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# Kwame Nkrumah, His Afro-American Network and the Pursuit of an African Personality

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KWAME NKRUMAH, HIS AFRO-AMERICAN NETWORK AND THE PURSUIT OF AN  
AFRICAN PERSONALITY

EMMANUELLA AMOH

105 Pages

This thesis explores the pursuit of a new African personality in post-colonial Ghana by President Nkrumah and his African American network. I argue that Nkrumah's engagement with African Americans in the pursuit of an African Personality transformed diaspora relations with Africa. It also seeks to explore Black women in this transnational history. Women are not perceived to be as mobile as men in transnationalism thereby underscoring their inputs in the construction of certain historical events. But through examining the lived experiences of Shirley Graham Du Bois and to an extent Maya Angelou and Pauli Murray in Ghana, the African American woman's role in the building of Nkrumah's Ghana will be explored in this thesis.

**KEYWORDS:** Africans, Diaspora Africans, Pan-Africanism, African Personality

KWAME NKRUMAH, HIS AFRO-AMERICAN NETWORK AND THE PURSUIT OF AN  
AFRICAN PERSONALITY

EMMANUELLA AMOH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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E. A

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The 20<sup>th</sup> century had many watershed moments throughout Africa and the African diaspora. Significant of this century, was the transatlantic alliance formed between Africans and diaspora Africans to stand against white supremacy in the form of colonialism and racism. Colonialism was crippling to Africa economically through the importation of European goods and the extraction of African resources. Culturally, Europeans enforced their language, education, religion, and beliefs in an effort to gain mental control over the African people in the same way as colonizers had done with land and resources in Africa. Thus, Westernization in the form of language, education, style of living among many others was perpetrated by western media and even by some Black Nationalists as the way of life. For instance, Dean E. Robinson notes that Martin Delany, an African American who was both an Africanist and emigrationist, engaged in the Back-to-Africa movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, argued that Africans had been exposed to Christianity but needed more tutelage.<sup>1</sup> For Delany, Africans needed to be saved from heathenism (African cultural practices). Early Black Nationalists view of Africans through a Eurocentric lens felt Africans needed to be saved from ‘barbarism’ or live like Westerners. For example, Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute attempted this effort to teach Africans which was set under the guise of “civilizing missions.”<sup>2</sup>

But in the same century arose a group of African Americans whom historian James H. Meriwether calls the ‘vindicationist.’ They included Pan-Africanists like Edward Blyden and W.E.B Du Bois who though still held some Eurocentric views about Africa and Africans yet,

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<sup>1</sup> Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thoughts* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2001), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama In Africa: Booker T. Washington, The German Empire, And The Globalization Of The New South* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 9.



“believed that they should promote the race and be advocates for Africa...”<sup>3</sup> Because African Americans faced the same stereotypes and shame as continental Africans, Pan-Africanists were strong defenders against racist depictions of Africans living in trees as monkeys as was shown in *Tarzan* movies.<sup>4</sup> By standing against the “uncivilized” imagery promoted by the racist media, Pan-Africanists in turn felt that they were protecting themselves against the same imagery that was being imprinted on them as well. Historian Nell Irvin Painter’s *Creating Black Americans* explained how the term ‘negro’ was used to degrade African Americans and even deny them civil rights.<sup>5</sup> Historian Ronald Takaki, also adds that for the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, African Americans were often called “unfit, and lazy.”<sup>6</sup> In response to the negative imageries, Africans and African Americans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the Civil Rights Movement and decolonization sought to redefine themselves or give a positive meaning to Blackness and Africa. Thus, a transatlantic alliance was formed between them which paved the way for the assertion of a new African personality for all descendants of Africa.

In a 1966 letter to long-time friend Christine Johnson, Kwame Nkrumah wrote “when Africa is free and united with one government for the whole of the continent the black man- wherever he may be, either in Africa, West Indies, or USA-will discover his personality, his dignity, and his honour.”<sup>7</sup> These words were the embodiment of his political dreams which he

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<sup>3</sup> James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans And Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph E. Harris, “Introduction” in *Global Dimensions of The African Diaspora*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Washington DC., Howard University Press, 1993), 5. [Diaspora Africa according Joseph E. Harris has grown to include continental Africans who voluntary relocate to the West. But for the purpose of this research, diaspora Africans will refer to people of African descent who are in the western world by virtue of the transatlantic slave trade.]

<sup>5</sup> Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African American History And Its Meanings, 1619 To Present* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 54.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald T. Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History Of Multicultural America, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition* (New York: Back Bay Book, Little Brown, and Co.2008), 100.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Kwame Nkrumah to Christine Johnson, in *Kwame Nkrumah, The Conakry Years: His Life and Letters* (London; PANAF, 1990), 34.

pursued, beginning from the 1950s, and as leader of the colonial government business to co-presidency with Sekou Touré in Guinea. Such dreams and hope led Nkrumah to become the first president of Ghana and one of the leading figures of the militant Pan-Africanism of the 1960s. He desired both continental and diaspora Africans to redefine the imagery and perceptions of Africa which had been tarnished by slavery, colonialism, and racism. This redefinition was based on the premise that Africa's liberation would award any Black person across the globe freedom. It is an idea that various Pan-Africanists from the 20<sup>th</sup> century to contemporary times have sought to promote.

This thesis seeks to examine African Americans presence and contribution towards Kwame Nkrumah's pursuit of an African personality and how it was interpreted. I explore the spaces and structures that allowed them to help the projection of a new African Personality. After Ghana gained independence, Nkrumah called for a new African personality that would prove to the world that "the black man is capable of managing his own affairs."<sup>8</sup> The African personality was a concerted effort to redefine the imagery of Africa in the early stages of post-colonial Africa led by Ghana. I argue that Nkrumah's engagement with African Americans in the pursuit of an African Personality, transformed diaspora relations with Africa. In looking at how the relationship between Africans and African Americans affected the development of post-colonial Africa, president Kwame Nkrumah and Ghana, come as perhaps the first to have engaged the African diaspora on a large scale besides Liberia.<sup>9</sup>

Ghana's independence on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957 overshadowed that of countries like Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco who got their independence in 1956. Ghana was the first country in Sub-

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<sup>8</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, "Independence Speech", 6th March 1957.

<sup>9</sup> Robert G. Wesibord's *Ebony Kinship*, James T. Campbell's *Middle Passages*, and David Jenkins' *Black Zion*; Liberia had a large number of Africans who were repatriated in 1820s and by 1840s it had declared independence and saw lot of African Americans visit and relocate to the country.

Saharan Africa to gain independence. Its independence was celebrated globally especially by African Americans. African Americans rejoice in Ghana's liberation was as Kevin E. Grimms notes, a "symbol of black modernity which led African Americans to learn from the African struggle to support their claim for full rights in the United States."<sup>10</sup> For historian James H. Meriwether, the celebration of this nation's independence will contribute to the reasons why African Americans would proudly be African. Meriwether has produced a book titled *Proudly We Can Be Africans* which further elaborates on the impact of Ghana's independence on the diaspora Africans or African Americans.

During Ghana's independence celebration, Nkrumah called for a new African personality as a tool for nation-building. Pan-Africanists like Julius Nyerere and Tom Mboya agreed with this pursuit. During this period, efforts to create a new image of Africa permeated all facets of development. Nkrumah was a strong advocate of this new image for he believed that Africa needed a new personality, one that would be a force against neo-colonialism and set Africa as a power within the emerging Third World. The re-imagining of Ghana and in extension Africa was captured in Nkrumah's pursuit of a new African personality. Even though Nkrumah was perhaps the first and loudest to promote a new personality as a racial uplift ideology for people of African descent, he was not the first to oppose Eurocentric images of Africa and black people. In the United States, Black Nationalists like Edward Blyden, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B Du Bois were among the first to vindicate Africa's image.

There has been a steady growth in the scholarship surrounding the interaction between Africans and diaspora Africans. African Americans and Afro-Caribbean are usually the

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<sup>10</sup> Kevin E. Grimm, "Symbol of Modernity: Ghana, African Americans and the Eisenhower Administration", PhD Dissertation, Ohio University, 2012, 11.

subjects of such analysis. Where African Americans have been discussed in relation with Africa, the narrative is often focused on how they assisted Africans in their struggles against colonialism or the establishment of Liberia with freedmen (former slaves from the United States). In narratives, Ethiopia and South Africa have dominated the conversation. African Americans have aligned with the history of both countries. Feeling the sense of pride standing against the oppressor like Ethiopia, the only African country to have overcome the efforts of imperialists to colonize it. And a sense of familiarity with South Africa, whose apartheid regime mirrored Jim Crowism in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

Ghana has gained a place as an area of discussion because of its role in Pan-Africanism, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Many ‘returnees’ (African Americans who have visited or lived in Africa) have documented their experiences in memoirs, newspaper articles and oral interviews which serve as major sources for my research. Their accounts have been examined by few scholars some include, Kevin Gaines’ *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates In the Civil Rights Era*. Gaines masterpiece has served as a basis for most Africa and diaspora African scholarship. It reveals one of the finest transatlantic explorations of the interplay between Africans and people of African descent.

Gaines explored the transnational solidarity between African Americans and Africans in the face of colonialism and racism, and how the former supported the civil rights movement using Ghana as a base. Major activists like W. E. B Du Bois, Malcolm X, Bill Sutherland, and George Padmore were central in his work. Also, his discussion of the activities of Malcolm X and other radicals abroad including their organization of a March protest in support of the

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War And The Color Line; American Race Relations In The Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 119.

March on Washington, do not only expand our knowledge of black internationalism, but it supports Gaines assertion that Ghana was a haven for these radicals.<sup>12</sup> The title, *American Africans* is quite a phrase in the sense that, the norm is African American. Perhaps Gaines play on words by using *American Africans* speaks to the fact that many of the Black expatriates in Ghana defined themselves more as American than African. His analysis of Pauli Murray, a lawyer, civil rights activist and a “returnee” is indicative of the title. For he writes that Pauli Murray not only saw herself as an American with some African heritage but she also “was disconcerted by African Americans or anyone who supported President Nkrumah or criticized the United States.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, Murray felt more American than African in Ghana and defended the United States despite the glaring news of the country’s racial discrimination detailed in Ghanaian newspapers.

As enlightening as Gaines *American Africans* is, it marginalized African American women. Among the many male activists mentioned, only one woman, Pauli Murray is discussed at length who inadvertently was also the depiction of the dilemma of the “returnee.’ Activists like Shirley Graham Du Bois who was central in Nkrumah’s pursuits did not receive a mention in Gaines research.

