Historicising the Continental–Diasporic Nexus: Du Bois and the (R)Evolution of Pan-Africanism

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Abstract

This paper historicizes W.E.B. Du Bois' evolving conceptualization of Pan-Africanism and examines its enduring influence on the continental–diasporic nexus in African unity. As co-organizer and theorist of Pan-African Congresses in the twentieth century, he alternated between visions rooted in Africa's territorial boundaries and those extending across the global diaspora. Close readings of his writings over the years reveal a persistent tension between racialized unity grounded in descent and a broader solidarity shaped by shared histories of slavery, colonialism, and racial oppression. The paper argues that while continental Pan-Africanism projects a people-centred unity within Africa, its diasporic counterpart risks reproducing essentialist limits that constrain its emancipatory potential. At the current historical conjuncture—marked by deepening inequalities and imperialist wars—Pan-Africanism must be reimagined as an internationalist solidarity of the oppressed, transcending racial and geographic confines across the Global South and Global North. By revisiting Du Bois' shifting positions, the paper contributes to contemporary debates on redefining and rejuvenating Pan-Africanism as a living ideology of resistance and liberation in the twenty-first century. In doing so, it speaks to the call to reimagine Pan-Africanism in light of unfinished liberation struggles, contemporary inequalities, and the urgent need for inclusive emancipatory thought and practice.

"But the physical bond is least and the badge of color relatively unimportant save as a badge; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas. It is this unity that draws me to Africa."

(W.E.B. Du Bois (2007a: 59) in 1940)

"All the former barriers of language, culture, religion and political control should bow before the essential unity of race and descent, the common suffering of slavery and the slave trade and the modern color bar."

(W.E.B. Du Bois (2007b: 188) in 1957)

Introduction

Pan-Africanism is both an idea and a movement. The two, however, have shaped each other. In their varying articulations, they have generated various versions of Pan-Africa. W.E.B. Du Bois encapsulates the consistencies and contradictions contained in this grand vision of African unity.

Having taken on the mantle of the father of Pan-Africanism from Henry Sylvester-Williams of Trinidad, who convened the Pan-African Conference of 1900, Du Bois organized a series of five Pan-African Congresses in the first half of the 20th century. Both as an organizer and theorizer, he became one of the leading authorities on this movement and its associated idea and vision.

It is against this background Du Bois' Pan-Africanism in its varying versions across his long

span of life – 95 years – has been embraced across the continental and diasporic divide. The former locates Pan-Africa within the geographic boundaries of Africa whilst the latter locates it across the global space. While both are inclusive of Africans as far the prefix 'pan' is concerned, it is the latter that particularly suffers from the pitfalls of racial exclusivity predicated on descent.

This paper, then, revisits Du Bois' conceptualization of Pan-Africanism across time and space with a focus on the way it reflects this continental-diasporic divide. As the epigraphs above indicate, Du Bois embraced each of the poles in varying historical and political contexts. This contradiction, it is further argued, explains why Pan-Africanism as a diasporic project cannot escape its essentialist limit of being nothing less than a racialist project. Once the unity goes global – beyond the continent of Africa – it becomes, by default, the unity of people of African origin or descent. It cannot escape this unless it becomes an international unity of the oppressed.

Historicizing the Idea and its Movement

Pan-Africanism is a modern concept. It emerged, both as an idea and a movement, in the crucible of modernity. The context that provided its emergence was the second encounter between Africa and Euro-America between the 15th and 19th century. Although it varied across the states and societies, this encounter produced three outcomes – slavery, colonialism and racism – that paved the way for the forging of Pan-Africanism as a counter discourse to Euro-American Orientalism.

One can argue that there was some form of cultural or even racial unity in ancient Africa that is tantamount to Pan-Africanism. However, Pan-Africanism as it has come to be known since 1900 when the Pan-African Conference purportedly "put the word 'Pan-African' in the dictionary for

the first time" (Du Bois 1970: 372), is different from, though in certain cases it has also been informed by, the alleged ancient unity of black Africa. Its early history is thus aptly captured:

> The idea of one Africa uniting the thought and ideals of all native peoples of the dark continent belongs to the twentieth century, and stems naturally from the West Indies and the United States. Here various groups of Africans, quite separate in origin, became so united in experience, and so exposed to the impact of a new culture, that they began to think of Africa as one idea and one land (Du Bois 1970: 372).

