Murray 2018, 254).

Murray's instinctual understanding of the Fourteenth Amendment extended not just to her belief in the unconstitutionality of race discrimination, but also to her belief that sex discrimination was unconstitutional. After being appointed to the President's Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), assembled in 1961, Murray drafted a memorandum that explicitly argued for a reinterpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, "applied to the rights of women in keeping with the supreme value of *individuality* in democratic society" (quoted in Mayeri 2001, 16; emphasis original). Again, this approach was evidence of Murray's firm belief in removing barriers to recognition, not just of her own individuality, but that of all Americans—something she took to be a governing principle of any democratic society. Throughout the memorandum she continued to revisit the importance of individuality. While acknowledging that the justification for many laws discriminatory against women was on the basis of physiological difference or child-bearing and rearing duties, Murray questioned how these laws reconciled with the personal rights of women, each of whom are "individuals with varied capacities, interests and talents—as varied as those of men" (Murray and Bell-Scott 2018, 23). To Murray, in a society that claims to be devoted to democratic values, committed to respecting the dignity of humans and their worth as individuals, "the responsible choice...[is] the right to full human development" (Murray and Bell-Scott 2018, 23). Once more, Murray demanded recognition of her individuality. Why should laws that discriminate under the guise of protecting child bearers limit her as well, if she had not decided to take on this role? Thus, her understanding of these

laws was that they were as arbitrary and unjustified as those that discriminated on the basis of race.

Prior to the formation of the PCSW, the Equal Protection Clause had done little to protect the rights of women. Courts regularly upheld laws that made a distinction between men and women so long as that particular law could be classified as “reasonable,” or had a “rational basis.” Under such justifications, the government could classify on account of sex as it pleased. However, Murray argued for a change to the standard of “reasonableness,” calling for a new “heightened reasonableness” that would only allow for differential treatment under more limited circumstances (quoted in Mayeri 2004, 764). According to Murray, the purpose of raising the standard of reasonableness was to prevent sex-based legal classifications from “imply[ing] inferiority or enforc[ing] an inferior status by singling women out as a class for restrictive treatment,” while still allowing for policies that were “genuinely protective of the family and maternal functions” (quoted in Mayeri 2014, 18). In order to make sure that there was a clear understanding of the discriminatory nature of some of these policies that discriminated against women as individuals, Murray began to formulate race-sex analogies, thinking that if the Court had been willing to concede that race as a basis for classification was unreasonable under the Equal Protection Clause, as it had in *Brown v. Board*, it would seem that they could also be persuaded that sex was an unreasonable basis, as sex, like race, is immutable. Murray believed that these analogies, if successful, would serve to further “build up” the Fourteenth Amendment (Mayeri 2014, 19).

Murray thought of both race and sex discrimination as comparable classes of discrimination in every way. She argued in a memorandum that “not only are race and sex entirely comparable classes, but there are no others like them. They are large, permanent, unchangeable, natural classes. No other kind of class is susceptible to implications of inferiority” (Murray 1962). It is likely that this understanding of the nature of sex and race discrimination as directly comparable was influenced by her own experiences, especially those at Howard University, where even among an entirely Black student body, she felt a palpable discrimination against her as the only female student. Instead of getting a respite from the discrimination of the outside world while in an environment composed predominantly of people of color, Murray instead felt the “deep, traditional implications which become attached to classes regardless of the actual qualities of the members of the class” (Dabscheck 2019, 566). Despite the fact that she had already earned admission into the same institution as her fellow classmates and performed at the top of the class, her peers were convinced that her ideas were in some way inferior and dismissed them summarily, even ignoring her contributions during class. Noting these apparent parallels between race and sex discrimination, Murray believed that the use of the Fourteenth Amendment would allow the Civil Rights Movement to unite with feminist movements under an argument drawn from the same constitutional claim.

However, just as her belief that the Fourteenth Amendment should be used to overturn racial discrimination was initially met with derisive laughter from her law school classmates, Murray’s idea of using the Fourteenth Amendment to challenge sex discrimination was met with a similar response from white feminists. Leaders of the National Woman’s Party responded to Murray’s suggestion as “utterly hopeless and counterproductive,” a form of “wishful thinking.” Some even believed that Murray’s use of race-sex analogies came out of her “preoccupation...with the Negro problem,” seeing her attempts to attain equality for women as “hitching [the Negro] wagon” to the feminist movement (Dabscheck 1965, 568). Again, a strategy that Murray saw as common sense was looked at with disdain by others. However, it was not by chance that a more

expansive understanding of the Fourteenth Amendment came naturally to Murray. Indeed, for Murray, her identity as a Black woman would never allow her to work solely for the rights of one group or another, and she thus desired to pursue universal human rights. This unwillingness to focus her quest for rights on exclusively women or Black people was undoubtedly born out of her own lived experience as a Black woman who faced discrimination often, but also came from the fact that, generally, she was unable to “determine whether [she] was being discriminated against because of race or sex” (Murray 1962).

Murray did not allow opposition to make her change her view on the Fourteenth Amendment. Rather, she continued to build upon her understanding using race-sex analogies. In 1965, she, along with Mary Eastwood, authored an article for the *George Washington Law Review* entitled “Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII.” In this article, Murray provides a legal analysis involving the Fourteenth Amendment, again arguing that there must be some sort of delineation between the laws that are “genuinely protective of the familial and maternal functions” of women and those that discriminate unjustly against them and their status as individuals (Murray and Eastwood 1965, 242). In Murray’s view, to relegate the entire class of women to an inferior status through law had implications that made it comparable to the separate but equal doctrine, a doctrine that had already been discredited more than ten years earlier. She argued that, by extension, all women were being penalized for their biological function with policies that were originally intended to protect a woman’s life. Instead of protecting the woman, however, these discriminatory policies were now allowing for the domination of “her development as an individual...reinforc[ing] an inferior status by lending governmental prestige to sex distinctions that are carried over into those private discriminations currently beyond the reach of the law” (Murray and Eastwood 1965, 240). With the publishing of this article, Murray and Eastwood had practically established the intellectual foundation upon which sex discrimination could be addressed through the courts.

The time for such an attack came with the 1971 case *Reed v. Reed*. In preparing for the case, which involved a dispute between a separated mother and father over who should be appointed as administrator for their deceased son’s estate, a young Ruth Bader Ginsburg came across Murray and Eastwood’s (1965) article and used it to formulate her brief in 1970. Ginsburg found Murray’s work so useful that she added Murray’s name to the cover page of the brief as one of the five co-authors (Brief for Reed v. Reed 1970). After hearing the case, the Supreme Court found that the preference given to men under the Idaho Probate Code was a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (Mayeri 2011, 17–19). The majority ruling stated, in language that is unmistakably like that used by Murray, “The Equal Protection Clause of [the Fourteenth] Amendment...does...deny to States the power to legislate those different classes on the basis of criteria wholly unrelated to the objectives of that statute. A classification must be reasonable, not arbitrary, and must rest upon some ground of difference having fair and substantial relation to the object of the legislation, so that all persons similarly circumstanced shall be treated alike” (Reed v. Reed 1971, 76). At long last, after years of work by Murray dedicated toward attaining universal equality with a more expansive reading of the Fourteenth Amendment, arbitrary sex discrimination had been outlawed by the Court, which had adopted Murray’s exact reasoning on the Fourteenth Amendment, forever shifting American jurisprudence.