Historian James T. Campbell’s *Middle Passages: African Americans Journeys to Africa*, is another extensive work that investigates African Americans engagement with Africa, mainly in Ghana, Liberia, and Congo. Campbell traced African Americans reverse migration (the journey of diaspora Africans to Africa) arguing that African Americans often define their relationship with Africa based on rejection experienced in the United States. Thus, while

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<sup>12</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans In Ghana; Black Expatriates In The Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans In Ghana*, 118.

“African Americans asked “what is Africa to me? They were also asking what is America to me?”<sup>14</sup> James H. Meriwether calls this kind of analysis “the bad times’ thesis” as it presupposes that, African Americans ‘escape’ to Africa in times of difficulty.<sup>15</sup> Gaines adds that, “these expatriates’ [African Americans in Ghana] decision to situate their hopes for meaningful change in Ghana was not an act of political escapism.”<sup>16</sup> Robert G. Weisbord’s, *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans and the Afro-American* which explored Back-to-Africanisms by focusing on the theme of self-definition or reclaiming lost identities, supports Campbell’s argument. Weisbord notes that “...what the leaders of most back-to-Africa movements sought on that continent was primarily an opportunity for the realization of the American ideal of individual betterment, dignity, and equality which this country [U.S] had denied its black citizens.”<sup>17</sup> He further adds that “black despair in some of America’s darkest moments led to African fever.”<sup>18</sup> Thus in the view of Weisbord, it is erroneous to assume that back-to Africa movement is about African Americans seeking to reconnect with their brothers in the diaspora.

Following the steps of Campbell and Weisbord, James H. Meriwether’s *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa* traces diaspora Africans’ journey to Africa but with focus on their changing perceptions of Africa. Meriwether explored how African Americans moved from the theme of uplifting and redeeming Africa to the theme of Africa as a symbol of hope. He argues that development in Africa forced African Americans to change their views on Africa to see it as a source of pride. He exemplifies their excitement in a speech by the civil rights activist, Ralph Bunche. Bunche expressed his happiness about the strides

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<sup>14</sup> James T. Campbell, *Middle Passage*, xii.

<sup>15</sup> James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship, Africa, Africans and the Afro-American* (Westport Conn. Greenwood Press, 1973), 130.

<sup>18</sup> Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship*, 146.

Ghana had made by declaring to President Nkrumah that, "...Ghana under your leadership- whether you will it or not- represent spiritually and symbolically, all of us whose skins are pigmented."<sup>19</sup> Both Meriwether and Campbell like Gaines focused on the Civil Rights Movement and not much on the African American's contribution in the postcolonial era. Even though they all explored the African American community in Nkrumah's Ghana, their work did not focus on their involvement with the African political pursuit during the period. And like Campbell, Weisbord and Gaines, African American women's engagements in Africa were sidelined.

What is evident in the scholarship is the presence of African Americans in Africa to help the continent redeem itself from imperial underdevelopment tactics. It is also noteworthy that Gaines, Meriwether, Campbell and Weisbord's efforts seek to show the international effect of racial politics on the U.S and its foreign relations, a feature of U.S transnationalism. Transnational history is often an engagement between two cultures, the migrating country, and the hosting nation. Yet, scholars tend to focus on the migrating group to the neglect of the receiving country or the exchange that occurs between the migrant group and the hosting country. In the case of *America Africans* in Ghana, Gaines' discussion of the involvement of the Diasporas in Nkrumah's administration was focused on their efforts toward the civil right movement. Richard H. H. Harold's "Ghanaian Perspectives on Diaspora Blacks" provides a missing link in the historiography as his research investigates the contrary views Ghanaians and diasporic Africans had of each other, even though his focus was more on contemporary perceptions than 1951-1966. He writes that on one hand, African Americans are seen as

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<sup>19</sup> James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 173.

‘arrogant’ with an air of knowing better than Ghanaians.<sup>20</sup> And on the other hand, Ghanaians are perceived as being insensitive to racial issues referring to “returnees” as ‘obroni’ [white person or foreigner] which creates a hostile environment for them.

To give better understanding of the view of diaspora Africans in Ghana, Obiagele Lake’s dissertation “A Taste of Life: Diaspora African Repatriation to Ghana” is a wonderful addition. Her work depends greatly on the rich oral sources from African American residents in Ghana to better assess the diaspora pan-ethnic relations in Ghana and how diaspora Africans attempt to assimilate into the society. Unlike the previous scholarship, Lake’s work reflects the voices of African American women resident in Ghana. Although they often appeared as wives and lacking agency, their oral accounts revealed the experiences of “returnees” and the rate of their assimilation. Despite her effort in inquiring about diaspora Africans perceptions on Ghanaian society and Pan-Africanism, the women discussed lacked agency, she argued that they had gone to Ghana because of their husbands and did not elaborate on what they did while there. She however, discussed the difficulties some women experienced living in the Ghanaian culture.<sup>21</sup>

A closer examination of the historiography tend to project that the presence of African Americans in Nkrumah’s Ghana, was an isolated event from the country’s internal and external affairs; and that includes any attempt they made towards the post-colonial pursuit of African Personality. The focus is given to how African Americans used the country as a refuge from racial and ideological persecution without giving attention to how their presence influenced the shaping of the country. For instance, Kevin Gaines work which has served as a basis for most

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<sup>20</sup> Harold Richard Herbert Harris, “Ghanaian Perspectives On Diaspora Blacks” Master’s Thesis, The University Of Texas-Arlington, May, 2004, 63.

<sup>21</sup> Obiagele Lake, “A Taste of Life: Diaspora African Repatriation to Ghana”, PhD, Dissertation, Cornell University, August 1990, 178.



diaspora work reinforces that notion of Africa as a place to retreat to. Despite the scholarship's neglect of the post-colonial pursuit of African personality as a nation-building tool, some articles have touched on African Personality under Nkrumah's regime. These include Jerry Yorke's "An Overview of Kwame Nkrumah's Cultural Policies on Ghana's Visual Culture," "Reclaiming Our Africanness in The Diasporized Context: The Challenge of Asserting A Critical African Personality" by George J. Sefa and Ali Mazrui's "On The Concept of We Are All Africans." Yorke, Sefa and Mazrui agree on the importance of an African personality and acknowledge Nkrumah's role in giving it a force in post-colonial Ghana. They also agree on the idea of a need to connect the diaspora African to Africa but do not acknowledge the African American network influences on Nkrumah. David Jenkins in *Black Zion* gives such credit in his overview of African American's influence on Nkrumah's Ghana by stating that, at times Nkrumah trusted African Americans in Ghana more than Ghanaians because they shared his vision<sup>22</sup> "of an idealized, united Africa, which chimed with the imagined Africa of the United States."<sup>23</sup>

Even though there is a growth in the scholarship surrounding interactions between Africans and people of African descent, much is left to be discussed. One of the areas that need further exploration and hence a reason for my research is the less attention given to the role African Americans played in the shaping of Africa after independence especially in Nkrumah's Ghana. The gap that this research seeks to fill is the exploration of the structures that made it both possible and impossible for them to contribute to the pursuit of an African personality which was also, a self-fashioning tool for them. And this is best understood or appreciated

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<sup>22</sup> David Jenkins, *Black Zion: Africa, Imagined and Real as Seen by Today's Blacks* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1975), 50.

<sup>23</sup> David Jenkins, *Black Zion*, 167.

when their day to day activities, social connections jobs or means of survival in Ghana are examined. My argument is that the pursuit of an African personality was a racial uplift ideology which helped revive Pan-Africanism and to also engage the diaspora Africans in Africa. This study further adds that Nkrumah's engagement with African Americans in the pursuit of an African Personality, transformed their relations with Africa, Pan-Africanism and other Black Nationalist movements of the late 20th century. By examining the lived experiences, one would be able to measure the impact of Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism on the African diaspora.

In this study, political biographies of Kwame Nkrumah and Shirley Graham Du Bois will be explored. The lived experience of Shirley Graham Du Bois is used as a lens to understand the extent of their contribution and how some navigated both cultural and political barriers to identify with this pursuit. Kwame Nkrumah's political biography would provide the context of their engagement while Shirley Graham Du Bois' will address some of the assertions made by scholars to justify the marginalization of black women in this transatlantic endeavor. By discussing some factors that show that, the challenges some female 'returnees' encountered were not unique to what was encountered by their male counterparts. That it was not an issue of gender but socio-political barriers that only Nkrumaist and that included diaspora Africans who identified as Nkrumaist could navigate. As will be discussed in the next chapters, it was easy for a Nkrumaist to navigate certain barriers than a non-Nkrumaist. A perfect example was Pauli Murray who among many things was not a Nkrumaist while Shirley Graham Du Bois a clear Nkrumaist, was able to carve a niche for herself to support the pursuit. This also goes to show the extent of a 'returnee's' involvement in the development of the 'ancestral' continent. The lives of these women and men from different background converged in Ghana with a common

aim to help the country rebuild Ghana as a step towards giving Africa a new look which Nkrumah termed an African Personality.

This study will use a blend of Kobi Kazembe K. Kamboon or Joseph A. Baldwin's Africentric approach to the study of African personality and Molefi Kete's Afrocentric approach to the discussion of the relations between Africa and its diaspora. The Africentric approach emphasizes "self-determination, self-affirmation, and self-respect"<sup>24</sup> which formed the fundamentals of most Black Nationalist's movement like Negritude or Nkrumah's African personality. Afrocentricity, on the other hand, is "a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location and actualizing of African agency within the context of history and culture."<sup>25</sup> In other words, an effort that puts Africa at the center of historical analysis by looking at the African context, culture, language, and bridges formed between Africans and diaspora Africans. Thus, while this study explores African American agency in Nkrumah's Ghana, it is also an exploration of the journey of Africa's re-definition. This research is in line of Nkrumah's idea of bridging the gap between Africans and diaspora Africans to aid in each other's development but more specifically, it is to unearth the presence of African Americans in the early stages of nation-building in postcolonial Africa, and to find ways to engage them in Africa as they make both temporal and permanent homes on the continent.

The outline of this research is as follows: chapter two will explore the evolution of the African personality; what it meant during its time and manifestation of the ideology; its similarity with other Black empowerment movements like Negritude and Harlem Renaissance. The pursuit of an African personality by Kwame Nkrumah, and his African American network,

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<sup>24</sup> Kobi Kazembe Kalongi Kamboon, *The African Personality In America: An African-Centered Framework* (Tallahassee Fla., NUBIAN Nation Publications 1992), 37.

<sup>25</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (Chicago: African American Images, 2003), 3.

among many others was a form of racial uplift that was used to initiate the emerging new nations of the 'Third World' unto the global stage. According to Dean E. Robinson, Black Nationalism takes on its meaning within a particular context.<sup>26</sup> The same can be said about the African Personality and for the purpose of this research, it will be examined in the context of decolonization, Pan-Africanism and civil rights movement since those events strengthened the ties between Black people across the globe.