Du Bois was writing this history of *The Pan-African Movement* in the aftermath of World War II when nationalist agitations for the independence of countries in Africa were on the rise. Ever true to its history, he connects its origin to one landmass – the continent of Africa. However, this was only a reference point since in actual sense he locates it within the diaspora. For him Africans were not only in Africa anymore. They were also in other continents mainly because of slavery.

This by no means precludes the fact that there was some form of unity among various groups in Africa that were encountering colonialism as in the Maji Maji war against the Germans in colonial Tanganyika/Tanzania in 1905-1907. Rather, it is an account that explains the idea as it emerged within the context of a particular movement in the diaspora that was fed and ended up feeding nationalist movements for decolonization in Africa including those that also embraced it.

Kwesi Kwaa Prah's (2009) "2nd Impression" of *The African Nation: The State of the Nation*, however, looks at the two movements as simultaneous. Right "from its emergence", the author asserts, "African Nationalism or Pan-Africanism has straddled both sides of the Atlantic" (Prah 2009: 10). Therein lies the first factual pitfall of conceptualizing Pan-Africanism as a global project – conflating 'African Nationalism' and 'Pan-Africanism'. Such a glaring conflation is also evident in these writings of Prah's contemporary: "Thus African nationalism is Pan-

Africanism. There is no, and cannot be African nationalism outside of, apart from, or different from Pan-Africanism" (Shivji 2009: 196). However, upon being queried about the nationalism(s) in Africa that predated or even paralleled that of those who were inspired by Du Bois' Pan-African Congresses, Shivji clarified that it is in the context of the 20th century struggles for independence that one can correctly assert that African Nationalism was born out of Pan-Africanism and not the other way round. Thus when it is argued that through "all stages of its evolution and development, the Diaspora has been a key reference point" (Prah 2009: 10) to "African Nationalism or Pan-Africanism" the part of the argument that is factual, historically, is that of the influence that the Pan-African Congresses and the likes of Du Bois and George Padmore had on some of those who became leaders of the struggles for independence in Africa.

Reflecting – during the 1940s – on the 1920s that saw his first trip to Africa in 1924, the new father of Pan-Africanism could thus state: "So far, the Pan-African idea was still American rather than African, but it was growing, and it expressed a real demand for examination of the African situation and plan of treatment from the native African point of view" (Du Bois 1970: 384). As a diasporic idea, it continued as a racial project. Writing in 1940, about the 1920s, he frankly said:

> Of the Pan-African Congresses, I have explained their rather hurriedly conceived beginning. I was convinced, however, by my experience in Paris in 1919 that here was a real vision and actual need. Contacts of Negroes of different origins and nationality, which I had then and before at other congresses and the Races Congress were most inspiring. My plans as they developed had in them nothing spectacular nor revolutionary. If in decades or a century they resulted in such world organization of black men as would oppose a united front to European aggression, that certainly would not have been beyond my dream. But on the other hand, in practical reality, I knew the power and guns of Europe and America, and what I wanted to do was in the face of this power to sit down hand in hand with colored groups, and across the council table to learn of each other, our condition, our aspirations, our chances for concerned thought and action. Out of this there might come, not race war and opposition, but broader co-operation with the white rulers of the world, and a chance for peaceful and accelerated development of black folk. With

> this in mind I started to organize and hold a Pan-African Congress in 1921 which would be better attended and more carefully organized than that in 1919 (Du Bois 2007a: 137).

But being African or black meant different things to different people across the diaspora. Moreover, being a black nationalist in America was not one and the same thing as being one in Africa. Race as encapsulated in the racialist notion of African descent was not sufficient enough to unite people from various continents. Even the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hardly embraced this global racialist solidarity as evidenced below:

> I found the board of directors of the NAACP not particularly interested. The older liberalism among the white people did not envisage Africa and the colored peoples of the world. They were interested in America and securing American citizens of all and any color, their rights. They had no schemes for internationalism in race problems and to many of them, it seemed quixotic to undertake anything of the sort. Then too, there were colored members who had inherited the fierce repugnance toward anything African, which was the natural result of the older colonization schemes, where efforts at assisted and even forcible expatriation of American Negroes had always included Africa. Negroes were bitterly opposed because such schemes were at bottom an effort to make slavery in the United States more secure and to get rid of the free Negroes. Beyond this they felt themselves American, not Africans. They resented and feared any coupling with Africa (Du Bois 2007a: 137-138).