## Conclusion

Pauli Murray lived an intersectional life long before the concept of intersectionality became popular. Her complex identity was the result of her racial background, sexual identity, and gender identity, each falling somewhere in the territory of “in-between”—with Murray feeling not fully Black and yet not fully white, endowed with female anatomy but feeling more male than female, all while wrestling with her attraction to the same sex. It is possible that another individual with the same complex identity would have handled it differently, attempting to fit themselves into a specific identity mold for conformity’s sake. However, Murray did not allow herself to be confined to the constraints of any preexisting mold. Rather, she refused to simply accept her lot of experiencing multifaceted discrimination. Instead, she strove to be recognized as an individual, confident that the constitutional principles of America, if read properly, were sufficient to recognize her individuality. Thus, she committed much of her life to fundamentally shifting the common understanding of these constitutional principles to reflect her more universalist conception that an individual should not be forced to shed or change aspects of their identity in order to be protected by the law. She firmly believed that equality within the law for all, regardless of sex, was “so basic to democracy and its commitment to the ultimate value of the individual that it must be reflected in the fundamental law of the land” (Murray and Eastwood 1965, 246). Focusing on the Fourteenth Amendment, Murray demanded that the Court stop narrowly interpreting it and begin recognizing this basic principle of equality for all individuals, as, according to Murray and Eastwood, “the genius of the American Constitution is its capacity, through judicial interpretation, for growth and adaptation to changing conditions and human values” (1965, 245–47).

Murray resolutely believed that the Fourteenth Amendment was not only directed toward discrimination of a two-class nature, based on differences of Black and white, but rather should be interpreted as protecting against all arbitrary discrimination. Her own intersectional identity firmly convinced her that this was the correct course of action in pursuing universal equality. While there is still a great amount of work to be done in order to fully live up to this expansive understanding of equality and indivisible human rights, Murray has surely pointed the world toward the path that should be followed.

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## **Walking While... : Walkable Communities and the Politics of Urban Neighborhood Governance**

**Mars Quiambao**

### **ABSTRACT**

This article explores walkable communities, with a specific emphasis on the intricate dynamics of urban neighborhood governance. Drawing upon case studies from three diverse urban locales—namely, the predominantly Black Chicago neighborhood of Eastwood, the predominantly Chinese Chicago neighborhood of Bridgeport, and the community occupying People’s Park in Berkeley, California—my research scrutinizes the politics surrounding walkable communities. Central to this analysis is an examination of the role played by urban neighborhood governance in ensuring the safety, accessibility, and equitable distribution of amenities, including public transportation, educational facilities, and healthcare services. In addition, this article delves into the multifaceted effects of policing, spatial inequalities, and urban redevelopment within the context of walkable communities. This examination is anchored in the broader question of whether the concept of walkable communities contributes positively or negatively to the pursuit of social justice within urban housing landscapes. To argue that there are numerous inequities seen in walkable communities, for example, due to wealth, race, and gender, I raise the question: for whom is the city walkable if it distributes uneven spatial citizenship?

Keywords: walkable communities, urban governance, accessibility, right to the city, spatial inequities, hyper-surveillance, hypervigilance, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)

### **Introduction**

According to a research article from *Urban Studies*, walkability is “a set of capacities of any given neighborhood that is embodied in urban morphologies in three main ways—the densities (concentrations) of buildings and people; the mix of different functions and attractions; and the access networks we use to navigate between them” (Dovey and Pafka 2019, 94). On a more informal note, walkability is a way of life. It means different things to different people. To real estate developers, walkability means more amenities are available to prospective homeowners and residents, which results in higher revenue. In the sphere of public health, walkability means more physical activity and lower rates of obesity in a given population. With regard to care for the environment, a walkable community or environment means fewer cars on the road, resulting in fewer carbon emissions. However, for some populations, walkable communities may also represent a way of life that is inaccessible and unsympathetic to and even hostile toward them. To clarify, there are instances in which there is a lack of care and attention given to the distribution of inhabitants’ rights and amenities, thereby targeting and overtly surveilling

marginalized populations that are predominantly lower class, Black and Brown, and/or unhoused.

An instance of such overt violence occurred on February 23, 2020, when a 25-year-old Black man named Ahmaud Arbery went out for a jog and was chased and then killed by three white men in broad daylight. The men claimed they thought Arbery was robbing a property in their neighborhood and thus they had acted in self-defense against him. Nearly one year later, those three men were convicted of murder charges. Arbery's murder came amid a period of reckoning around race and racial justice in the wake of several killings of innocent and unarmed Black Americans (Faussett 2022).

In acknowledgement of Ahmaud Arbery's unjust murder, this article examines walkable communities, emphasizing the politics of neighborhood governance. It examines three case studies located in the predominantly Black Chicago neighborhood of Eastwood, the predominantly Chinese Chicago neighborhood of Bridgeport, and in the community occupying People's Park in Berkeley, California. Moreover, it focuses on the ability of urban neighborhood governance—the processes through which local and municipal governments are organized and delivered in urban areas and the existing relationship between government agencies and its local civil communities—to provide safety and accessibility to residents and equitably distribute adequate amenities (e.g., public transportation, educational facilities, and healthcare facilities). Further, in this article, I expand on the effects of policing, unequal urban geographies, and urban redevelopment and their differential impacts on those who enjoy the rights to walkability in the community. I thus question whether the concept of walkable communities, works for or against social justice in the urban housing landscape. Acknowledging the complexity of its social effects, I assert that walkable communities, although conceived with good intentions, still work to perpetuate social injustice in urban neighborhoods and communities.

I argue that there are numerous inequities (e.g., found across dimensions of wealth, race, and gender, among others) evident in walkable communities, and accordingly raise several questions. First, despite the many amenities they provide, are walkable communities making cities affordable, accessible, and available to everyone? Second, in acknowledgement of Ahmaud Arbery's murder, how can walkable communities provide minorities, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), the fundamental human right to move about their community on public streets and trails without fear and without risk of hyper-surveillance? I assert that walking may seem apolitical, but in actuality, walkability is a deeply politicized issue: walking and having a walkable environment is what creates a community's surrounding culture, and it is affected by factors that contribute to unequal urban geographies. In attempting to develop and create equitable urban spaces, how do we make walkable communities better for everyone living in them?

## Methods

This critical study focuses on the viability of walkability in communities in cities across the United States, and the analysis draws from a comprehensive examination of secondary sources. This secondary qualitative research effort spanned one month and encompassed investigations within library archives and online public databases from March 2022 to April 2022. The research explored anecdotes and extensive analytical studies concerning the attitudes and perceptions surrounding neighborhoods where the concept of Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city" is a contentious issue (as quoted in Purcell 2016). Simply stated, the right to city is, as British geographer David Harvey defines it, is "far more than a right of individual access to the

resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire...a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization" (2016, 158). For this reason, the prevailing concern revolves around access to the walkable city and its associated rights, privileges, and amenities, all of which are profoundly influenced by considerations of race and class. This overarching observation centers on the spatial and hierarchical organization inherent to urban planning and development, which are deeply intertwined with the unique historical backgrounds of each city. Such dynamics highlight the intricate interplay of power and politics, race and class, and, notably, gender. The methodological challenges encountered during this primarily qualitative and analytical research endeavor underscore the limitations of available knowledge and information.

I argue that walkability contributes to the perpetuation of residential inequity, as it is available primarily to individuals of certain classes and racially defined groups. In this sense, walkability contributes to larger areas of scholarship on comparative mobilities, including migration. Here, the act of walking in and of itself assumes a highly personalized and community-specific character. This underscores the need for a nuanced perspective on agency and personal choices, as, critically, a pervasive state of hypervigilance among residents in urban walkable communities is often produced—as many individuals are wary of who is walking in their community. As previously mentioned, walking carries diverse connotations and meanings, reflecting its role as a means of taking up urban space. Within the constraints imposed by the information available, this research extends our understanding of walking but also illuminates the intricate intersections between walking and the cultivation of walkable communities across various sociological dimensions, including gender, race and ethnicity, social class, and power dynamics.

### **Public Parks and Perceptions of Quality of Life**

Parks are public spaces and therefore are a part of the imagined walkable community, if not a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide identity for citizens of any background and are a major factor in the perception of a better quality of life. Geographer Don Mitchell (1995) examines the struggle over public space across three different uses in People's Park, located in Berkeley California: the park as a space of collective action, as a space of control for powerful institutions, and as a space of hierarchical organization in relation to Berkeley's surrounding unhoused population.