Chapter three will explore the African American journey to Ghana through the experiences of Shirley Graham Du Bois' (from here on would be referred to as Graham Du Bois). Their contribution to his pursuit would be central in this discussion. This chapter seeks to understand the contributors and motivations of reverse migration to Ghana between the 1950s and 1960s. This chapter will also investigate some factors overlooked by scholars which are significant in understanding some gender-related issues of the Pan-African alliance.

In chapter four, the study will discuss some of the problems and factors that hindered or limited their efforts to help the 'mother' country as 'returned sons and daughters.' Issues like Nkrumah's non-racial Pan-Africanism which conflicted with traditional Pan-Africanism, and the questioning of African Americans' loyalty to Ghana during the era of assassination attempts which have recently been shown to have had a CIA backing will be the focus of this chapter. Some of these issues have been briefly discussed by scholars but this analysis will expand on it and point to the need for Pan-Africanism to pay particular attention to such issues that only weakens the movement. The final chapter will conclude the research by summarizing all events discussed as well as highlighting some factors that can enhance diaspora Africans' roles in Africa's re-imagining and development. It will also rehash some of the ways that will help

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<sup>26</sup> Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism In American Politics And Thought*, 5.

bridge the gap and correct the erroneous perception of an ‘African-Black American’ feud in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This research examines primary materials such as transcribed interviews, memoirs, newspapers, and letters. The major challenge with respect to news articles in the Ghanaian newspaper has to do with newspapers authored by African Americans in Ghanaian newspapers during the time. Because activists and journalists like Julian Mayfield often wrote under anonymity, it becomes difficult to sometimes ascertain the level of their impact on national issues in Ghana through the print media which was accessible to most of them. Notwithstanding these challenges, the materials especially the memoirs corroborated by various correspondences and journals give an insight into their lived experiences under Nkrumah’s regime. In this research sources by Ghanaian authors were used and since Ghanaians use British English, the reader might occasionally see words spelt differently in American English. Example ‘colour’ instead of ‘color’. However, these would only be seen where there is a direct quotation.

The study of the African personality is important not only for Africans but people of African descent, as it helps to redefine oneself in response to daily life challenges one may encounter especially for Blacks in Western countries. This research seeks to show the impact of diaspora Africans in postcolonial African developments and hope to encourage an increase in reverse migration and wider opportunities for diaspora Africans to connect with continental Africa.

## CHAPTER II: THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY

*“We are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, that we are prepared to lay our own foundation, our own African personality. ...We are going to create our own African personality and identity. It's the only way that we can show the world that we are ready for our own battles.”*<sup>27</sup> **Kwame Nkrumah.**

The Second World War and the Cold War had the greatest impact on imperialism and transatlantic relations between Africans and African Americans. Diaspora and continental Africans used the rhetoric of each other's struggle for freedom as tools against their common enemy, white supremacy, in the form of colonialism and racial discrimination. In that period, African nationalists like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya who led independence struggle in their respective countries, supported the civil rights movement, by drawing links between colonialism in Africa and racial discrimination in the United States. Pan-Africanists like Nkrumah and Azikiwe had lived in the U.S and had been witnesses to racial discrimination. They were therefore, products of two forms of oppression. On the other side of the Atlantic were African American activists like William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (W. E. B Du Bois), Paul Robeson and George Padmore who refused to confine their fight against racial discrimination to only American Civil Rights Movement instead, they extended it to include anti-colonial activities.

The words of Kwame Nkrumah in the beginning of this chapter showcase the spirit of African nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, with the latter year declared as the year of Africa because many African countries gained independence. About 17 countries gained independence during the 1960s and the continent began to gain a foothold in the United Nations (UN). These achievements came through the efforts of African nationalists with the assistance of some

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<sup>27</sup> Kwame Nkrumah's Independence Day Speech 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957.

African American civil right activists. The spirit of African nationalism was celebrated as the fruit of Pan-African movements. President Nkrumah used his position and power to pursue a new Pan-African ideology; a new African personality and identity for Africans and people of African descents. James T. Campbell has described president Nkrumah as “a seeming synthesis of African traditionalism and western modernity.”<sup>28</sup> This synthesis was a result of his Ghanaian and overseas experiences which was also reflected in his pursuit of an African personality or the redefinition of ‘Africaness.’ It also made him appealing to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century radicals of all walks of life both in Africa and beyond. Thus, while the focus of this chapter is about understanding the African personality project under Nkrumah’s regime, first it will begin with a brief exploration of his political background prior to 1951 when he became the first African leader of government business in British colonial Africa. This will help explain how he became the ‘perfect’ “synthesis of both African traditionalism and western modernity” for Civil Rights Activists and Pan-Africanists. In this chapter, a brief overview of Pan-Africanism will be explored since the pursuit of a new African Personality was also a Pan-African agenda.

President Kwame Nkrumah formerly known as Francis Nwia Kwame Nkrumah was born in 1909 at Nkroful, a Nzema town in the western region of Gold Coast (Ghana). He was the only child to his mother and a step-sibling to many children whom his father had with other wives. His education and career endeavors led him to pursue a Teacher’s Training degree at Achimota College formerly known as Prince of Wales College in Accra. While attending there he met Pan-Africanist Kwegyir Aggrey, the first African staff member of Prince of Wales College. The young Nkrumah would later meet another influential Pan-Africanist, Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was then working as the editor and writer of the *African Morning Post* in Gold Coast before he went

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<sup>28</sup> James T. Campbell, *Middle Passage*, 316.

on to become governor-general of colonial Nigeria and later serve as the country's first president in 1963. Aggrey's Pan-African ideas greatly influenced Nkrumah, including his dislike of Marcus Garvey's exclusion of Whites in the Black Nationalist movement.

In president Nkrumah's autobiography, he recorded Aggrey's impact on him stating that "it was through him that my nationalism was first aroused."<sup>29</sup> Even though Nkrumah would continually declare that Garvey had the most impact on him,<sup>30</sup> he agreed with Aggrey that, "you can play a tune of sorts on the white keys, and you can play a tune of sorts on the black keys, but for harmony, you must use both the black and white."<sup>31</sup> This emphasized the need for collaboration between people of different racial background for the purpose of human liberation and true democracy to prevail. It also explains why Nkrumah adopted a Global Pan-Africanism which includes Africans both South and North of the Sahara and diaspora Africans.<sup>32</sup>

Kwame Nkrumah also recalled in his autobiography that prior to meeting Azikiwe in person he had been influenced by Azikewe's articles published *African Morning Post*, which he constantly read. It was both Azikiwe and Aggrey attendance to schools in the United States and their experiences overseas that prompted Nkrumah to expand his horizon and see what foreign nations could contribute to his educational or professional aspirations.<sup>33</sup>

Few scholars have discussed the impact of Nkrumah's years abroad on his political pursuits. Kwame Nimako's "African Awakening And Neo-Colonialism" discussed how Nkrumah picked symbols and ideas from the United States and applied it to the reshaping of

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<sup>29</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (New York: Nelson, 1957), 16, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, 45.

<sup>31</sup> Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Ali Mazrui, "Africa And The Black Diaspora: The Future In Historical Perspective", *International Journal*, Vol. 30, No.3, Africa (Summer 1975), 570.

<sup>33</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography*, 17. (Aggrey went to Colombia University while Azikiwe attended Lincoln University and University of Pennsylvania. Nkrumah would attend the latter schools. Azikiwe also wrote a recommendation letter for Nkrumah.)



Ghana. John Henry Clarke's *Kwame Nkrumah: His Years In America* argued that the foundations of Nkrumah's ideologies and the stages of Nkrumah's later nationalism that led to independence gained grounds in the U.S. Marika Sherwood and A.B Assensoh will also emphasize the impact of Nkrumah's years abroad over his later political endeavors and most of those years were spent in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

In mid-October 1935, Nkrumah arrived in Harlem, New York and found it "difficult to believe it was not Accra," because of the presence of so many black people.<sup>35</sup> He continued his journey to Lincoln University where he would graduate with a degree in Economics and Sociology in 1939.<sup>36</sup> Nkrumah will further his education at University of Pennsylvania, attain his master's in Philosophy and a bachelor's in Theology from the Lincoln Theological. His academic achievements led him to a teaching position in "negro civilization" at Lincoln University, where he has held sermons, as well as conducted surveys on African American families for academic purposes. He wrote that those experiences opened his eyes to the plight of African Americans in the country.<sup>37</sup> Nkrumah also had his fair share of racial discrimination. While on the bus from Philadelphia to Washington, they stopped at Baltimore for refreshment. When he requested for water to drink in the refreshment room, he was denied service and was instead told "the place for you, my man, is the spittoon outside."<sup>38</sup> His experiences in Gold Coast and the United States will shape his political ideas making him both anti-colonialist and anti-racist. In fact, Malcolm X will declare that "there is probably no more enlightened leader on the

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<sup>34</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad, 1935-1947* (Legon, Ghana: Freedom Publishers, 1996), A.B Assensoh, *Kwame Nkrumah of Africa: His Formative Years and The Beginning of His Political Career, 1935-1948* (Ilfracombe: Stockwell, 1989).

<sup>35</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography*, 31.

<sup>36</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Nkrumah to the School's Dean, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1941, Horace Mann Bond Papers (MS 411) Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

<sup>38</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography*, 43.

African continent than President Nkrumah, because he lived in America. He knows what it is like there. He could not live in that land as long as he did and be disillusioned, or confused, or be deceived.”<sup>39</sup>

While making academic progress, Nkrumah helped in the setup of African Student Association and attended some conferences organized by the Council on African Affairs (CAA) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Through this endeavor, he met activists and Pan-Africanist like W.E.B Du Bois, Paul Robeson, and Amy Ashwood Garvey.<sup>40</sup> In 1944 while serving as president of the African Student Association, the CAA asked Nkrumah to be a sponsor on its conference on Africa and in 1945, he joined the NAACP’s conference on colonial Africa to help draft resolutions.<sup>41</sup> Kwame Nkrumah finally left the United States in 1945, for London to continue his education. While in London, he was invited by J. B Danquah to join United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in the struggle for independence. UGCC was an elitist party made up of lawyers who sought to use constitutional means to gain independence thus the motto for UGCC was “self-government within the shortest possible time”. Nkrumah’s years abroad and participation in the Manchester Congress made him a non-conformist to the gradualist approach UGCC had adopted. This led him to separate from the party to form his own, the Convention People’s Party (CPP) with the motto “self-government now.” CPP was a mass party dominated by market women or female traders who often served as the financiers of his campaigns. Nkrumah’s agitation for independence through non-violence means will lead Gold Coast to independence in 1957.

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<sup>39</sup> Malcolm X, *The Autobiography Of Malcolm X*, ed. Haley Alex (New York: Ballantine Books 1992), 267.

<sup>40</sup> Marika Sherwood, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Years Abroad 1935-1947*, 84-85.