This was black nationalism made in America. And this particular strain of it that Dub Bois was critiquing embraced an African race but focused on American citizenship. In his defense of black nationalism against political theorists who challenge its philosophical foundation, Tommie Shelby (2005) delineates its two conceptions that highlights its African American focus: classical and pragmatic. The former is more associated with a strong nationalist position for political independence while the latter is more concerned about bringing social justice within a polity. “The solidaristic commitment of pragmatic nationalism, “ he asserts, “is based on a desire to live in a just society, a society that need not be, nor even contain, a self-determining black community” (Shelby 2005: 28). These strains “of black nationalism”, as he earlier asserted, have

"become, for all practical purposes, a constitutive component of the self-understanding of a substantial segment of the African American population" (Shelby 2005: 25). It is this process of becoming – of running so deep in America – that enables one to understand how Pan-Africanism as diasporic and thus racial was conceptualized and mainly came to be African American-centric.

In this regard it is imperative to take both a historical and philosophical approach. Shelby's aversion to explain black nationalism, of which Du Bois Pan-Africanism is a variant of, as a social movement or social tendency, is useful in explaining tendencies that cut across historical periodization. It works, for instance, in his assertion that the black emigration from the United States of America is consistent with both classical and pragmatic nationalism. However, this interest in black nationalism as being primarily "a social philosophy or political theory, and only secondarily as a sociohistorical phenomenon" (Shelby 2005: 30) is limiting in tracing Pan-Africanism as an intertwinement between an idea and a movement. For instance, the following conclusion from Du Bois' 'To the World: Manifesto of the Second Pan-African Congress' as adopted in 1921 was both classical and pragmatic in the Shelby sense because of the historical context of the time that constrained the movement from advocating a strong black nationalism:

> The world must face two eventualities: either the complete assimilation of Africa with two or three of the great world states, with political, civil and social power and privileges absolutely equal for its black and white citizens, or the rise of a great black African state founded in Peace and Good Will, based on popular education, natural art and industry and freedom of trade; autonomous and sovereign in its internal policy, but from its beginning a part of a great society of peoples in which it takes its place with other co-rulers of the world (Du Bois 1997: 46).

Such a statement gives a glimpse into why the Congress participant, Jessie Fauset, noted that "those in attendance considered Du Bois' resolutions 'bold and glorious…couched in winged, unambiguous words" (William L. Van Deburg 1997: 40). This is a far cry from the Du Bois of

1919 who embraced President Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric of self-determination in his support for a League of Nation to advance, pragmatically one may add, Pan-Africanism, albeit moderate.

Informed by the racial politics in the United States America, Du Bois had cast his lot with the President who was fighting a losing battle – "the League fight" – with the US Senate when the latter thus urged Americans to join the League of Nation as embodied in the Treaty of Versailles: "Dare we reject it and break the heart of the world?" (Wilson quoted in John Milton Cooper, Jr. 2001: 9). Of course, for him the 'heart of the world' hardly included those in Africa and in the African Diaspora within the Americas. However, a number of them pragmatically embraced it.

Locating the Pan-African Congress of 1919 within T*he Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Erez Manela (2007) notes that Du Bois and other leading African American activists adopted the Wilsonian language of self-determination to ask for recognition of rights within the US. "The mandate system sufficiently impressed" Du Bois, observed one of Wilson's biographers, "that he would support the League and the treaty in spite of his own history of bitter disappointment with Wilson" (Cooper, Jr. 2009: 497). The disappointment had to do with Du Bois' endorsement of Wilson in the 1912 presidential elections since most of what he did during his presidency is exactly what Du Bois thus said he wouldn't: "He will not advance the cause of the oligarchy in the South, he will not seek further means of 'Jim Crow' insult, he will not dismiss black men from office, and he will remember that the Negro in the United States has a right to be heard" (Cooper, Jr. 2009: 170). Du Bois' Pan-African concerns for Africans globally expressed in this moment are thus summed:

> Nevertheless, in the May issue of *The Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, which [Du Bois] edited, he issued a ringing

> declaration in favor of League membership. "A league of nations is absolutely necessary to the salvation of the Negro race," declared [Du Bois]. Not only would such a world body "from the beginning recognize the Negro nations," but it would give them a forum in which to speak and act against "the selfish nations of white civilization" which threatened to plunge the world into a "Great War of Races" even more terrible than the conflict just ended. "The refusal to adopt the Japanese race equality amendment is deplorable," [Du Bois] conceded, "but it is an argument for and not against a nation of nations. It is the beginning of a mighty End (Cooper, Jr. 2001: 99).