Mitchell (1995) details that public parks are important community resources that promote a better quality of life through emphasizing and improving upon physical activity, mental health, social cohesion, and conservation. Despite these benefits, it remains clear that Black and Brown community members, in this case comprising most of the unhoused population in People's Park, are less likely to benefit from these resources in places, due to over-policing in the name of order and supposed cleanliness. Tracing the history of People's Park over time, Mitchell shows that the aggressive policing and removal of local activists, so-called squatters, and mere urban dwellers in this area is particularly alarming because it stands in contrast to the mission of public parks—providing recreational and leisure experiences to everyone and anyone who occupies them.

Mitchell's (1995) work speaks to an unfortunate pattern, one in which people of color have historically been both directly and indirectly excluded from the benefits of public space and hence, the amenities provided by walkable communities. Informally, the concept of a community alludes to a notion of shared space where people can interact and to which people can attach

meaning. In the case of People’s Park, the state (i.e., either the city police or local government officials) removes those deemed by officials as illegitimate in terms of the right to occupy that space. This removal highlights the fact that in the realm of urban governance, development, and aesthetics, people of specific backgrounds—more specifically those who might be Black and Brown, transient, and poor—are not, and will not be, prioritized in their needs and amenities in the imagined perfect walkable community. Such groups are denied the right to live in their own community, which perpetuates social injustice.

In the introduction of *The Right to The City* (2003), Don Mitchell further discusses how People’s Park went from being a space of freedom to a perceived space of depravity. In other words, the mere fact that unhoused people are in the physical space seemingly makes it a space of social and moral deprivation. It is also important to note that the academic administration at the University of Berkeley and the city government of Berkeley entered into a municipal agreement to redevelop People’s Park so as to thwart its “inappropriate” use (Mitchell 2003, 91). The definition of inappropriate use in this context suggests that authoritative figures (i.e., the state) view unhoused individuals as “inappropriate” or “undesirable” users of public spaces, and so local government policy makes efforts to discourage or even criminalize the unhoused. The “right to the city” concept, which Mitchell (2003) explores, advocates for the idea that urban spaces should be inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of their socioeconomic status. By framing the issue in terms of “inappropriate use,” his work critiques the stigmatization of unhoused individuals and condemns the reaction to unhoused people occupying People’s Park, arguing it is antithetical to the purpose of public parks.

In addition, Don Mitchell’s (2003) commentary about the relationship between the unhoused population, the overt regulation and policing of the space, and the physical space of the park itself illustrates the idea of the *dispositif*, a conceptual framework illustrating how specific aspects of urban development, such as transportation, land use, or public spaces, are shaped and governed. The concept of the societal *dispositif*, as developed by French philosopher Michel Foucault (as quoted in Pløger 2008), is particularly relevant when examining the regulation of public spaces, especially in the context of unhoused individuals being prevented from inhabiting them. As Pløger writes,

Foucault always regarded space, from his early writings onwards, as a place for configurations of knowledge, bodies and the shaping of human behaviour, a relation between body, gaze and discipline, all leading to powerful spatializations of specific (societal/situational/social) configurations...[and he] saw space as both rational and separating. On one hand, they [governing bodies] employ space to implement a bio-politic, a “sorting out” through classifications and on the other hand, it is used to separate what is “normal” and “a-normal”, the sick and the healthy, the good and the bad. In this way, urban space becomes important to the administration of city life and to a political “modernizing of power”. The emergent bio-medical episteme becomes an important societal *dispositif* of “sorting out”, dividing and dispersing people rationally in space through a certain coordination and institutionalization of certain schemes of signification (2008, 61).

Under the circumstances described by Mitchell (1995, 2003), the *dispositif* encompasses a complex network of elements all of which are systemically oppressive, including city regulations, municipal policies, law enforcement practices, public opinion, and spatial design, that jointly influence the utilization of public spaces. When unhoused individuals are denied access to spaces such as People’s Park, it underscores the power dynamics at play within this

authoritative system. The regulation of the park, for example, reflects the interests of city authorities, property owners, and local businesses, who seek to maintain a certain image or functionality of these spaces. As a consequence, the deliberate exclusion of unhoused people in People's Park occurs and thus exemplifies the dispositive's ability to define who has the right to occupy and utilize public spaces and how such regulations are enforced. This has, over time, led to the perpetuation of societal norms and hierarchies of spatial access based on housing status, economic privilege, and public aesthetics. Thus, it is crucial to analyze the issue through the lens of Foucault's concept (as quoted in Raffnsøe et al. 2014), as it unveils the interplay of power, knowledge, and spatial configurations in shaping a hostile and exclusionary urban landscape, such as that of People's Park, and shows the shortcomings in terms of accessibility to those who wish to be visible and simply exist within the public space.

### **Walking and Mobility in the Eastwood Neighborhood**

On the same note of people being denied the right to live in their own community, Laurence Ralph's book *Renegade Dreams: Living Through Injury in Gangland Chicago* (2014) contextualizes the effects of disability and high-crime rates among other social forces, that pressure Black urban residents to endure and persevere through the chaotic state of the Chicago neighborhood of Eastwood. Ralph asserts that Eastwood is not just a warzone but a community. However, it is also a place where people's dreams are projected but never fully realized. Eastwood's residents deal with poor urban neighborhood governance, which can be seen in the numbers, as Eastwood has incredibly high rates of unemployment, dilapidated housing, as well as high rates of incarceration and criminal activity, addiction, and so forth.

Taking a unique approach to his field research and urban ethnography, Ralph (2014) examines the social forces behind Eastwood's long-standing plight. Ralph begins by giving an account of the Divine Knights Gang and their everyday interactions in the neighborhood. For children living in Eastwood, walking from place to place means needing to be aware of their space all the time or in other words, being extremely vigilant. That means avoiding certain streets and alleys in order to avoid getting jumped by rival gangs or to avoid law enforcement. But what systems are in place to address this issue? As the rates of policing are high in this predominantly Black and high crime neighborhood, there seems to be no rush from local governance to address and reduce such rates, rather, it is a fact of life. Apart from policing, there is also blatant disregard around addressing the dilapidated housing in Eastwood. Municipal efforts instead focus on housing redevelopment plans for more affluent and wealthy prospective buyers, and not on senior residents or long-standing members in the community and members of the Divine Knights Gang (Ralph 2014). With this in mind, Ralph's *Renegade Dreams* not only points out the negative social forces contributing to Eastwood's demise, but also lets the reader reconsider, in both the physical and metaphysical sense, what can be done for Eastwood inhabitants. How can walking and mobilization around the neighborhood be safe and upward mobility in the Eastwood neighborhood and beyond become possible?

This idea that walking speaks to larger ideas of mobility, as both personal and impersonal, is further examined in Evrick Brown and Timothy Shortell's *Walking in Cities: Quotidian Mobility as Urban Theory, Method, and Practice* (2015). By definition, walking is the right to mobility. Walking and mobility are, more importantly, activities that have been transformed and redefined by urbanization and by the eras and the communities in which they have taken place. As geographer Tim Cresswell states,

The idea of mobility as liberty and freedom would have made little sense in feudal society. In the early modern period, as cities grew, and people were displaced from the land, the practice and ideology of mobility was transformed. New mobile figures began to inhabit the landscapes of Europe. Mobility as a right [was] accompanied by the rise of the figure of the modern *citizen* who was granted the right to move at will within the bounds of the nation-state (quoted in Brown and Shortell 2015, 1; emphasis original).

This quote alludes to the freedoms that were newly founded during the beginnings of urban modernity in Europe, and over time, these have transformed into what people see as mobility, and how people use mobility in the context of urban space and social interaction.