<sup>41</sup> James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 152.

President Nkrumah's experiences overseas made him the perfect "synthesis of African traditionalism and Western modernity." Brempong Osei-Tutu writes that "African American's attachment to Ghana can largely be attributed to President Nkrumah's projection of the "African personality."<sup>42</sup> In addition, Ghana as an English-speaking country made it easy for diaspora Africans to interact with its people unlike French-speaking countries such as Guinea and Senegal. With Nkrumah set as "the voice of Africa" and Ghana as the Mecca for people of African descent, he set to resurrect Marcus Garvey's race-conscious movement under the umbrella of African personality.<sup>43</sup>

As previously discussed, the imagery of Africa and that of people of African descent across the globe had undergone serious degradation at the hands of slavery, colonialism, racism, and neo-colonialism. The imagery of Africa and Blacks have been used to represent evil, failure, laziness, even to justify slavery and racial discrimination. This comes at the background of the social construction of race of which White has been deemed superior and Black as inferior. Presenting a speech at an all African Student Union annual meeting, W.E.B Du Bois said that prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans resented the idea of going to Africa or helping the continent because of the works of the American Colonization Society that sought to 'return' African Americans to Africa. This venture was considered as alienating their rights as citizens born in the United States. He also added that there was "the insistence in college and church that Africa had no history and that its inhabitants were the lowest of barbarians."<sup>44</sup> This will further

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<sup>42</sup> Brempong Osei-Tutu "Ghana's "Slave Castles", Tourism, and the Social Memory of the Atlantic Slave Trade" In *Archeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Akinwumi and Toyin Falola (Bloomington-Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2007), 185.

<sup>43</sup> W. E. B Du Bois letter of Introduction of Kwame Nkrumah at the U.N 1960, 1 (Accessed from W. E. B Du Bois Papers (MS 312) Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

<sup>44</sup> W.E.B Du Bois, keynote address at 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference-The All African Student Union, June-18-222, 1958. Du Bois Papers (MS 312).

fuel the resentment some had against Africans and will also cause others to venture on a rescue Africa mission like the Tuskegee Institute's work in Togo.<sup>45</sup> Maya Angelou, Graham Du Bois, Curtis Kojomo Morrow and Nell Irvin Painter who lived in Ghana during the 1960s quickly came to the realization that they had been deceived about the image of Africa and Africans depicted through Western media.<sup>46</sup> African Americans also suffered such abasement because of their linkage to slavery and their African heritage.

Thus, the new African Personality became a unifying tool which aided them in their struggle for independence and correcting negative stereotypes. There is no definite origin of the term African personality but, Viera Vilhanova and D. Masolo agree that Edward Blyden was the first person known to have used the term 'African Personality' as a way of denouncing Eurocentric images of Africa and the idea that blacks were inferior to whites.<sup>47</sup> The Africanist Cheik Anta Diop is said to have defined the African personality as "the basis and foundation of our humanism...to being freed from the western grip. It requires that our people should speak through us...our peoples only mean to give expression to what they alone can show forth: how they see themselves, how they identify themselves in the context of the world situation..."<sup>48</sup> His definition is similar to the activist Bennie Khaopa, who defines a person's African personality as "his world view, i.e. his own existential reality, his own view of his collective being or existence."<sup>49</sup> For President Nkrumah, the African Personality "finds expression in a re-

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<sup>45</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama In Africa: Booker T. Washington, The German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>46</sup> James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 18-19.

<sup>47</sup> Viera P. Vilhanova, "The African Personality Or The Dilemma Of The Other And The Self In The Philosophy Of Edward W. Blyden 1832-1912" *Asian And African Studies*, Vol.7 No. 2 1998, 167.

<sup>48</sup> Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), 118.

<sup>49</sup> Bennie A. Khoapa, *The African Personality* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1980), 1.

awakening consciousness among Africans and peoples of African descent of the bonds which unite us-our historical past, our culture, our common experience and our aspirations.”<sup>50</sup>

President Nkrumah’s purpose of the African personality is further revealed in the opening quote of this chapter which was declared at the independence celebration of Ghana. First, he declared, “we are going to create our own African personality and identity.” This was to give the world new imagery of Africa. The West had created a personality for Africans and people of African descent which have been further downgraded through colonialism and scientific racism. The former adopted the idea of an African being “half devil, half child” leading to a paternalistic attitude towards the continent espoused in colonialism. Such an idea needed to be refuted as it sought to rebirth itself in the form of neo-colonialism. The latter, scientific racism argued that blacks were biologically inferior to whites. This idea was used to oppress Black people especially those in the Western world. At independence, a new identity was therefore needed, an identity which will make African Americans who hitherto shied from being called “African” to proudly be African. This will also influence the rejection of the derogatory term “negro”, “colored” among others to the acceptance of “Afro”-American or “African”-American. For one writer, the derogatory term like “negro” deprived the African American of any race or origin and hence by using “African” as a prefix to “American”, they were then connected to both their original roots and their new roots.<sup>51</sup>

President Nkrumah had also declared that “we are going to demonstrate to the world...it is the only way we can show the world that we are ready for our own battles.” One of Nkrumah’s popular slogan was “we prefer self-government in danger than servitude in tranquility.” This

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<sup>50</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 205.

<sup>51</sup> John Runcie, “The Black Culture Movement and The Black Community,” *Journal of American Studies*, Vol.10, No.2, (August, 1976), 189.

proclamation was used to challenge the colonial assertion that Africans were not ready for self-government. This will lead to some of the bloody independence struggles in places like Algeria, Kenya, and Guinea-Bissau. The assertion of a new personality was to empower the African to challenge the spread of Eurocentrism. As African countries' begun to gain independence, there was the assumption that they would not last and various economic pressures and political interference from the West were used to ensure their failure. So, the pursuit of an African personality was to make Africans a force to be reckoned with. Thus, the African personality was not a policy to be contained in Africa but one to have a global effect, one geared towards changing the perception of the western world about Africa. What was important here was for the world to see this new imagery being created. As W.E.B Du Bois and Marcus Garvey will declare, the world had to know that Africa was wide awake.<sup>52</sup> These ideologies will influence many of the ventures that Nkrumah will take and also influence the people he will include in this pursuit. Because of his transnational focus, he often worked with people from different continents but most importantly with diaspora Africans.

Therefore, it can be argued that the African personality is the dignity of being African demonstrated through one's cultural aesthetics, political and economic power. It is what makes an African or one of an African descent proud to be associated with Africa in the face of the constant subjugation of "Africanness" to "Europeanness" by Westernization. Kwame Nkrumah saw the pursuit of an African personality as creating a united force against colonialism and neo-colonialism as well as asserting Africa's authority within the Third World. For diaspora Africans who lived under his regime like Maya Angelou, Graham Du Bois, and Alphaeus Hunton, an

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<sup>52</sup> Marcus Garvey, "the True Solution to the Negro Problem-1922" in *Philosophy and Opinions, the Journal of Pan-African Studies*, ed. Amy Jacques Garvey (eBook 2009), 6.

African Personality was about African Revolution, Black unity and the projection that the Black person was capable of managing his own affairs to refute the notion that, Blacks were incapable because of their racial inferiority.<sup>53</sup> By joining forces with Nkrumah's pursuit, they were able to pressure the United States government to enact favorable laws or civil right acts to help minority groups in the country. They also saw it as joining forces with Africans to influence U.S foreign policy towards Africa in a favorable manner.

Masolo notes that according to Blyden, the African personality was not “a prove of black racism to oppose the arrogant white racism,” rather “as an opposition to any form of racial prejudice and social chauvinism and as a catalyst to constructive solidarity among all Africans.”<sup>54</sup> This resonates with Nkrumah’s independence speech that the African personality was supposed to be a guide of the new Africa’s development. And in other speeches also Nkrumah clarified that he was not a racialist but a universalist who had only waged war on all forms of oppression. Thus, the African personality was not a racist movement and not one to assert Black superiority over Whites but an ideology to uplift the black.

President Kwame Nkrumah pursued this ideology through African Unity by rehashing Marcus Garvey’s idea that, “if you will but think down the future and compare the possibilities of that future with the happenings of the past you will come to the conclusion that there is no other salvation for the Negro but through a free and independent Africa.”<sup>55</sup> Nkrumah constantly emphasized that the black man will be “free to breathe the air of freedom, which is his to breathe in any part of the world”<sup>56</sup> only when Africa is united. With this mindset, Nkrumah called for an

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<sup>53</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* (New York: Random House, 1986), 16.

<sup>54</sup> D.A Masolo, *African Philosophy in search of identity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1994), 12.

<sup>55</sup> Marcus Garvey, ed. Amy Jacques Garvey, “the True Solution to the Negro Problem-1922”, 17.

<sup>56</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, “Message to The Black People In Britain” in *The Struggle Continues: Six Pamphlets* (London: Panaf Books Ltd, 1973), 14.

All African Peoples conference, the first International Africanist Congress among others. To deliberate on strategies to free countries still under colonial rule and to develop some strategies to help develop the new Nations. He also called for an all African government which started with Sekou Touré's Guinea, to form the Guinea- Ghana union, as the nucleus of the anticipated United States of Africa.<sup>57</sup> A *Daily Defender* newspaper article discussing the merger also mentioned that Nkrumah was inspired by the thirteen American colonies which led to the United States of America, to form the Guinea-Ghana union which eventually, will lead to the formation of Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963.<sup>58</sup> OAU had a profound impact on Malcolm X whose last years were actively engaged in Pan-Africanism, and visiting African leaders. This interaction also served to solidify the union between Africans and diaspora Africans. Thus, OAU will be the model for Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) established in 1964 a year after his return from Ghana.<sup>59</sup>

The African personality was also pursued through the promotion of African culture, through the print and electronic media which led to the setup of Ghana television. This brought dramatic changes such as the change from British oriented programs to African oriented programs. The media became the platform to showcase African aesthetics. In fact, Professor Don R. Browne, of Purdue University who had spent some years in Africa in a 1960s speech to media educators and the Speech Association of America said that "Africa is perhaps the last testing ground for the thesis that broadcast media can be used purposefully to uplift society."<sup>60</sup> Africa may have been late with the use of broadcast media as a tool for development but it was a tool that helped in the fight against colonialism. With respect to culture, African clothes, 'African

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<sup>57</sup> "Ghana Merger Upsets British: Ghana-Guinea Union Worries British" *Daily Defender*, Nov. 25, 1958, 1.

<sup>58</sup> "Ghana Merger Upsets British: Ghana-Guinea Union Worries British."

<sup>59</sup> Malcolm X, Speech on the Founding of the OAAU June 28, 1964, 1.

<sup>60</sup> 'TV, Radio Spur African Development', *The Chicago Defender*, Jan. 1, 1966, 8.



hairstyle' among others became popular during this period of African personality pursuit.