By pragmatically embracing, albeit ambivalently, the then about to collapse Wilsonian moment, Du Bois and his colleagues in the Pan-African Congress of Paris in 1919 "passed very moderate resolutions asking the peace conference to lay down regulations for good colonial governance in Africa" (Manela 2007:59). It is this painful experience that led him to revisit his conceptualization and implementation of Pan-Africanism in the 1920s. Historical events significantly shaped Du Bois' social philosophy and political theory, ultimately radicalizing him.

Thus, the philosophical theorizing of Pan-Africanism cannot be divorced from its political movement. One has to trace both to make sense of how it hit a conceptual racial snag that needs to be transcended in order to envision Pan-Africanism that is neither conceptually flawed nor politically impractical. Many of the racialist ideas of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism for that matter that emerged, historically, "seemed", as Shelby (2005:24) points out, "to some to be at odds with the goal of advancing a nonessentialist, progressive black politics, for they appear to reify that dubious category of 'race,' to assume the existence of a transhistorical and organic 'black essence,' or as to imply the desirability of an authentic and unitary black plural subject – 'the black community.'" Challenging their currency having served their political and historical purposes is thus imperative. However, one would agree that doing so in line with the likes of Kwame Anthony Appiah (1993), by "attempting to dismantle and discredit black nationalism

altogether through a radical critique of what they take to be its various conceptual, empirical, political and moral flaws" (Shelby 2005: 25), amounts to throwing the baby with the bathwater. It takes, however, a concerted philosophical and historical analysis to "opt for a more constructive form of critique" that "highlights the weakness within the Black Nationalist orientation while drawing out and building upon its valuable elements" (Shelby 2005: 25). In this regard this paper affirms the call below to pick the baton from the founding fathers and mothers:

> The transformation of black political consciousness – or the political consciousness of any group, for that matter – is more likely to come about if the new vision can be comprehended as an extension of, rather than a radical rupture with, traditional beliefs of the group. Despite its shortcomings, we should not discard the heritage of black nationalism in our efforts to rethink the foundation of black politics (Shelby 2005: 25).

Conscious of the African American bias on his Pan-Africanism, the post-1919 Du Bois attempted to shift the focus globally, albeit retaining the racial mark of solidarity. "With the object of moving the center of this agitation nearer other African centers of population", the Pan-Africanist pointed out in his 1940s reflections of the 1920s, he "planned a Fourth Pan-African Congress in the West Indies in 1925" (Du Bois 1970: 384). It didn't work out. As an alternative, they held it in New York in 1927, whereby "direct African participation lagged" (Ibid.) One particular resolution stressed the development of Africans for Africans, a notion that came to be associated with radical African nationalism. A bold attempt to hold the Fifth Pan-African Congress on the African continent in 1929 also hit a snag. World War II provided the political context that enabled the convening of this Congress in Manchester, catapulting globally the idea and movement that had lost much ground during the interwar and war periods. He reminisced:

> The Pan-African idea died, apparently, until fifteen years afterwards, in the midst of the Second World War, when it leaped to life again in an astonishing manner. At the Trades Union Conference in London in the Winter of 1945 there were black labor representatives from Africa and the West Indies. Among these, aided by colored persons resident in England, there came a spontaneous call for the assembling of another Pan-

> African Congress in 1945, when the International Trades Union had their meeting in Paris (Du Bois 1970: 385).