In the context of race, power, and gender, walking is used as a context for intergroup interaction and simultaneously reflects the systemic inequalities that order contemporary intergroup interaction in everyday urban life and communities. For example, walking for elites is a lifestyle choice. Elites do not have to walk but choose to do so for pleasure and for leisure, despite having access to better vehicles or other aspects of material wealth, such as money and chauffeurs. In contrast, for the relatively less powerful and wealthy, and the poor, walking is often born out of necessity. Shortell (Brown and Shortell 2015) asserts that poor and vulnerable citizens have various motives; they are sometimes walking *away* from something, such as to escape from a toxic or non-ideal living situation, and if not, they are walking *toward* something better, such as better work opportunities. Focusing on the power dynamics of walking is therefore important, as walking often makes the relatively powerless more vulnerable, for example in situations that include heightened exposure to street crime for residents of poorer, high-crime neighborhoods. As a result, it becomes the responsibility of the walker to evade dangerous situations, rather than the responsibility of institutions to mitigate or ameliorate the negative social forces and situations in the first place.

### **Gendered and Racialized Walking**

Shanshan Lan, in Brown and Shortell's (2015) book, details her ethnographic field research in which she simultaneously examines walking, narratives about walking, and the accumulation of racial knowledge. Lan's work is powerful as she is both an academic ethnographer and a person who lives alongside of and closely identifies with the affected community in Bridgeport, otherwise known as Chicago's Chinatown. In providing both a formal and informal perspective of walking, Lan shows that walking can be an experience of racialized, gendered, and classed violence and harm. Lan thus poses walking as a highly personal experience that requires special precautions depending on how you appear to the community around you. That said, walking is an embodied experience in which the built environment, and more importantly, the governance surrounding it, are critical to how marginalization and inequity operates and proliferates.

In Bridgeport, this inequity and danger is perpetuated by the power and structure of institutions, as historically racist state policies such as urban renewal and housing segregation persist in other forms. For those reasons, the rapid deterioration of the built environment and interracial-class coalitions are likely to occur and only add to the dangers of urban walking (Lan 2015). For white, Black, and Asian residents, their understandings of the neighborhood, such as the focus on "street etiquette" and "street smarts," are racially coded. The need for such local knowledge only compounds the stress and vigilance that Chinese residents and non-white residents are burdened with, as they must maintain a constant awareness to stay alert and safe and have a strong will to survive in the racialized urban environment. All the while, white

Bridgeport residents and tourists know little about the racial landscape of the community and do not require this type of knowledge or the will to survive and navigate their day-to-day lives. In Lan's closing remarks, using her insights from her ethnographic research, she compares two types of walking: walking as a daily routine that requires diligence and care, and walking as a planned special event. Lan describes the latter as operating through the white touristic gaze, which only objectifies the community's amenities for pleasure and leisure. Lan concludes that these two approaches to walking require different levels of attention and mindfulness. It is additionally unfair to burden residents who are overwhelmingly non-white with the need to be preoccupied with navigating how to survive in their own neighborhood, when it is not just a space that they occupy—it is their home.

Lily Linke's podcast *Foot Notes* delves into the intersection between walkability and race. Linke (2020) focuses on designing a home or the "perfect street for the imagined walkable community," but recognizes it is a luxury not available to all. In an article from *America Walks*, Linke asserts that:

The decision about whether or not to walk somewhere, and if so what route to take, is deeply personal, political, social, and cultural. Where I feel safe and comfortable is an amalgamation of my identity, my lived experiences, and the culture of the place I find myself in. We can design the "perfect" street, but if we don't address the culture that governs that street, walking will continue to be a luxury enjoyed by some, and not the deeply human right it must be, enjoyed by all (2020).

As mentioned earlier, Black Americans, especially Black males, continue to be harassed, assaulted, or murdered while just trying to move through their daily lives. Trayvon Martin was murdered while walking through his own neighborhood (Baldwin 2022). Ahmaud Arbery was murdered while jogging through a neighborhood adjacent to his own. It is this reality that pushed Linke to produce *Foot Notes*, and that pushed me to question how walkable communities and those who advocate for walkability can address the issue of anti-Black violence and overt surveillance of Black people. In this context, it is reasonable to argue that many individuals find that so-called walkable communities are spaces that are unsympathetic and hostile toward them.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Walking is heavily imbricated with factors concerning race, class, and gender and influences the way people perceive themselves. This research has illuminated such topics as the right to the city and asks more specifically: what rights and liberties can citizens fairly expect to benefit from and participate in? My research perspective expands on considerations of the unequal geographies found in Chicago neighborhoods such as Eastwood and Bridgeport, illuminating both the multi-sensorial similarities and differences found in communities of people with different backgrounds—Black and Asian—and the manner in which these respective groups interact with their built environment by walking out of necessity and survival.

From a personal perspective, it would be remiss to not think about the importance of having a walkable campus and how that aspect is integral to the college experience. However, having a walkable community does have implications for the neighboring residents around it. Therefore, it is important to understand the impact of walkable communities, how they exacerbate disparities in wealth, race, and class, and as seen from the findings, how this particularly affects



communities of color. By acknowledging this, we can reimagine the ways walkable communities are seen by either group affected: those who build them and those who inhabit them.

The findings provided in this article show that poor urban neighborhood governance and unequal geographies of infrastructure in cities across the United State have led to cumulative injustices experienced by marginalized populations that are predominantly lower class, Black and Brown, and/or unhoused. In each community mentioned, urban planning initiatives by local and municipal agencies have failed to prioritize safety and accessibility for all residents in favor of social legitimacy and imposed images of city cleanliness, economic incentives, and supposed future prosperity. In the process of attaining such socially desirable goals, the communities I have pointed to here have fallen short of meeting the needs of those who inhabit them. In turn, residents are subjected to further social and emotional pressure, whether that be fear of danger or death.

Moving forward, those in charge of planning walkable communities need to be focused on a direction that calls for both racial and social equity. Researchers and planners must listen to and engage with communities directly. We must also seek to understand how municipal governance and those in positions of power and privilege often contribute to the struggles of those who are relatively powerless and vulnerable, even when those in power never intend for this to happen. Finally, the imagined walkable community must have coalitions of people from all backgrounds and consider identities beyond those related to race, class, and gender, such as ability, age, and so forth. To achieve the goal in mind, we must acknowledge that for safe walkable communities to exist, we must eliminate the fear that such marginalized populations as those studied here have been experiencing all their lives.

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## **Interrogating the “Ivorian Miracle”: From Independence Success to Civil Wars**

**Yaya Bakayoko**

### **ABSTRACT**

Post-colonial Côte d’Ivoire represents the story of an economically prosperous nation succumbing to the negative effects of economic globalization led by the IMF’s structural adjustment reforms. Internal divisions over ethnic tensions fueled by the politicization of citizenship and belonging added to this trajectory. From the “Ivorian miracle,” an autonomous agricultural economy led by small cocoa farmers, to the country’s involvement with the IMF and the push for economic and political liberalization, the post-colonial history of Cote D’Ivoire has included major episodes of turbulence. The introduction of the concept of Ivoirité—a nativist ideology aimed at classifying between native Ivorians and Ivorians with immigrant ancestry with regard to citizenship status and political participation—would cause ethnic and regional tensions in the country to boil over. Françafrique and other myriad forms of neocolonialist politics that ensure the maintenance of French influence in West Africa also undermined the economic development of the Ivorian state. This article focuses on the involvement of international institutions in the post-colonial journey of the Ivorian state, analyzing the discourse of democracy in the African continent, in a state where the fluidity of citizenship and ethnicity has always created tensions and civil wars.

Keywords: Ivorian civil war, CFA franc, structural adjustment plan, neocolonialism, Ivorian miracle

### **Introduction**

As an ex-economic hub of French colonial West Africa, post-independence Côte d’Ivoire represents the paradigm of a brilliant post-colonial model of economic success and development that has fallen into a civil war fueled by ethnic division and flawed economic measures. Once described as the model of development for newly independent states in Africa, Côte D’Ivoire’s post-independence history reveals the difficulty faced by new independent states in maintaining economic success and development in a globalized world (Klass 2008). After a decade marked by growing tensions in most African countries in the 1950s, Côte D’Ivoire, like many others in West Africa, gained independence in 1960. With a new air of freedom and a proclaimed desire to catch up to the rest of the world, these newly independent African states wanted to develop and economically flourish like their ex-colonizers.