Kwame Nkrumah was noted to wear the Africa garb especially clothes from the different part of Ghana to signify unity. African wear took a different turn under his administration all towards the projection of the African personality.

There was also the setup of Encyclopedia Africana to handle the intellectual part of the African personality in the promotion of African history. It was an endeavor geared toward correcting the wrong notion that Africa had no history prior to the coming of Europeans in Africa. And for W. E. B Du Bois, it was “the task of Encyclopedia Africana to correct these falsehoods and cause their removal from textbooks and common beliefs”.<sup>61</sup> The Encyclopedia Africana was a lifelong dream of Du Bois which was revived after Ghana’s independence. The project also aimed to connect Africans and people of African descent. Its secretariat reflected that; it had African Americans such as Kelly Miller, a professor at Howard University, J. W. Cromwell; from American Negro Academy and W.E.B Du Bois as its director. The African members included: lawyers John Mensah Sarbah, and J.E. Casely Hayford.<sup>62</sup> L. W. Hesse a member of the Encyclopedia Africana explained its significance as; an international cooperation, scholars with a common academic interest but most importantly, “It will have a spirit and the spirit of Encyclopedia Africana will be to act like a kind of catalyst – to mobilize all available energy for the purpose of exploiting the cultural wealth of Africa and defining the total **African personality**.”<sup>63</sup>

One thing which was emphasized in this project was the use of Africans or people of African descent. Both Du Bois and Nkrumah resented the idea of including whites to tell the

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<sup>61</sup> W. E. B Du Bois’ Encyclopedia Africana Report to the Academy of Sciences, 21 December 1961.

<sup>62</sup> Clarence G. Contee, “The Encyclopedia Africana Project of W. E. B. Du Bois” *African Historical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1971), 79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/216269>

<sup>63</sup> L. W. Hesse speech on Encyclopedia Africana to the secretariat. September 4, 1963, (Du Bois paper), 3.

African story. L. W Hesse in a speech before the secretariat said: “for so long the spokesmen in Africa have been non-African. Now the time has come for Africans to speak for themselves. And the Encyclopedia Africana should be the medium which the African can re-interpret himself to the world.”<sup>64</sup> Even though there was the challenge of few Ghanaian or African scholars in the needed field, Hesse like others were of the view that, only a black person can give a thorough interpretation of the black man’s history.

The political pursuit of African personality was also evident in the revival of Pan-Africanism. It can be argued that the African personality was the new pan-Africanism which will go to affect Pan-African movements beyond the 1960s. In fact, in W.E.B Du Bois’ autobiography, he discussed that the All African Peoples Conference was taking the place of the Pan-African Congress.<sup>65</sup> Homer A. Jack, an associate executive director of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA), also referred to the conference as the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, most political moves for an African personality pursuit was geared towards reviving Pan-Africanism.

Pan-Africanism is a socio-political movement that connects Africans and people of African descent towards political, economic and cultural freedom. It also asserts the rights of black people against white supremacy.<sup>67</sup> Pan-Africanism which has been the bedrock of African and African American interactions was started in the African diaspora. The founding fathers of the movement include Sylvester Williams, W.E.B Du Bois and George Padmore. Later in the 1930s-40s the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, and Nnamdi Azikiwe joined the rank of

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<sup>64</sup> L.W. Hesse, Speech to Encyclopedia Africana Secretariat, 4.

<sup>65</sup> W. E. B Dubois, *The Autobiography Of W. E. B Dubois: A Soliloquy On Viewing My Life From The Last Decade Of Its First Century* (International Publishers, 1968), 401.

<sup>66</sup> Homer A. Jack, “Americans At African Confab; Attend Event As Observers” *Chicago Defender*, 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1959.

<sup>67</sup> Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide*, 34.

the Generals of the movement. The first Pan-African Congress (PAC) was organized by Sylvester Williams in 1900 in London but, Du Bois will pick it up and organize a series of PACs from 1919-1927 changing locations between Europe and America. Colin Legum writes that most of the early congresses were not militant and did not enact actual policies but was more of a platform to share views or fraternize. Early PACs were also accommodationist towards colonialism. In other words, they did not demand an end to colonial rule instead they called for the inclusion of Africans in the colonial government. For instance, some of the resolutions of PAC 1919 include;

v. “*The State*. The natives of Africa must have a right to participate in the government as fast as their development permits...they shall at once be allowed to participate in local and tribal government, according to ancient usage and this participation shall gradually extend, as education and experience proceed, to higher offices of states;”<sup>68</sup> Again these early congresses were dominated by African Americans with few Africans and was largely an elitist movement like most Black Nationalist movement.

Perhaps the most “transformational” Pan-African Congress was the Manchester Congress of 1945. It is believed to have been the catalyst for African Nationalism of the 1940s which will lead to most African countries gaining independence. Kwame Nkrumah together with George Padmore and others organized this congress and Africa was greatly represented at the congress. Some of the popular faces present at this congress included; Amy Ashwood Garvey, George Padmore, C.L.R James, Kwame Nkrumah, J.C de Graft Johnson, Raphael Armattoe, Jomo Kenyatta, and W.E.B Du Bois. During this Congress, the Pan-Africanist agreed that; “1. The

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<sup>68</sup> Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide*, 133.

principles of the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter be put into practice at once. And 2. The right of Africans to develop the economic resources of their country without hindrance.”<sup>69</sup>

As discussed above, PAC was initially controlled by Diaspora Africans, from 1900-1940s but post-Manchester saw the movement being transplanted to Africa and, as it shifted to Africa, it became African oriented, controlled by Africans. Nkrumah became the new face or “president” of the movement as Du Bois dramatically described handing over his title as president of the movement to Nkrumah when Ghana became independent.<sup>70</sup> With independence, the African American role in PAC was overshadowed by Africans, leading almost to their non-existence. In other words, the African American role in Pan-Africanism of the 1950s and 1960s appeared to be ceremonial. This will influence Nkrumah’s engagement of the African diaspora in Africa as part of the Pan-African agenda because for him, “The concept of Africa for the Africans -does not mean that other races are excluded from it... It only means that Africans who naturally are in the majority in Africa, shall and must govern themselves and their own countries.”<sup>71</sup> Nkrumah encouraged the African diaspora to be engaged in the African revolution to help materialize the dream. African Americans were integral to Nkrumah in this pursuit.

The African personality was also in some ways a racial ideology that was used by Nkrumah and his African American network to uplift the African race at the height of decolonization and civil rights movement. Kevin Gaines writes that “...racial uplift ideology describes a prominent response of black middle-class leaders, spokespersons, and activists to the crisis marked by the assault on the civil and political rights of African Americans.”<sup>72</sup> This idea

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<sup>69</sup> Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide*, 136.

<sup>70</sup> Letter from W.E.B Du Bois to Kwame Nkrumah, February 7, 1957 (Du Bois Papers).

<sup>71</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, Opening Speech at the Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security in Africa, Accra, April 7-10, 1960, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Kevin K. Gaines, “Racial Uplift Ideology in the Era of ‘the Negro Problem’”

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1865-1917/essays/racialuplift.htm> accessed on 8/6/18

helps to explain not only the pursuit of an African personality but also its structures and that of most Black nationalist movements. At independence, most African countries did not have many educated people to take over the helms of affairs, the few who had either been educated in Britain or America were the ones that led the independence struggle and became its heads as president or prime ministers. These few western educated African elites took upon themselves to help resurrect the African imagery as well as connect with the African diaspora. Thus, with the help of educated African Americans, many of their expectations for the new nations were achieved. For Sekou Touré, the economy must rediscover its African personality. With law, it must work on the basis of the African personality. Of education, its mission is “the rehabilitation and blossoming of the African personality.”<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the pursuit was also a resurrection of Garveyism, reinforcing racial pride. Garvey accentuated Black pride, through economic empowerment and a desire to reconnect with Africa as core features of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The pursuit of the African personality was carried out in a similar vein. The unification of Africa was to set a platform where each African government could depend on others to assist them economically and not depend on neo-colonialists. President Nkrumah promised to assist any country that was willing to fight for their independence knowing the consequence of such an action. For instance, when France gave its African colonies to either accept to be part of the French community or get independence and risk losing support, Sekou Touré led Guinea to vote for independence. He declared to French Prime minister Charles De Gaulle that “we prefer freedom in poverty to opulence in slavery”. Thus, France withdrew its support from independent Guinea and Nkrumah

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<sup>73</sup> Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide*, 118.

with the Pan-African agenda came to the rescue by providing about \$28 million to aid Sekou Touré's Guinea.<sup>74</sup>

One of the Afrocentric 'sermons' preached by Molefi Kete Asante is that "language is the essential instrument of social cohesion." And that "the ability to hold unto language is one of the keys to sanity and effective resistance to colonization."<sup>75</sup> Nkrumah promoted the study of African language as a way of promoting the African personality.<sup>76</sup> Language has been the challenge of most African Americans who make the effort to 'return' to Africa. Ghana is a multiethnic country with several languages and one's inability to learn perhaps the most popular one will cause such a person to remain on the peripherals of the Ghanaian community. The importance and perhaps expectations of Ghanaians for African Americans to know a local language is made evident in a conversation between Efua Sutherland, a cultural Pan-Africanist and Maya Angelou when the former tried to help the latter secure a job in Ghana. During their meeting with the chair of Institute of African Studies, J. H. Nketsia, Efua Sutherland mentioned that "Maya is already trying to hear Fanti and would make a good Ghanaian."<sup>77</sup> For this cultural Pan-Africanist, the language is part of the Ghanaian identity. Some African Americans like Graham Du Bois and Maya Angelou made the attempt to learn the popular languages like Fante and Twi thereby showed their support of a new African Personality that had pride in its own language as opposed to European and Western languages.

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<sup>74</sup> Unknown Author, "Two West African Nations To Form Republic: Ghana Will Lend \$28,000,000 To Guinea." *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1958. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory Of Social Change*, (Chicago, Illinois: African American Images, 2003), 42.

<sup>76</sup> Deryl Zizwe Poe, *Kwame Nkrumah's Contribution to Pan-Africanism; An Afrocentric Analysis* (New York; Routledge, 2003), 107.

<sup>77</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, 16.