Du Bois wrote this history of the movement that reflects his idea of Pan-Africanism when close to the events. It was in the mid 1940s, after he had written *Dusk of Dawn*, that Appiah (1993) pays particular attention to in questioning why should something – a history of discrimination and insult – that one share with the whole of the non-white world bind him to a part of it. For Appiah, it is the illusion of race that racism imposes on people the choice between Africa and other oppressed parts of the world. But this is not entirely historically contingent since the particular imposition of slavery, colonialism and racism that the people of the continent of Africa experienced developed in such a way it created a particular shared history. It had affinity with other non-white people, but it was still particular not least because of racism. But the philosopher opts to dismiss this particularity while making a compelling conjecture that in Ghana Du Bois "never completed the escape from race" (Appiah 1993: 45) even if he had escaped from American racism. As an internationalist, however, Du Bois was concerned with the solidarity of all the oppressed. This is why he embraced the labor movement in the 1940s. However, it was still evident that due to racism and colonialism the workers of the world unite movement still marginalized Africa and constrained Africans. It was evident to him in 1919 in Paris, during the treaty of Versailles, when countries like Japan, Vietnam and even Egypt where far ahead in reclaiming self-determination, thus making their conditions particularly distinct from those of the so-called Black Africa. Commenting on the buildup to the Manchester Congress, he lamented:

> Difficulties of transportation and passport restrictions may make attendance at this Congress limited. At the same time there is real hope here, that out of Africa itself, and especially out of its laboring masses, has come a distinct idea of unity in ideal and cooperation in action which will lead to a real Pan-African movement (Du Bois 1970: 387).

It is evident from this historicizing that the Du Boisian Pan-African movement was not thoroughly connected with the nationalist agitations that were already occurring in different parts of the Caribbean and Africa after World War I. It was only during the ending and in the aftermath of World War II that the connection was forged, not least because of the connection that Du Bois formed with Kwame Nkrumah, who also attended the Fifth Pan-African Congress.

By then Nkrumah had already been influenced by black nationalism made in America while a student in the United States of America in the 1930s. "Black nationalists", as Shelby (2005: 24) reiterates, "advocate such things as black self-determination, racial solidarity and group self-reliance, various forms of voluntary racial separation, pride in the historic achievements of persons of African descent, a concerted effort to overcome racial self-hate and to instill black self-love, militant collective resistance to white supremacy, the development and preservation of a distinct black cultural identity, and the recognition of Africa as the true homeland of those who are racially black." In a letter to a friend, penned in 1935, the Black nationalist in him remarked:

> [No] African student who visits this country [America] can return home without being determined to help liberate Mother Africa from imperialist chains of exploitation and from ignorance and poverty (Nkrumah quoted in Bankole Timothy 1955: 25).

Reminiscing on "Hard Times" in America that included a stint in black neighborhoods of Harlem, he noted, with a touch of hindsight knowledge that tends to characterize autobiographical memory, how his experience and survey of the racial problem in the United States of America was an "eye-opener" that changed earlier perceptions. "When I compared this racial segregation with the modernity and advancement of the country", Nkrumah (1957: 43) lamented, "it made my heart sink". It was such crystallization of thought and practice that made him pen this declaration that Du Bois (2007b: 193-194) cited after Ghana got its independence:

> African nationalism had now been established in the Gold Coast – the new Ghana. From now on it must be Pan-African nationalism, and the ideology of African political consciousness and … emancipation must spread throughout the whole continent…I have never regarded the struggle for the independence of the Gold Coast as an isolated incident but always as a part of a general world historical pattern (Nkrumah 1957: 288).

Like his mentors and colleagues – Du Bois and Padmore – Nkrumah, up to this point, was still straddling the diasporic and continental divide. However, he increasingly shifted toward the continental pole that had, in the interest of continental unity, forfeited racial solidarity. There were Arabs in North Africa who did not necessarily see themselves racially as black, let alone African. Moreover, there were Europeans who had settled within the geographical boundaries of the continent of Africa for generations. On top of that, there were people of Asian origins who had become citizens of African countries. How could one then conceptualize Pan-Africanism as a racial concept? And how could one envision it as a global project without resorting to descent and thus marginalize those – within the continent – who could not invoke any African ancestry?