With no political experience, most African countries in the immediate post-independence period struggled for economic autonomy. Côte d’Ivoire made an exception to this trend, as the country flourished economically in its immediate post-independence period. The “Ivorian miracle,” as it is known, was the country’s economic boom from the 1960s to 1980. Led by a

strong agricultural sector, the country's economy flourished through the production and exportation of cocoa, coffee, and timber. Production and exportation of internationally high-demand cocoa led the country to be economically prosperous, which in turn led it to be presented as the agricultural and economic development model for new independent states in the region. However, after the world economic crisis in the 1970s that severely hit most African countries, Côte d'Ivoire didn't escape the growing involvement of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its financial management. The IMF got involved in Côte D'Ivoire to restore the country's economy and help fight the early economic crisis. The country agreed to its first structural adjustment plan with the World Bank and IMF in 1980 (Custers 2006), which resulted in the consequence of a critical drop in the price of its main agricultural resources, notably cocoa. These new economic reforms, originally meant for a brief period, instead became a long-term part of the Ivorian economy. The structural adjustment plan came with requirements for numerous reforms. As a result, the Ivorian regime, like most African countries indebted to these world economic institutions, faced major pressure to fully democratize and allow multipartyism in the early 1990s. Before multipartyism, Côte D'Ivoire was led by a single party, the PDCI (Democratic Party of Cote D'Ivoire), the stable regime of the country's first president, Félix Houphouët Boigny. The shift to multipartyism and a "democratic" system would become a factor in destabilizing the fragile tribal, ethnic, and religious cohesion in the country. This article analyzes the downward post-independence journey of the Ivorian state: from its economic miracle, led by the mass production and exportation of cocoa, to its experience with IMF's structural adjustment plans and its relationship with former colonial power, France, to the politics leading to its first coup d'état in 1999.

The sudden death of President Houphouët Boigny in 1993, combined with the structural adjustment plan and the disappearance of stable single party rule, created instability at all levels in the country. Structural adjustment plans decreased subsidies and public spending, heightening tensions among the population due to increasing costs and deteriorating services. After Houphouët Boigny's death, a declining economy and ethnic division fueled by new politics of exclusion led to the country's first coup d'état in 1999. Houphouët Boigny's successor, Henry Konan Bedié, was central to fomenting this regional and economic politics of exclusion; the coup that eventually resulted from increased tensions marked the definitive halt of development and the beginning of a long period of instability in the country.

### **The Ivorian Miracle: A Model of Development for New Independent States**

The 1950s marked the last fights for independence among African countries. Commonly referred to as the year of Africa, 1960 brought the acquisition of independence for many African countries. Côte D'Ivoire gained its independence from France on August 7, 1960 and began its development journey of catching up to the rest of the world. While the immediate post-colonial era was very difficult for most newly independent African states, all of which aimed to get their economy going, Côte D'Ivoire surprisingly flourished economically. The country entered a period known as the Ivorian miracle, in which its economy was one of the fastest growing in the world. This sudden economic growth was led by a government supported agricultural sector. Cocoa and coffee, the traditional Ivorian crops, became a source of pride for the country as their production and exportation led to the significant growth of wealth.

Between 1960 and 1979, Côte D'Ivoire registered an average growth rate of 7.3 percent compared to neighboring newly independent states like Senegal, with a rate of 2.5 percent, Sierra Leone, with 1.6 percent, and Ghana, with 0.1 percent (Hecht 1983, 25). This Ivorian economic

growth was export led and heavily relied on cocoa and coffee, and it was government policies that encouraged agriculture and accessible cheap labor that facilitated such export-led growth. Smallholder farming became an integral part of the Ivorian economy, as thousands of peasants contributed to agricultural production and economic growth. The government used a set of policies to encourage the expansion of cocoa and coffee production; starting in 1965, for example, the government rewarded farmers with cash bonuses for planting new areas devoted to selected high-yield varieties of cocoa. This measure led to a spectacular increase in cocoa production. In Divo, a traditional cocoa-growing region, for example, 10,450 hectares (amounting to 15 percent of the total area under cocoa production) were planted between 1972 and 1980 under this bonus system (Hecht 1983, 32). It is important to note that this agricultural economic system was financed domestically and did not benefit from monetary assistance from any major international monetary institutions. During this period and prior to structural adjustment measures, the Ivorian government enjoyed full autonomy over how it managed financing and export production in the cocoa industry. In terms of development, the country redistributed the cocoa exportation surplus to other economic sectors and provided subsidies and other public welfare supports. Due to the self-reliance achieved by the Ivorian economy during this period, many international economic and development organizations presented the Ivorian economic strategy as the model for newly independent African states.

### **The Liberalization of the Ivorian Cocoa Industry: An Inadequate Economic System for a Newly Independent State**

Structural adjustment plans are a set of economic reforms to which a country must adhere to get a loan from the World Bank or IMF. Such structural adjustment reforms often set conditions, such as massive cuts to public sector employment, reductions in government public spending and subsidies, increased privatization, and a deregulation of the market (Mkandawire and Soludo 1999; Black 2001). These conditions have often been criticized because of their severe impacts on the public sector. The concept of the structural adjustment plan emerged during a particular point in the World Bank's "Debt and Adjustment Period"; these reforms were popularized in the 1980s as more and more countries from the Global South took loans from the World Bank and IMF to mitigate the global recession and national economic crises (Goldman 2005).

Côte D'Ivoire's first experience with structural adjustment plans came in early 1981, with the massive downturn in cocoa prices in the international market. As a result of the global crisis, the period of economic growth known as the Ivorian miracle came to a full stop by the early 1980s. The Ivorian government went to the IMF for aid in redressing its economy and limiting the impact of the crisis, and the structural adjustment plans imposed on the country would then weaken its economic and political autonomy in multiple ways. The reforms began with large scale privatization, and the cocoa sector was notably affected; since it was composed of smallholder farmers, privatization reforms opened up the export market to multinational corporations. This resulted in unequal market power as small farmers were made to compete with these stronger private corporations (Custers 2006). The state-owned *La Caisse de Stabilization*, a government entity that ensured the regularization of cocoa prices for small farmers, was dismantled due to the liberalization of the market. With virtually no government subsidies, no help in protecting them against private multinational companies, and a volatile international market price, small farmers in the cocoa industry that had once led the country to an economic boom were abandoned. Due to the new economic policies, a small group of multinationals now controlled and set the international cocoa price; the income of both the

Ivorian government and small farmers was drastically decreased as a result. It is estimated that when Côte D'Ivoire engaged with its second structural adjustment plan between 1999 and 2000, the revenue of small farmers in the cocoa industry was cut in half compared to previous years (Custers 2006). Pressure from the IMF and other international financial organizations to liberalize the cocoa market in the 1980s rendered the economy of multiple African nations fragile, notably that of Côte D'Ivoire and Ghana, which had been the African continent's main producers of cocoa. Liberalization and privatization of the cocoa industry hence exacerbated the Ivorian economic crisis rather than attenuating it, and inevitably delivered a bankrupt and needy Ivorian government into the hands of the IMF (Amanor 2020). The state moved from regularizing the cocoa industry, which had enabled the reinvestment of economic surplus from cocoa exports and facilitated the provision of subsidies, to pushing the liberalization of the industry. As a result, the conditions imposed by the IMF weakened the Ivorian economy's autonomy and exposed small cocoa farmers to the greed of stronger and more powerful private multinational cocoa export companies. The replacement of state agencies with private agents and companies with greater market power widened the gap between the farmgate price and the exported cocoa price. These reforms thus weakened the government's power over its own cocoa exportation, as multinationals became the controllers of the country's cocoa export industry (Wilcox and Abbott 2004). Like with many developing nations, the IMF's structural adjustment plans considerably altered the path to an autonomous economy for the Ivorian state, as it was now under the control of the international financial institution and its policies.