However, the pursuit of African Personality was not just a cultural movement and thus cannot be ascribed to cultural nationalism even though, it had a lot to do with the projections of what ‘Africanness’ ought to be. It went beyond cultural projections. Orhin Yorke and Kwame Arhin agree that despite Nkrumah’s pursuit of an African personality, he did not set up any cultural policy even though he emphasized an African culture.<sup>78</sup>

While Nkrumah encouraged African Americans to join him in Africa, he did not encourage a mass migration, simply because the country was still on the verge of development. According to Masolo, one of the central figures of the Harlem Renaissance Claude McKay was of the view that while the pursuit of black personality necessitated a return to Africa, the return could be both physical, intellectual or imaginative of which the Harlem Renaissance poets greatly explored.<sup>79</sup> The ambassador of Ghana to the United States in an interview summarized a reason against mass migration when he said “if a group of 500 American blacks suddenly came to Ghana, we couldn’t absorb them”<sup>80</sup> because the country did not yet have structures to accommodate everyone. As would be demonstrated in the next chapter, not every African American who went to Ghana to help was able to effectively do so and even improve his or her life.

Even though Pan-Africanism was African oriented, the diaspora was very much included and engaged in its pursuit. Its impact would be seen in the Black Power movement led by Stokely Carmichael whose zeal was demonstrated in his adoption of Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Touré’s names; Kwame Ture. Evidently, the Black cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s was also influenced by the African personality pursuit as both African and African

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<sup>78</sup> Kwame Arhin, ed. *The Life And Works Of Kwame Nkrumah: Papers Of A Symposium Organized By The Institute Of African Studies, University Of Ghana, Legon* (Trenton, NJ.,: Africa World Press 1993) 8

<sup>79</sup> D.A Masolo, *African Philosophy*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> Robert G. Wiesbord, *Ebony Kinship*, 155.

American leaders exchanged ideas through pan-African gatherings. The pursuit affected both Africans and people of African descent. For instance, Anis Haffer one of the popular Educationist in Ghana remembering Nkrumah's transatlantic struggle wrote that "Nkrumah's pursuit of the African personality, an international clarion call, inspired the blues singer, James Brown's revolutionary lyrics, "Say it loud, I'm black and proud."<sup>81</sup>

In many ways, the pursuit of an African personality was also similar to movements like Negritude of Francophone Africa and the Harlem Renaissance of the African diaspora. Examining Aime Cesaire's invention of negritude, D.A Masolo writes that Cesaire used negritude to "conceptualize the dignity, the personhood or humanity of black people."<sup>82</sup> Harlem Renaissance, on the other hand, he writes was a cultural movement that sought to "correct the mistakes, sometimes violently and to reestablish the truth"<sup>83</sup> The mistakes here, represented the misconceptions and erroneous representation of Africans and people of African descent by Western countries. Langston Hughes, one of the forerunners of the Harlem Renaissance wrote that "we, the creators of the new black generation, want to express our black personality without shame or fear..."<sup>84</sup> The black personality is synonymous to the African personality. Because Negritude and Harlem renaissance were both geared towards the explosion and acknowledgment of black intellectual prowess among many other ventures which blacks had been denied access to. Like negritude which urged a return to African roots, the African personality also urged a return African roots.

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<sup>81</sup> Anis Haffar, "Kwame Nkrumah and the African Personality-In Memory of Africa's Man of the Millennium" Category: Opinon of *Graphic Online*, Sep 19, 2016. <http://www.graphic.com.gh/features/opinion/Kwame-nkrumah-and-the-african-personality-in-memory-of-africa-s-man-of-the-millennium.html>. Accessed June 2018

<sup>82</sup> D.A Masolo, *African Philosophy*, 2.

<sup>83</sup> D.A Masolo, *African Philosophy*, 11.

<sup>84</sup> D.A Masolo, *African Philosophy*, 3.



A critique of this pursuit was leveled in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century by the African scholar Ali Mazrui. Mazrui questioned the genuineness of the African personality. For Mazrui, Nkrumah's idea of an African personality is lacking in the sense that, it was a colonial creation in response to European imperialism and thus does not define the true African personality. Again, the idea was modeled with a combination of western modernity and African traditionalism without Africa's Triple Heritage. According to Mazrui, Africa's triple heritage include "indigenous, Islamic and Western forces"<sup>85</sup> In other words, the identity of an African is complex and not a straight line. Even though it is a response to colonialism, which is not different from most black nationalist movements, what is significant is that all these movements have emerged in response to addressing the political, economic and cultural oppression of people of African descent and correcting negative stereotypes about Black people.

Nkrumah's African personality was unique in that it was not limited to a particular race, it included Africans and people of African descent whereas movements like Negritude even though included people of African descent, was largely a French-centered movement which had more relevance for francophone Africa than other regions or people outside Africa. Speaking at the opening of the Institute of African Studies in Accra, President Nkrumah discussed the African genius by addressing the difference between Negritude and his pursuit of African personality. He asserted that;

"when I speak of the African genius, I mean something different from negritude, something not apologetical, but dynamic. Negritude consists in a mere literary affectation and style which piles up word upon word and image upon image with occasional reference to Africa and other things African. I do not mean a vague brotherhood based on a criterion of colour, or on the idea that Africans have no reasoning but only a sensitivity. By the African genius, I mean

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<sup>85</sup> Ali Al'Amin Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (London: BBC Publications, 1986), 21.

something positive, our socialist conception of society, the efficiency and validity of our traditional statecraft, our highly developed code of morals, our hospitality and our purposeful energy.”<sup>86</sup>

The pursuit of an African Personality was reflected in the Africanization of the civil service, the study of African language and emphasis of African culture in education, all aimed at liberating Africa from the grips of colonialism. But most importantly, it was reflected in the pursuit of African unity. The idea of a new African personality motivated the drive for a United States of Africa, the formation of Organization of African Union (OAU) and later Pan-African cultural movements like PANAFEST. In all these pursuits, African Americans helped, working hand in hand with African leaders. Civil right activists like Graham Du Bois, W.E.B Du Bois, Bill Sutherland, and Maya Angelou among others added their voices to this pre-independence cry to correct negative images about Africa. Their journey to Ghana and their contribution to this pursuit will be the discussion for the next chapter

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<sup>86</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Axioms of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: PANAF, 1967), 5.

### CHAPTER III: MOTHER AFRICA CALLS

"In everything I do, write or say, I think of myself as your ambassador, faithfully representing the true Ghana. I therefore try to be thoughtful and diplomatic, though firm and always absolutely correct" wrote Graham Du Bois to Kwame Nkrumah, October 20, 1966.<sup>87</sup> Graham Du Bois' affirmation of president Nkrumah who by then had been overthrown as president of Ghana through a coup in 1966 is demonstrated in the opening quote. This declaration or affirmation was also a pledge to Africa, in uplifting the Black race and defending it against all sorts of oppression from within or outside it. Graham Du Bois was an American who would die as an African. Her life and work reflect the tie that binds Africans and African Americans, one that became potent in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The 20th century Civil Rights movement and African decolonization united Africans and people of African descent across the globe. Historian Penny M. Von Eschen has argued that during this period, interactions between Africans and African Americans were based on an understanding that Africa's destiny was 'inextricably' entangled with the destiny of people of African descent.<sup>88</sup> At the height of these movements, many African Americans relocated to or visited Europe (France) and Africa (Ghana). Popular figures such as Pauli Murray, Maya Angelou, W.E.B. Du Bois, Bill Sutherland, and Graham Du Bois were among the vast number of people who went to Ghana in response to what historian Kevin Gaines calls "the combined repressive forces of the Cold War."<sup>89</sup> Civil rights activists fought for Africa's independence and human rights for all across the globe through institutions like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Council on African Affairs (CAA), and the

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<sup>87</sup> Letter from Shirley Graham Du Bois to Kwame Nkrumah in, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Conakry Years*, 77.

<sup>88</sup> Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans And Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>89</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans In Ghana*, 25.

American Committee on African Affairs (ACOA) in collaboration with African nationalists like Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe.

The efforts of African Americans did not end with fighting against colonialism, especially in West Africa, where work continued toward new nation-building, and their role in Africa during the 1950s and 1960s cannot be overemphasized. Activists who went abroad have been accused of ‘running away’ from racial issues that plagued the United States. Intellectuals like W.E.B Du Bois and his wife Shirley, as well as Julian Mayfield, have been criticized as ‘escapists’ for ‘neglecting’ the civil rights movement. However, Kevin Gaines has refuted such notions by showing in his work, *American-Africans In Ghana*, how they used the country to support the civil rights movement. This chapter will explore Nkrumah’s clarion call for help and will also look at why some African Americans in the middle of the U.S Civil Rights Movement turned to Africa. But most importantly, through the lived experience of Graham Du Bois in Ghana, this chapter will examine the various platforms and means African Americans used to assist Nkrumah’s pursuit of an African personality.

The journey of African Americans to Africa since the 19<sup>th</sup> century has often been based on multiple factors including the realities of chattel slavery and the racial discrimination it caused in the U.S. This issue has led the likes of James T. Campbell to argue that, African Americans relationship with Africa is based on escaping hardship in the United States. Historian David Levering Lewis agrees with this argument, and explain in the preface to Campbell’s *Middle Passage* that “when an African American asks, “what is Africa to me? He or she is also asking what is America to me?”<sup>90</sup> In other words, African Americans only turn to Africa when conditions are not favorable to them in the United States. This assertion is described by historian

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<sup>90</sup> James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African Americans Journey To Africa*, XII.

James H. Meriwether as the ‘bad times thesis’ and emphasizes that it does not hold true for other eras like the Great Depression in the 1930s.<sup>91</sup> However, an examination of the early journey to Africa tends to support Campbell’s argument. For instance, early Pan-Africanists or emigrationists, like Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and Edward Blyden of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, largely encouraged the journey to Africa because ‘there was no room’ for African Americans in the United States after emancipation. Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which garnered over a million followers, more than members of the NAACP also rehashed the need for African Americans to turn to Africa. That movement insisted that African Americans need to return to the motherland as the only way to fully develop as a Black person born in America.<sup>92</sup>

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, an encouragement to go to Africa was not entirely about embracing ‘the mother continent,’ finding one’s root, or running away from racism. Rather, the migration to Africa was focused on rebuilding Africa and helping its people gain freedom from colonial rule, and African nationalists welcomed the help. When Marcus Garvey sounded a similar call in the early 1920s, he perceived it would not only address the problems of Africa but would also provide a solution to “the Negro problem.”<sup>93</sup> The impact of Garvey’s ideas on Black Nationalist movements and individuals is still prevalent among modern Black identity movements. President Nkrumah on numerous occasions acknowledged Garvey’s impact on Black people. For instance, in his autobiography, Nkrumah wrote that Garvey’s philosophies influenced him the most.<sup>94</sup> In 1951, Kwame Nkrumah was invited as a guest speaker for Lincoln University’s commencement where he was also scheduled to receive an honorary doctorate.

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<sup>91</sup> James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Marcus Garvey, “The True Solution to the Negro Problem-1922,” 33.

<sup>93</sup> Marcus Garvey, “The True Solution to the Negro Problem-1922,” 33.

<sup>94</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Ghana: The Autobiography Of Kwame Nkrumah*, 45.