Appiah's (1993) analysis partly addresses this dilemma in Du Bois' early work. It irrefutably shows that whilst scientifically there are no races, Du Bois' Pan-Africanism in the 1940s remained racialist. The problem with the analysis, as Shelby (2005) has hinted in regard to discrediting black nationalism, is that it overstretches itself. In asserting that there are substantial affinities between the racial doctrines of Pan-Africanism and Zionism, Appiah overlooks the history of both the idea and the movement. As a counter-discourse to Euro-American centrism, Pan-Africanism as Du Bois envisioned it in the 1940s was only a stepping-stone for a world order that would include the people associated with the continent of Africa and those who, though relatively advanced in attaining self-determination, were still lagging behind Euro-America. This is evident in this concluding remark to his attempt at historicizing the movement:

> Singularly enough, there is another 'Pan-African' movement. I thought of it as I sat recently in San Francisco and heard Jan Smuts plead for an article on 'human rights' in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations. It was an astonishing paradox. The Pan-African movement which he represents is a union of the white rulers of Kenya, Rhodesia, and the Union of South Africa, to rule the African continent in the interest of its white investors and exploiters. This plan has been incubating since 1921, but has been discouraged by the British Colonial Office. Smuts is now pushing it again, and the white legislatures in Africa have asked for it. The San Francisco trusteeship left a door open for this sort of thing. Against this upsurges the movement of black union delegates working in cooperation with the labor delegates of Russia, Great Britain, and the United States in order to build a new world which includes black Africa. We may yet live to see Pan-Africa as a real movement (Du Bois 1970: 387).

He lived through the dusk to see the dawn of Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism that was post-racial.

Straddling the Continental-Diasporic Divide

Du Bois' connection with Nkrumah had a profound effect on his conceptualization of Pan-Africanism. Between the eve of Ghana's independence to the time he moved there to become a citizen in 1961, Du Bois shifted dramatically in bypassing the racial pitfalls of conceiving Pan-Africanism as diasporic. Unfortunately, in confining him to 1940 whilst concluding that "in his later writings, Du Bois – whose life's work was in a sense, an attempt at just this impossible project – was unable to escape the notion of race he explicitly rejects" (Appiah 1993: 46) his critic overlooks Nkrumah's continentalist Pan-Africanism that had started to aid the escape from race.

What makes Appiah overlooks this, it seems, is his use of Nkrumah's quote that affirms Du Boisian Pan-African racialism. Rather than engage with the subsequent articulations of Pan-Africanism that shifted towards a continentalist approach as African countries increasingly won independence, he invokes the Nkrumah of the 1950s who had not yet shed the diasporic racial

conception. "If Du Bois' race concept seems an all-too-American creation," he asserts, "its traces in African rhetoric are legion" (Du Bois 1993: 44) before quoting Nkrumah as saying Ghana's oppressed brothers throughout the continent and the New World were looking to them. Elsewhere Appiah (1993: 19) quotes the Nkrumah of 1952 reiterating "African for Africans" to show Alexander Crummell and Edward Blyden's racialist influence on his African nationalism.

But Nkrumah changed as the political landscape changed. In line with his Pan-Africanism that transcends race he even married an Arab woman from Egypt. African unity for him was no longer about descent. It was a political project that called for the emancipation of the whole of Africa – the continental including the so-called Arab Africa in the north and white Africa in the south. In his rallying call for a United States of Africa during the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the early 1960s he thus conceptualized such a post-racial Pan-Africa:

> To us, Africa with its islands is just one Africa. We reject the ideas of any kind of partition. From Tangier or Cairo in the North to Cape Town in the South, from Cape Guardafui in the East to Cape Verde Islands in the West, Africa is one and indivisible (Nkrumah 1970: 217).

This is the transformed Nkrumah that Du Bois had advised in 1957 to lead "a movement of black men for Pan-Africanism" (Du Bois 2007b: 188). This Du Bois was still preoccupied with "the essential unity of race and descent" (Ibid.) In that regard he envisioned "Pan-African socialism" that "seeks the welfare state in Black Africa" (Ibid: 189). A year later, however, he would affirm:

> Your nearest friends and neighbors are the colored people of China and India, the rest of Asia, the Middle East and the sea isles, once close bound to the heart of Africa and now long severed by the greed of Europe. Your bond is not mere color of skin but the deeper experience of wage slavery and contempt. So too, your bond with the white world is closest to those who support and defend China and help India and not those who exploit the Middle East and South America (Ibid: 198).