### **Neocolonialism and the Push for Multipartism**

The volatility of the international market price of cocoa and the liberalization of the industry were factors that led to the decline of the Ivorian miracle. However, international pressure from former colonial power France and the IMF to adhere to political liberalization, namely multipartism, would become serious additional factors in making the Ivorian state economically and politically vulnerable. After independence, many African states enjoyed single party rule, as leaders of earlier independence movements became leaders of the new free states and stayed in power for multiple decades. As discussed earlier, Ivorian independence movement leader Houphouët Boigny was installed as president of the Republic in 1960. As a plantation owner and part of the small farmer community that had once revolutionized the country's cocoa production, Houphouët Boigny stably ruled the country, leading a single party, PDCI, for three decades. With twenty years of economic prosperity in the country's immediate post-independence period, Houphouët Boigny's rule, although not democratic, was characterized by stability and prosperity. As part of its structural adjustment plan, the IMF required some political reforms, and in the late 1980s, the institution pressured all African states it had become involved with through loans to move toward political liberation and full democratization. By the early 1990s, a movement for multipartism vibrated across all sub-Saharan African states—the pressures from international powers were increasing and new political minds were emerging. Still recovering from the worldwide recession and its recent economic crisis, the Ivorian government accepted multipartism under this pressure. Multipartism in Côte D'Ivoire would render its stability fragile, as political parties gained partisan support through divisive ethnic and religious propaganda. This forced introduction to multipartism, designed to democratize the country, was in practice superficial, and a facade used by Houphouët Boigny and his government to alleviate the pressure from the IMF and other international powers.

Houphouët Boigny died in 1994 while still in power. This tragic event was seen as an opportunity for multiple political party leaders to fight for the presidency through calls for early and immediate elections. In a country so ethnically diverse as Côte D'Ivoire (with more than sixty different ethnic groups), the newly formed political parties rallied support through appeals to ethnicity and regionalism rather than political reforms, and thus over time played a role in destabilizing the political climate of the country (Klass 2008). The liberalization of the Ivorian political sphere and the cocoa industry through structural adjustment hence undermined the political and economic autonomy of the country, and over time served to undermine its stability.

### **The CFA Franc and France: Neocolonial Involvement in West Africa**

Although it gained independence in 1960, Côte D'Ivoire's post-colonial politics and economy were largely influenced by both the reforms of the IMF and the involvement of former colonial power, France. I contend that the neocolonialism of French economic involvement and the intervention of Western financial institutions in newly independent West African states prevented the full and gradual economic and political development of these states. The politics of *Françafrique*, an institutional system privileging French companies and firms as primary exporters and investors in sub-Saharan francophone African economies, has guaranteed the maintenance of strong French political and economic ties in Africa. Simultaneously, the politics of *Françafrique* prevent the full liberation of former French colonies, limiting their development and accession to full economic autonomy and expansion into other markets worldwide.

The CFA Franc (*Communauté Financière Africaine*) is the currency of two economic zones, the *Communauté de L'Afrique Central* (CEEAC) and the *Union Economique et Monétaires Ouest-Africaine* (UEMOA); the two economic zones are composed of fourteen countries, including Côte D'Ivoire, all of which are former French colonies except Guinea-Bissau. The CFA Franc is printed by the Bank of France and the external convertibility of the currency is guaranteed and determined by the French treasury (Taylor 2019). This means that the CFA Franc currency is French property as it is owned by the French national treasury, thus enabling Paris to decide its value. The French control over the economic fortunes of francophone West African countries has been enmeshed with and part of the Bretton Woods process, which aimed to promote export and open the African economy to the global market. In 1994, in accordance with the IMF, Paris devalued the CFA Franc from 0.002 per French Franc to 0.001 per French Franc. This devaluation was done without the agreement or consultation of Côte D'Ivoire or any members of the CFA economic zone (Taylor 2019).

Through this economic attachment, France undermines the full financial development of these countries. The total absence of autonomous national economic policies in Côte D'Ivoire and members of the CFA zones is a direct consequence of France's role in manufacturing and controlling the value of the CFA Franc. A country's currency and economy are pillars of its development; with an operating mechanism that ensures Paris has leverage over members of the CFA Franc zones, the CFA Franc is an instrument limiting the development of West African countries, while maintaining France's political and economic influence in the continent.

### **The Concept of Ivoirité: A Politics of Exclusion Causing a Civil War**

Numerous examples show how civil wars have destroyed the development of some sub-Saharan African states, with Liberia and Sierra Leone being the most prominent examples in West Africa. Apart from the innocent lives they take, armed conflicts can economically cripple nations for

decades; revival from conflicts is often a very slow process, and it is sometimes impossible to recover. The political instability leading to the first Ivorian coup d'état in 1999 and the civil war of 2002 had numerous ingredients: a failed economy, a fragile political scene caused by international actors imposing reforms, and a politics of exclusion based on ethnic differences. The glorious economic period known as the Ivorian miracle had enabled Houphouët Boigny, the country's first president, to unify the nation through the provision of public jobs and subsidies to all citizens, regardless of ethnic or religious differences. During this prosperous era, Côte D'Ivoire welcomed a lot of immigrants, especially those from neighboring Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, which provided cheap labor for the cocoa and coffee industry. As mentioned earlier, the global crisis in the mid 1970s hit the Ivorian economy hard because of the country's heavy reliance on cocoa and coffee exportation. With the mid 1980s marking the first economic crisis since independence for the Ivorian economy, tensions rose in the country, and those neighbors and immigrants welcomed earlier were now seen as burdens.

The death of President Houphouët Boigny opened up long existing ethnic and regional tensions. Upon his death, a clear regional division was created between those of the North and the South. The North—which is primarily made up of a mix of the Malinke ethnic groups, Muslims, and immigrants from the neighboring countries of Mali and Burkina Faso—was highly marginalized by Henry Konan Bedié, Houphouët Boigny's successor. As Bedié led the transitional period after Houphouët Boigny's death and prepared for the next election, he introduced policies to exclude numerous candidates from the country's northern regions. Bedié introduced the concept of *Ivoirité*: a politicization of citizenship status, aimed at classifying between indigenous Ivoirians and Ivorians with immigrant ancestry. This concept, which was codified into the electoral law, meant that presidential candidates had to have two native Ivorian parents (Bah 2010). This political move was intended to stop Alassane Ouattara, a popular northern political leader who may have had partial ancestry from neighboring Burkina Faso, from participating in the election. Unsurprisingly, this law not only furthered the stigmatization of northerners as immigrants, but it also accused them of being the source of the country's declining economy (Klass 2008).

Stemming from this growing tension between the North and the South—created by the politics of exclusion led by Bedié—the army, led by General Robert Guéi, ousted President Bedié in a coup d'état in 1999. Under international pressure led by France and French multinational export companies that controlled most of the country's cocoa exportation, General Guéi held the country's first election with the law of *Ivoirité* still in place. The election blatantly favored General Guéi and was criticized by the international community as it was seen as a way for the military to retain power. Facing severe international threats of economic embargo, General Guéi eventually decided to leave the presidential office to election runner-up Laurent Gbagbo. With Laurent Gbagbo as the president and the concept of *Ivoirité* still in place under the law, the North continued to feel marginalized. With massive support from locals, a rebel group formed by traditional hunters called Dozos in the North gained control of the northern part of the country. By 2002, Côte D'Ivoire had become a divided country, with the South governed by the government of Laurent Gbagbo and the North by the rebels. What had started with a policy of exclusion targeting the rise of northerner political leaders turned into an armed conflict that divided the country in two, definitively stopping the country's hope of reviving its past economic glory. Although the economic crisis had led to tensions between different ethnic groups that boiled over, Bedié's concept of *Ivoirité* and his politics of exclusion aimed at immigrants,



accusing northerners of being responsible for the destruction of the Ivorian miracle, were the ultimate factors that led to the country's first civil war.