During his address, he encouraged African Americans to join their brothers in Africa to fight off colonialism and help build emerging new nations. He said, “there was never a better period for the ‘Back to Africa’ movement of Marcus Garvey than today. Let the negro scientists and technicians and teachers flow in ever large numbers to Gold Coast and to help build the new Gold Coast...”<sup>95</sup>

This call will be repeated in 1958, a year after the independence of Ghana which saw prominent African Americans civil rights activist like Philip A. Randolph and Martin Luther King go to Ghana to join in the celebration. Even politician Richard Nixon traveled to Ghana, albeit as a representative of the United States government. While in the U.S, Nkrumah visited various institutions to urge African Americans and African students to bring their skills to support the nation’s development. President Nkrumah made the call by appealing to the ancestral ties between Africans and African Americans, and, the plight of Blacks across the globe caused by white supremacy in the form of colonialism, neo-colonialism and racial discrimination. He also added that, “Freedom for the Gold Coast is a test case for Africa and the African race all over the world. It is therefore incumbent on the negro-world and all lovers of democracy to...support the struggle.”<sup>96</sup> This statement implied that Africa’s independence or Ghana’s independence was a major step towards freedom for all African descendants on the globe. Civil rights activists saw the need to support Africa’s independence as a test case for African Americans’ to assert their socio-political rights in the United States.

The problem and demands of the Civil Rights Movement and African nationalism or decolonization were similar. Whereas Africans wanted self-governance which comprised of

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<sup>95</sup> Kwame Nkrumah Commencement Address at Lincoln University, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1951, 7 (Accessed from Horace Mann Bond Papers (MS 411) University of Massachusetts, Special Collections, February 2018).

<sup>96</sup> Nkrumah, Commencement Address, 7.

political, economic and cultural freedom from European imperialists, African Americans agitated for economic empowerment, equal opportunities, and access to education from their government. Thus, Nkrumah's call created a platform that sought to satisfy to an extent each other's needs. For instance, Ghana at independence had to rely on existing colonial labor, that is British officials or civil servants who were often non-Ghanaians and had been employed by the colonial government. The extent of this problem is demonstrated by Tawia Adamafio, the Minister for Establishment (civil service) under Nkrumah's governance. Adamafio was worried that independent Ghana's Armed Forces were under the control of white officers who had been employed by the colonial government. General Alexander, the British official in command of Ghana's Armed Forces and other white officers were later removed through the policy of Africanization with fears that whoever controlled the army had the power to overthrow the government or undermine it.<sup>97</sup> But for Adamafio, Nkrumah and Michael Dei-Anang, the presence of non-African, white officials in those positions undermined Ghana's power to lead anti-colonial government that projected an African personality. Activist leaders saw the appointments of African Americans to positions as examples of using your 'own' to rebuild a national agenda. Even though none of the African Americans in Nkrumah's administration occupied the position as that of General Alexander, having them on the team was crucial to Nkrumah whose new government lacked a large number of Ghanaians with certain expertise. Nkrumah thus encouraged and surrounded himself with diaspora Africans who had the expertise and who believed in uniting Africa as a prerequisite to freedom for all blacks in the world.

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<sup>97</sup> Tawia Adamafio, *By Nkrumah's Side: The Labor and The Wounds* (Accra, Ghana: Westcoast Publishing House 1982), 86.

The call proved timely for African Americans who were unsatisfied with the American system or whose skills were underappreciated during the Civil Rights Movement. For instance, in 1960 Pauli Murray, an activist, lawyer, and the first African American woman to be an ordained priest in America, jumped to the opportunity to serve as a senior lecturer in Ghana. Her decision to go to Africa was influenced by many factors with one being that her job with a New York firm despite its financial security did not give her full satisfaction.<sup>98</sup> Aside from the lack of avenues to explore their skills, others responded to the call because of anti-communist attacks. Activists like Julian Mayfield, Vicki Garvin, Graham Du Bois, and W.E.B Du Bois responded to the call because they were victims of anti-communist attacks. For example, Du Bois was under investigation for being charged as a foreign agent because of his association with the Peace Information Center which was considered as a subversive group. Anti-colonial activities and socialist leanings in the era of McCarthyism were considered a threat to national security. This explains why the U. S FBI held files on Graham Du Bois and her husband, marking the two as threats to national security. Because of their involvement with the NAACP and CAA, their movements were monitored.<sup>99</sup> The NAACP and the CAA were among civil rights institutions that engaged in independence struggle in Africa. Such engagements were deemed by the US government as un-American activities which brought pressure from the House Un-American Committee on its victims. Un-American in the sense that, America was being ‘misrepresented’ abroad especially in areas that America sought to gain foothold like Africa. Historian Mary Dudziak has demonstrated in her book, *Cold War Civil Rights*, that the fear of such Un-

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<sup>98</sup> Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography Of A Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest And Poet* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1987), 318.

<sup>99</sup> U.S Department of Justice declassified files made available to Mr. William Maxwell, University of Illinois, Associate Professor of English, May 16 2007 through the Freedom of Information Act, <http://omeka.wustl.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/fbeyes/duboisshirley> accessed 9/6/2018



American activities will lead to the emergence of goodwill ambassadors,<sup>100</sup> sent overseas to counter arguments of racism and oppression. This venture she argues will have a positive impact on civil rights act with the biggest milestone being *Brown v. Board of Education* that will end segregation in American public schools.

Others, like the artist Tom Feelings, responded to the call by going to a place where he was part of the majority.<sup>101</sup> Underlining this response was the desire to discover one's roots and he was not alone. Pauli Murray explained that she needed to "satisfy a nagging curiosity about the African component of my ancestry" as one of her reasons for going to Ghana.<sup>102</sup> It is noteworthy to also mention that Nkrumah's school years in the United States also influenced the decision of others to respond to the call. For instance, Bill Sutherland who later became an assistant to Ghana's finance minister relocated to Ghana after being inspired by Nkrumah's nationalist course and his long relations with Bayard Rustin who happened to be his mentor.

Yet in the examination of the African American presence in Nkrumah's Ghana or Africa, African American women have been sidelined. In fact, in Kevin Gaines immense work, *American Africans in Ghana*, he discussed more than six male nationalists: Malcolm X, George Padmore, Bill Sutherland, Kwame Nkrumah, Martin Luther King, W.E.B Du Bois and Richard Wright with some given whole chapters to discuss their transatlantic work, while only Pauli Murray had a chapter, which was still crowded with the discussion of the works of the above nationalists. While it may be argued that the extent of the work of the above nationalists outweighs that of a woman like Graham Du Bois, it is often not the case because women were

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<sup>100</sup> Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and The Image Of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 56.

<sup>101</sup> Interview of Tom Feelings by Elton Fax, April 12, 1987 in *Artiste and Influence* (New York NY: Hatch Billops Collection, 1987), 11.

<sup>102</sup> Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography*, 318.

active but not at the forefront of events. Therefore, it is important to examine the spaces created by such women in dominant patriarchal societies and movements because within those spaces women contribute their quota to the grand scheme of things.

Women who are married to men in influential positions like Graham Du Bois are often overlooked by historians due to their status as a wife or a secretary. They are also overshadowed, or their works go unnoticed because they are black women who for a long time were defined by the accounts of white womanhood. Such women are best examined with ‘community feminism’ as proposed by Amy Jacques Garvey, the second wife of Marcus Garvey. Community feminism according to her, allows women to function as helpmates and participate in nationalism or assume leadership roles.<sup>103</sup> Historian Ula Taylor used “community feminism” as a lens through which women’s engagement with Black Nationalist movement can be discussed. Ula Taylor used this framework to explain how Amy Jacques-Garvey acted as Garvey’s helpmate and also took over the affairs of the UNIA when he was incarcerated. That venture would also launch her into the Pan-African movement. Judith Stein in *the World of Marcus Garvey* notes, “Jacques-Garvey defined her role as Garvey’s comforter and surrogate.”<sup>104</sup> In other words, Jacques-Garvey succumbed to the traditional perception of womanhood to support her husband’s dream. Nevertheless, Jacques-Garvey believed that women could rise beyond the status of wife and mother to take up leadership roles. This deviates from Simone De Beauvoir’s feminist perception that being a wife and a mother impedes one’s ability to make significant contributions to society; however, Graham Du Bois and Amy Jacques-Garvey have proved the falsity of that assertion.

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<sup>103</sup> Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The life & Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>104</sup> Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 151.

Most importantly, they represent other great women who have been overlooked in the annals of history by the towering images of their husbands or male counterparts.

Graham Du Bois' lived experience serve as a lens to see the contributions of African Americans in postcolonial Ghana's development. In a letter to her cousin, Graham Du Bois noted, "Ghana is a beautiful, interesting little country. If your nice children would like to give you a present, suggest that they give you a trip to Ghana!"<sup>105</sup> This was her expression of being a Ghanaian but most importantly a reflection of her being part of Nkrumah's pursuit of a new African Personality. President Nkrumah who called for the pursuit of an African personality declared on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957 that "we are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, that we are prepared to lay our own foundation, our own African personality. ...we are going to create our own African personality and identity. It's the only way that we can show the world that we are ready for our own battles."<sup>106</sup>

The pursuit was to redefine Africanness, to set Africa as a force within the emerging Third World of the 1950s. The pursuit of African personality was demonstrated by Nkrumah in many ways but for the sake of this discussion, two ways will be considered: that is political and cultural. In this analysis, Graham Du Bois' role will serve as a lens in understanding the African American contribution to the pursuit and to address factors that have been ignored by scholars such as Kevin Gaines, James T. Campbell, and James H. Meriwether. Scholars have concluded that African American women were hindered in their contributions towards Ghana's development under Nkrumah. But analyzing Graham Du Bois reveals a different perspective.

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<sup>105</sup> Letter, Shirley Du Bois to her Cousin Laura, August 3, 1963, W. E. B Du Bois Papers (MS 312) Special Collections.

<sup>106</sup> Kwame Nkrumah's Independence Day Speech, Accra-Ghana, 6/3/57.

Graham Du Bois was an African American who later became one of Africa's most influential women.<sup>107</sup> She was born in Indianapolis in 1896 as the only daughter among five children to David A. Graham and Eta Bell Graham, who were active members of the African Methodist Episcopal congregation. Her father was an itinerant preacher who moved around a lot, perhaps explaining why Graham Du Bois became a citizen of different nations. By the time of her death in China in 1977, she had acquired three citizenships from the United States, Ghana, and Tanzania. She graduated from Lewis and Clark High School and in 1931 attended Oberlin College and obtained her bachelor's degree. In the 1940s, she pursued graduate studies at Howard University (a master's degree) and Yale University. Her studies at Yale, which she did on a scholarship, inspired some of her literary works like *I Gotta a Home* and *Elijah's Ravens*. Graham Du Bois married Shadrach McCants with whom she had two sons, Robert and David. They divorced in 1927, and in 1951 she married her life-long friend and mentor, W. E. B Du Bois.