By then, Du Bois' Pan-Africanism had shifted from preoccupation with race to class. In its internationalism, it focused on the international solidarity among those whose land and labor had been stolen in the service of capital. Akin to Third World internationalism, this version that he termed Pan-African socialism was not so trapped in race. Yet it did not simply wish race away, given that historically, whether scientifically dubious or not, it had been constructed to expropriate the human and natural resources of those he had thus referred to in *Dusk of Dawn*:

> On this vast continent were born and lived a large portion of my direct ancestors going back a thousand years or more. The mark of their heritage is upon me in color and hair. These are obvious things, but of little meaning in themselves; only important as they stand for real and more subtle differences from other men. Whether they do or not, I do not know nor does science know today. But one thing is sure and that is the fact that since the fifteenth century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have had a common history; have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory. The actual ties of heritage between the individuals of this group, vary with the ancestors that they have in common with many others: Europeans and Semites, perhaps Mongolians, certainly American Indians (Du Bois 2007a: 59).

When read from the point of view of the Du Bois of the late 1950s and early 1960s this quote and the first epigraph above from the 1940s indicates that Du Bois had shifted from an essentialist conception of race. He had taken a sociohistorical conception that Appiah (1993: 41) is adamant does not transcend the biological conception of race since, for him, it bury that "below the surface". By focusing on Du Bois' affirmation that at that time science did not know whether those marks were important Appiah does not engage with the fact that Du Bois was not saying history or politics do not know that such marks no longer had little meaning in the contest of slavery, racism and colonialism. To him this is the evidence that in the absence of a biological explanation Du Bois had "no more conceptual resources for explicating the unity of the Negro race – the Pan-African identity – than he had in 'The Conservation of Races' half a century earlier" (Appiah 1993: 42). Thus, having successfully shown that Du Bois' Pan-Africanism was

racialist, Appiah deliberately decides to sidestep the history and politics that made the illusion of race become a physical and emotional reality to people like Du Bois to the extent that they sought each other's solidarity. This reading of the same passages provides such an understanding:

> Of course Du Bois is describing a Pan-African vision of solidarity, one that includes everyone of African descent, regardless of where they live or call home, perhaps even extending to all people of color who have been oppressed by white supremacy and European imperialism…what is important to notice here is that Du Bois grounds his Pan-African vision, not in a thick collective identity as he did in "The Conservation of Races," but in the common experience of racial injustice and the stigma of being racialized as "black" (Shelby 2005: 244).

This Pan-Africanism served its historical purpose, and the times demands it to be transcended.

Beyond an Anti-Racism Racial Discourse

In the 21st century, it is imperative to reconceptualize and reimagine Pan-Africanism. There is a universal (i.e., global) Pan-Africanism that has a racial nature and a local (i.e., continental) Pan-Africanism that has a non-racial nature. The former is associated with Du Bois, whilst the latter is associated with Nkrumah. Having bestowed the title of "President of the Pan-African Congress" to Nkrumah in 1957, Du Bois (2007b: 189) glimpsed at the dawn of post-racial Pan-Africanism.

At a basic global level, the racial Pan-Africanism, in contrast to the post-racial one, is an idea and a movement of the so-called people of African descent or origin toward a certain form of unity that is based on that point of origin, i.e., the continent of Africa. The aim of global Pan-Africanism is to unite the people who identify with Africa against all the bad things that have happened and continue to happen, in one way or another, to them at a global scale – slavery,

racism, colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism, neoliberalism, and so forth. This common suffering and struggle is the tie that binds together the said people of African descent from Haiti to Harlem and beyond. However, by default, it is racial. It is a racial discourse in the sense that it mobilizes what was characterized as a race to fight what characterized people of African descent as a race, and a black race for that matter. As it has been shown above, it is a counter-discourse to racism. But it still operates within the confines of race as it attempts to unite people whose common marker is not only the common suffering or struggle but also a common point of origin – Africa.

It is thus logically impossible to conceptualize Pan-Africanism globally without resorting to race – the black race as claiming Africa as its cradle. The way black has been conceptualized, historically, is not a black that is independent of Africa as its continent of origin. That is why Pan-Africanism only becomes a race-less concept when it is conceptualized geographically (i.e. continentally) by embracing whoever is a citizen of Africa irrespective of race or origin, that is, with respect to all historical phenomena such as slavery, colonialism, capitalism and imperialism that have shaped Africa as it is known today in all its complexities.