The first Ivorian civil war started in 2002 and would last about half a decade, costing thousands of human lives and destroying the nation's development. Under tremendous international pressure, the government of Laurent Gbagbo would organize a presidential election in 2010, in which all major political leaders of the country, including Alassane Ouattara, would be given a chance to participate. At the end of the 2010 presidential election, Alassane Ouattara, the political leader once banned because of suspicion that he had foreign ancestry, emerged victorious. Alassane Ouattara's victory would be highly contested, with his opponent, President Gbagbo, refusing to accept the results and leave the presidency. The post-election period in 2010 again brought Côte D'Ivoire to a time of violence, with another civil war fueled by politicians playing with the fragile ethnic, regional, and religious tensions between the north and the south of the country.

## Conclusion

Moving from an economic miracle to economic collapse and political disaster, Côte D'Ivoire has undergone a tormented history, yet one common to post-colonial African states. From its independence to the present moment, the country has been subject to multiple external influences that have not always been beneficial for its stability. Before its association with the IMF, the country enjoyed some political and economic autonomy that created a period of economic boom shortly after its independence. I have shown here that although internal politics played a role, the path of the Ivorian state has been largely determined by external influences. Economically, the IMF structural adjustment plans stripped the country of its autonomy. The liberalization of the cocoa industry in favor of private multinationals destroyed small farmers' cocoa production and exportation. The massive cutting of government expenditures and subsidies imposed as part of the structural adjustment reform caused youth employment to die out, leading to the rise of nativism and an acute dislike of immigrants.

Still part of the external influences dictating the Ivorian post-colonial path, France has been continuously involved in the country's politics and economy, undermining its autonomy and preventing its full development. The CFA Franc has been a tool of neocolonialism, well used by Paris to maintain greater political and economic influence in the Ivorian state and other former French colonies in Africa. Internally, certain politics have threatened the nation's stability. Henry Konan Bedié's concept of *Ivoirité* has been influential in dividing the country—added to a struggling economy, these circumstances have favored the outbreak of a civil war. The revival of the Ivorian economy with current president Alassane Ouattara highly depends on the strength of the country's reconciliation process. The South and the North, the Christians and the Muslims, and all the different ethnic groups must become one for Côte D'Ivoire to fully regain its prosperity and achieve lasting economic autonomy.

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## **Promoting Human Dignity Through Ecological Justice: A Review of *Unbowed* by Wangari Maathai**

**Lwazi Bululu**

Published in 2006, Wangari Maathai's memoir, *Unbowed*, is a stirring chronicle of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate's journey from scholar, to environmentalist, to politician. But the book's triumph lies not in its detailing of the origins and impact of the Green Belt Movement, which has planted over 51 million trees in Kenya (Green Belt Movement 2024). At the heart of Maathai's own story is her embodiment and promotion of dignity.

The first part of Maathai's (2006) memoir details her youth and cultivation at home and at school. For Maathai, "how you translate the life you see, feel, smell, and touch as you grow up...[determines] what you become" (52). Maathai recalls her upbringing in Ithithe near Nyeri town in the central highlands of Kenya. Looking back at that stage in her life, she recounts how she developed a deep connection to nature while running errands—fetching water, collecting firewood, etc.—for her mother. She notes how observations as well as cultural and spiritual practices unconsciously preserved biodiversity. The world was alive, and people understood themselves to have an intimate and interdependent relationship with the environment. Fig trees, sacred to her Kikuyu people, she would later learn, have root systems that are critical to bringing out the groundwater from deep in the belly of the earth (46).

Maathai loved her formal education, and she would admit that it changed her life. She proudly asserts, "When I finally learned to read and write, I never stopped, because I could read, I could write, and I could rub [use an eraser]!" (41). From Ithithe Primary School, she would go on to St. Cecilia's Secondary, then Loreto's Girls' High School, just outside of Nairobi, and eventually to the United States for university, finally completing her doctoral studies in Germany and at the University of Nairobi. Maathai demonstrated a love of academia rooted in the idea of knowledge and its power. The joy one gets from absorbing knowledge, the power one attains from creating it, and the liberatory feeling of realizing that that joy and power allow you to change the world all shine through in the memoir.

Unfortunately, many children on the continent, especially young girls, do not have the opportunity to experience this. The gender education gap on the continent seems intractable, because many see education through an economic calculus. What is the value of sending a girl to school when it is so expensive and there is so much to do at home? Given the harsh economic realities many face, this is understandable. But education, as Maathai inspires us to see, is about much more. At its core, education is a "substantive freedom" or intrinsic aspect of one's being, the fulfilment of which is not just an instrument for income generation but rather the realization of a life one can value and treasure (Sen 1999, 87–89). Education is the making of who you want to be.

Maathai returned in 1966 to an independent and reinvigorated Africa. But, in her work, she saw the suffering of women. She saw a continent different from the one she had left. As part of her research at her posting at the University of Nairobi, she would do field research in rural areas of Kenya. There, she writes, she saw soil erosion, cows so skinny their ribs were visible, undernourished people, and plantation trees as cash crops (2006, 121). And when she spoke to

these impoverished rural women in her capacity as a member of the National Council of Women in Kenya (NCWK) and they spoke of water, food, and energy, she knew their plight was tied to the environment (122). Immediately she recognized a potential solution: trees. And thus the Green Belt Movement was born. Maathai had not only the perspicacity to see the interconnectedness of all the issues, but also the boldness to do something about it.

Maathai noticed a change in human relations in production, consumption, being, and knowing. Maathai's work was about challenging this ontological dualism that cleaved relations (and created subordination) in multiple realms: mind and body; nature and society; man and woman (Merchant 1983, 143–44). Maathai came face to face with the first of these categories when she was met with confusion (and slight derision) from foresters in Kenya who couldn't understand why she was teaching rural women to plant trees. They said, “You need people with diplomas to plant trees”—a laughable statement (Maathai 2006, 135). Her rebuttal, that these women were “foresters without diplomas,” demonstrates a challenge to ubiquitous normative assumptions about professionalization and knowledge—who has it, how is it conferred, and what is it knowledge of? Women are carers and physical labourers, and thus, it was assumed, they should know nothing about environmental science. However, this view neglects that women have long been bearers of cultural knowledge about the environment in African societies.

Further still, in addressing the rift between nature and society, Maathai saw the intimate connection between the two. Modern development and epistemology see society as separate from nature, thereby justifying its exploitation. Forests have been cut down in Kenya to pave the way for cash crop plantations, leading to soil erosion. In the past, women used these forests to gather firewood to cook; the roots of these forests bound the soil together, yielding good crops and fresh water. Now, women cook processed foods that take less energy to cook but have less nutritional value (121). Processes of colonialism and now global capitalism have cheapened nature and left the people who belong and live in reciprocal relation to the land vulnerable.

In fact, what makes the situation more precarious for rural women on the continent and worldwide is that they can find no room for themselves in the formal economy, which sees their homes and backyards as “frontiers” to plunder (Moore and Patel 2017, 18–19). Maathai's holistic approach to eradicating poverty and women's inequality saw the issues within bad governance, environmental degradation, and a predatory global economic system (2006, 277). Ways of life rooted on the land are often viewed as unproductive; thus, they fall foul of the ever-increasing demands of an economic system that needs more raw inputs. A great success of the Green Belt Movement is that as small as the sum was that the women who worked for Maathai received, it gave (rural) women a stream of income they could not find in the formal economy (137). And the long-term substantive change to tree planting would restore their ability to live off the land, restoring their dignity.

Besides contributing to livelihoods, the initiatives of the Green Belt Movement also worked toward building the consciousness of people and the realization of democracy in Kenya. Development of human capabilities, especially in authoritarian regimes, is tied to political consciousness. Steve Biko posed the question: “How can people be prepared to put up a resistance against their overall oppression if in their individual situations they cannot insist on the observance of their manhood?” (Biko and Ndebele 2017, 83). Reflecting on her work, not only in the Green Belt Movement but also in the fight for political freedom in Kenya, Maathai notes that people stopped waiting and started to do things that constituted changes to take “personal responsibility for improving their quality of life” (2006, 174). Kenyans made their voices heard to stop the development of the Times Media Trust Complex in 1989, which would

have decimated the luscious green space of Uhuru Park in central Nairobi (185). The same was true for the pro-democracy Saba Saba (Kiswahili for 7/7) demonstrations in 1990 (207). Maathai's work and image of a better future for Kenyans planted the seeds for profound thought and committed action, leading to a greening of the democratic state and people's self-image as Kenyans.

Overcoming the seemingly insurmountable challenges of life stirs inspiration. It would be easy to walk away from *Unbowed* feeling like Maathai's was a life in which she soared above everything—her personal and deep struggles over the loss of her marriage; her fight for nature; her push for democracy. Yet, the book is about being rooted. Rooted in the traces that history, culture, home, and community leave you. The silent power of trees is that through digging deep in the earth, they fight gravity and dare to pierce the sky. Maathai teaches us that to be rooted is to change the world.

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**Reunification Motivated by Emotion: A Review of *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery*  
by Heather A. Williams**

**Kevin Parris**

In her book *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery*, historian Heather A. Williams explores the emotional experiences and perspectives of African Americans who were forcibly separated due to slavery. Her exploration contrasts with earlier scholarship that focused primarily on the structural aspects of enslaved families, addressing a gap in the research by examining the human experience of families. Details of this human experience are derived from over 1,200 “information wanted” and “lost friends” advertisements that began to appear in Black newspapers as early as the Civil War. Her analysis of these sources reveals a broad spectrum of family relationships between Black people, both free and enslaved, developed under slavery in the American South. *Help Me to Find My People* reveals how Black interpersonal relationships motivated family “reunification” methods and people’s resistance toward white supremacy following emancipation.

Williams’s work extends the discussion of African American trauma caused by separation, answering the calls of Black feminist scholars like Nell Irvin Painter (2007) for a more nuanced portrayal of Black people’s emotional lives during enslavement. Williams builds on this scholarly tradition by illuminating the spectrum of emotional responses to separation. For example, Delia Garlic, a freedwoman, emotionally described the separation of siblings, stating, “Of course they cry; you think they did not cry when they were sold like cattle?” (Williams 2012, 34). In this manner, Williams challenges the ideas propagated by historians who asserted that enslaved and freed individuals had limited emotional capacities (Elkins 1976). She argues that African Americans’ emotional capacity was not only present but a primary factor in shaping their decisions and resistance to enslavement. Williams’s thesis is clear from the opening: “This is a book about emotions” (2012, 13). Her book enriches the history of Black families by drawing from a wealth of primary and secondary sources that date back to the Antebellum era, such as Works Project Administration interviews, Black-led newspapers in the North, and newspapers of the South, post-emancipation. In delivering a fresh interpretation of a thoroughly researched period of history, Williams progresses the field of Black family history toward emphasizing the emotional core within the historical narrative.

*Help Me to Find My People* is divided into three parts: Separation, The Search, and Reunification. In “Separation,” Williams considers the viewpoints of children, adult spouses, and white individuals who witnessed or were responsible for separations. For instance, when exploring the experiences of children who endured separation from their families, Williams relies on the recollections of former enslaved individuals, with an awareness of the complexity of the time gap between emancipation and the interviewees’ childhood. “The Search” delves deeply into the stories of family members who embarked on often challenging journeys to locate their lost loved ones, using a combination of personal accounts, oral histories, letters, and other primary sources to convey the emotional and logistical hurdles they faced. Finally,

“Reunification” examines the complex experiences of individuals and families who finally managed to reunite after many years had passed. It delves into the emotional, psychological, and practical challenges people encounter upon reuniting with their loved ones. By skillfully weaving these perspectives together in a narrative, Williams challenges historical narratives that suggested that African Americans lacked emotional depth and complexity.

She also supports her argument by pulling from opposing arguments and counternarratives to help establish the credibility of her sources. For instance, she addresses John Blassingame’s (1979) criticism that white views and influence distorted enslaved people’s narratives and interviews. Blassingame expressed reservations about interviews with white witnesses, as he was concerned that their use might “lead almost inevitably to a simplistic and distorted view of the plantation as a paternalistic institution where the chief feature of life was mutual love and respect between masters and slaves” (1975, 490). While Williams acknowledges Blassingame’s critiques, she argues that these interviews can still serve as valuable sources when recontextualized with an awareness of potential white bias. By combining the testimonies of African American enslaved people and white witnesses, she creates a compelling picture of what truly happened.

In addition to deconstructing the counter-narrative that African Americans lacked emotional capacity using stories of separation and reunification, Williams also analyzes the emotional capacity of white Americans in Antebellum history and their role in facilitating and responding to separations. Williams strategically uses letters and addresses from enslavers who held positions of immense power, including notable figures such as US President Thomas Jefferson and Judge George Walton. One letter by Thomas Jefferson expressed that enslaved people were incapable of feeling, justifying their exploitation. He “acknowledged the potential finality of separation,” demonstrating that the sale of enslaved people was sometimes intended to “simulate death” (quoted in Williams 2012, 121). In contrast, Judge Walton’s letter in 1792 emphasized the interconnectedness of enslaved families and communities. Walton suggested manipulating their emotional connections to produce harder-working servants and children, stating “left together they promise prosperity: but to separate them, they would be trifling” (quoted in Williams 2012, 98). These examples demonstrate that white enslaver ideologies, while not monolithic, tended to lead to the same goal of monetary gain through Black subjugation, as enslavers would even use separation’s emotional impact to their advantage.

Williams’s interpretation of slavery in the pre-Civil War and post-emancipation South illustrates how emotions significantly shaped African American families and marriage history, further fueling people’s resistance to separation and fight to end slavery. Williams argues that marriage was a form of resistance to enslavement, serving as an expression of love and an antidote to emotional pain and loneliness. She mentions the interpretations of enslaved people, such as Francis Fedric, who saw marriage as a resistance for Black men, as they lacked power in their relationships with the external world. However, some emotions fueled apprehension toward marriage, as some feared that an emotional connection would impair their decisions around achieving freedom. For instance, Williams discusses how Henry Bibb, a formerly enslaved person, expressed that marriage would make him settle into slavery rather than challenge the institution. Despite this, emotional connections fueled enslaved people’s escape from their enslavers. These emotional connections are shown in primary sources such as runaway ads, which were posted in locations where enslavers anticipated that escaped runaways would travel to see their lost loved ones.

A critique of Williams's thesis is that it can be interpreted as noncontemporary. Williams argues against perspectives that analyze this period purely through theory and that fail to incorporate enslaved people's emotional narratives, such as Stanley M. Elkins's 1976 book *A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. However, most modern historians (see Hunter 2019), acknowledge African American emotional capacity in their interpretations and have disproved most of Elkins's conclusions. Williams could have attempted to make more explicit connections between her historical research and contemporary conversations related to marriage and family, which could have increased the book's significance in today's historiography.

Williams's research inspires future conversations on African American history, to consider the emotional context of the past, how it may influence or be absent from sources, and how it can be used to create a clearer picture. She has also revealed that interpreting the emotional suffering caused by slavery requires inspecting white emotional capacity, which can open up new examinations of white America's role in the perpetuation of slavery as well as the emotional suppression necessarily involved in the subjugation of others. Williams's work has the potential to inspire readers to delve deeper into African American diaspora studies. It provides a unique lens through which to connect with the human dimension of this historical tragedy. Moreover, *Help Me to Find My People* can inspire future research on the emotional and psychological legacies of slavery.

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