As soon as one wants to include others outside the continent the main marker become blackness i.e. race as applied to Africa because that is the only way citizens of the African Diaspora can claim Africa simply because historically the only, nay, main, thing that really marks people out there of being of – or from – Africa is the color of their skin. Thus, not everyone outside Africa who is regarded as black politically can identify with or claim Africa that way. It is in this regard the oppressed non-whites outside Africa who are not black in the African sense cannot claim

Africa through a global Pan-Africanism that is inherently racial as it seeks to unite people of African (i.e. black) origin in the world. If Pan-Africanism could simply be Pan-anti-imperialism, then many continental outsiders would claim Africa in terms of class – the global class of the oppressed united against the oppressor. They can thus identify with those who have been oppressed in the continent and, historically, many have joined their struggles but not on the basis of race – they joined on the basis of a common stance against human oppression. Such Pan-Africanism is inclusive of all who, historically and politically, have somehow ended up being in and of Africa. It is the telos of Du Bois' Pan-Africanism that was simply a means to an end rather than an end in itself. For, ultimately, Pan-Africanism is nothing less than Pan-Humanism.

As it has been reiterated above, race is socially constructed and Pan-Africanism, at least in the way it started in the African Diaspora, was also a response to that social construction. One cannot simply wish away this history of Pan-Africanism in as much as one cannot wish away the history of racism. Moreover, no one can ignore the racial legacy of the history of Pan-Africanism that is invoked the moment one asks what actually unite certain people who reside outside of Africa to Africa: Is it a geographical space called Africa? Is it a common oppression that is linked to Africa? If it is a geographical space, is it physical, intellectual and/or spiritual? If it is a common oppression what is so African about it? In this regard why is there no Pan-Asianism or Pan-Latin Americanism in the same historical sense there has been Pan-Africanism? In a similar vein why not just a Pan-anti Imperialism, Pan-anti Racism or Pan-anti Euro-American centrism?

It is true continentalist arguments start with geographical unity as the basis for the definitions of Africans. However, in this case the argument by no means "leave little space for the African

Diaspora" or "pushes out the African Diaspora" altogether as Prah (2009: 15) alleges. Rather, in line with Africa's quest for wholeness that Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009) expounds, it calls for the re-membering of the dismembered continent. But, with Marcus Garvey's aborted Back to Africa Pan-African movement that was critiqued in the 1940s as having "represented poorly conceived but intensely earnest determination to unite the Negroes of the world" (Du Bois 1970: 377) in hindsight, is this mission of making Africa whole practically possible in this globalization age?

It is practically achievable if one acknowledges that the geographical boundaries of the African continent have always been shifting and thus accommodating. There are islands that, geographically and politically, are supposed to belong to the continent of Africa, yet they do not. It is the case because they were conquered or chose to continue to be colonies of Euro-American countries. Why then shouldn't Haiti – where Aimé Césaire (1956) poetically claimed that 'Negritude', as in 'Blackness' or 'Africaness', stood up for the first time – become one of the islands of Africa? Or why won't those who identify with or wish Africa well would relate and return to the continental symbolically, if not physically? As conceptualized below, it still has enough space:

> Africa is a place, a material and imagined place, or rather a configuration of places, an embodiment of spaces that are socially produced and produce the social. Its material and symbolic boundaries are constantly shifting, for Africa's spatiality, like all spaces, encompasses the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, and interlocking and dispersive networks of relations at every scale from the local to the global…Africa in short, is a geography, a history, a reality and an imaginary of places, peoples and positions, both an invented intellectual construct and an object of intellectual inquiry (Paul T. Zeleza 2003: 3).

Such a Pan-Africa is a mosaic of people and spaces that calls for a post-racial Pan-Africanism.

Conclusion

This paper has traced the historical context and philosophical foundation of Pan-Africanism as an idea and a movement. It has shown that Du Bois was instrumental in forging it as a diasporic and thus racial project. However, with the mantle passing to Nkrumah, another version – continental in geography and post-racial in peopling – emerged. It is this version, it is argued, that would enable Africa to move forward together with those who identify with or wish it well.

The tie that binds people to Africa can only be useful if they all cast their lot with this geopolitical entity that is arguably the poorest continent. Those who claim to be of Africa ought to truly seek its intellectual and material prosperity. It is such an Africa-centered progress that will surely undo the yoke that has continually left it fragmented. Africa must unite, continentally.

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