Graham Du Bois is described as a civil right activist, communist, and a dramatist. She was an award-winning playwright and composer with many plays to her list. She turned one of her celebrated literary work "Tom-Tom" into an opera with her own music composition. The first opera to boast of an all-Black cast, "Tom-Tom" enjoyed enormous success.<sup>108</sup> It explored the African heritage of African Americans which Jodi Van Der Horn-Gibson has described as evidence of Graham Du Bois' early African nationalism. Graham Du Bois demonstrated her curiosity about her African heritage and desire to uplift the Black race in her literary works and she authored several biographical books such as *Booker T. Washington*, *Paul Robeson*, *Julius*

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<sup>107</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York; University Press, 2000), 203.

<sup>108</sup> Jodi Van Der Horn-Gibson, "Dismantling Americana: Sambo, Shirley Graham, and African Nationalism" *The Journal of American Popular Culture* Vol. 7, No.1 (March 1, 2008).

*Nyerere: Teacher of Africa*, which also shows her political leanings. As a young child, she wrote her first article about the Young Women's Christian Association's discrimination against her for being a 'colored' girl.<sup>109</sup> The young Graham Du Bois had been denied entry to swim with her schoolmates because; the city did not yet have a pool for colored girls. Born to a father who was an activist and friends with the renowned activist W. E. B Du Bois, the young woman was encouraged to add her voice to those calling for racial equality and human rights for all people irrespective of color.

It is important to give an overview of her political life prior to her marriage to W. E. B Du Bois, for many have assumed her intellectual and political life started after her union with him. Prior to getting involved with Ghanaian or African politics, in 1942 Graham Du Bois served as YWCA-USO director at the military base in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where about fifteen thousand of the soldiers were Black. She created recreational programs for the soldiers, but Gerald Horne her biographer notes that her job included being a friend and counselor to the soldiers, which will earn her the title of "mama" among them.<sup>110</sup> In the same year, there was a racial protest at the base which led to the death of three men. Graham Du Bois supported the soldier's protest against the maltreatment of black soldiers and this led to her dismissal as YWCA-USO director at the Fort.<sup>111</sup> However, the NAACP, having witnessed her contribution towards addressing racial discrimination promptly hired her as field secretary, where she helped to establish new branches across the country and push for civil rights.

Graham Du Bois was also co-founder of the progressive party with Henry Wallace and Glen Taylor as candidates. In 1948 at Philadelphia, she gave the keynote address at the party's

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<sup>109</sup> Robert D. Thompson Jr., "A Socio-Biography of Shirley Graham Du Bois: A Life in the Struggle", (Dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1997), 26.

<sup>110</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race Woman*, 94.

<sup>111</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race Woman*, 93.

founding convention. This speech titled “I am a Negro Woman” has been cited by many people and influenced a lot of black nationalists. In that speech, Graham Du Bois proclaimed “I am only one negro mother who has seen the doors of a great hospital closed against her dying son; I am only one of the thousands whose sons fought in distant lands for freedom and democracy which they did not have at home.”<sup>112</sup> The memorable speech revealed the anguish of Black people at the time especially, the pains of Black women or mothers who had to witness their children lynched in the U.S or give their lives in World Wars for the freedom they did not experience at home. Graham Du Bois’s first son Robert McCannes’ death is captured in the speech. Robert had enlisted in the U.S Army and was sent home after being sick. According to Graham Du Bois, the Army did not provide him with proper medication and she recalled doing all she could but, because it was the era of Jim Crowism, she could not get her son the needed medical attention. According to her, hospitals turned her away because they did not have a place for a ‘negro.’ Robert died a few weeks after she got help, but it came too late. This incident had a great impact on Graham Du Bois, who would later in early 1960s while in Ghana, write to her attorney Bernard Jaffe, concerning her grandson Robert: “please check on Roberts January entrance to school. At least see that he is registered for that semester. There is a strong possibility that he will be sent to Vietnam! But I’ll try to keep him in school.”<sup>113</sup> She was willing to do everything in her power to prevent Robert’s enlistment even if that meant flying him to Ghana or engaging him in other ventures which she did.<sup>114</sup> This statement also highlighted the pervasiveness of Jim

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<sup>112</sup> Shirley Du Bois Keynote Speech at Progressive Party Convention, Philadelphia, 1948. (accessed from W. E. B Du Bois papers MS312).

<sup>113</sup> Letter from Shirley G. Du Bois to Bernard Jaffe, December 12, 1965. (Accessed from Bernard Jaffe Papers (MS 906) Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. July 26, 2017.

<sup>114</sup> Letter from Graham Du Bois to Bernard Jaffe, June 4, 1964, Graham Du Bois had a tough time dealing with Robert, she flew him to Ghana to give the young man new perspective but after a while, she feared him being a recruit for CIA infiltration of Ghana and sent him back to the U.S

Crow. Graham Du Bois also called for “peace without battleships, atomic bombs and lynch ropes.” Historian David Stein discussing the impact of Coretta Scot King on American political and economic systems wrote that the preaching of non-violence by Martin Luther King and Coretta King was influenced by Graham Du Bois’ call for peace without bombs.<sup>115</sup> Graham Du Bois also called for full equality for Black people, an end to segregation and discrimination in the army against blacks. She was also chairman for the New York State Wallace for president committee and secretary for the N. Y. State Council of Arts Sciences and Professions.

Graham Du Bois saw things differently from Dorothy Hunton, the wife of the civil rights activist, and an integral member of the Council on African Affairs, Alphaeus Hunton. Dorothy Hunton had stated that she was “politically unconscious’ prior to her marriage to Hunton,<sup>116</sup> thereby giving Hunton the credit of her political awareness, but Graham Du Bois was politically conscious before her marriage to Du Bois. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the influence that W.E.B Du Bois had on her through their long association as friends and finally as couples. Graham Du Bois’ response to ‘Mother Africa’s Call’ was to a large extent influenced by her husband’s response. She had made connections with some Africans prior to relocating and most of her siblings and parent were familiar with West Africa but it is fair to argue, that it was her husband’s decision that made her relocate to Ghana or set the pace for her political activeness in Ghana.

President Nkrumah’s call to African Americans to help develop Ghana came as a wonderful opportunity for the power-couple, whose lives were constantly interrupted by the FBI. When Nkrumah finally invited Du Bois to work on Encyclopedia Africana, it opened another

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<sup>115</sup> David Stein, “Coretta Scott King, The Archive and Black Feminist Methods”, *Black Perspectives*, May 11, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Dorothy Hunton, *Alphaeus Hunton: The Unsung Valiant* (Richmond Hill, NY: D.K Hunton 1986), 43.

door for Graham Du Bois to contribute her quota to Africa's fight and development. They moved to Ghana in 1961 where they lived as guests of the president. In 1963 the couple renounced their American citizenship to become Ghanaians following the oppression of blacks in the United States and the fulfillment they had in Ghana.

As previously discussed, the African personality was a new Pan-Africanism and Ghana according to Malcolm X, was its fountainhead."<sup>117</sup> Graham Du Bois like other African Americans of her time contributed to its pursuit in various forms. Her first experience of African politics and the pursuit of the African personality came through her husband in 1958 to honor an invitation to attend the All African People's Conference or, the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Congress in Ghana. The All African Peoples conference was one of the major steps towards the promotion of the African personality. It is described by Thomas Borstelmann as the undoing of the Berlin Conference<sup>118</sup> organized by Otto Von Bismarck to partition Africa in 1884-1885. This conference followed the Independent African States Conference attended by only Ghana and 8 states; Libya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan that were independent by 1958. The two conferences according to Nkrumah was to learn from one another and find strategies for Africa's liberation and development.

The All African People's Conference, per the name of the conference, marked a new era for Blacks across the globe. Americans present at the conference included congressman Charles Diggs, Claude Barnett,<sup>119</sup> Bill Sutherland, Graham Du Bois, and Eslanda Robeson. The last two were at the conference representing their husbands, W. E. B Du Bois, and Paul Robeson

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<sup>117</sup> Malcolm X, "El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz" in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Alex Haley, ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2015), 404.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War And The Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), 121.

<sup>119</sup> Homer A. Jack, "Americans at African Confab Attend Event As Observer's, *Chicago Defender*. 10<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1959.



respectively. Some African leaders included Patrice Lumumba of Congo, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Kwame Nkrumah the host. It was a gathering of longstanding friends, various nationalist groups and members of labor unions from across the globe which furthered political connections and alliances. Some of the diaspora African brains behind the 1958 conference were George Padmore and Bill Sutherland.

Padmore had moved to Ghana in the early 1950s and served as special advisor to Nkrumah and a major figure in the running of the African Affairs Bureau in Ghana.<sup>120</sup> Together with Nkrumah they planned and orchestrated the All African Peoples Conference and other Pan-African meetings. Bill Sutherland, the Pan-African pacifist who also served as an unofficial liaison between Africans and African Americans had also relocated to Ghana in 1953, early enough to witness and support Ghana's independence struggle. He married the Pan-African cultural activist, Efua Sutherland whose impact on Ghana's visual culture is still felt. Sutherland who was then working as the assistant to the finance minister, Komla Gbedemah, also served as the hospitality officer for the event.<sup>121</sup>

President Nkrumah opened the conference by declaring that, "this conference will formulate and proclaim our African personality based on the philosophy of Pan-African Socialism as the ideology of African Non-violent Revolution."<sup>122</sup> He will continue by adding that "we are not racialists or chauvinists. We welcome into our midst peoples of all other races, other nations, other communities, who desire to live among us in peace and equality. But they must respect our rights, our right as the majority rule..."<sup>123</sup> This was designed to encourage the

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<sup>120</sup> "Padmore His Life and Work" in *Accra Evening* newspaper, September 1959. (Accessed from Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD-Accra, Ghana), March 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, *Guns and Ghandi in Africa: Pan-African Insights on Non-violence, Armed Struggle and Liberation in Africa* (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2000), 35.

<sup>122</sup> All African Peoples Conference, Du Bois papers.

<sup>123</sup> Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism*, 43.

participation of those supporting diaspora Africans in decolonization and development of the new nations. The declaration touched on the importance of an African personality premised on African unity. Nkrumah added that “a union of African states will raise the dignity of Africa and strengthen its impact on world affairs. It will make possible the full expression of the African personality.”<sup>124</sup> The statement touched on African unity and acknowledged the readiness of the country to receive diaspora Africans’ assistance in the development of Africa. It was also one of the steps taken towards the attempted but ‘failed’ United States of Africa. During the conference, the promotion of a new African personality also brought about a new definition of who an African is and a new meaning to the slogan “Africa for the Africans.”<sup>125</sup> The aims of the conference were to use non-violence to end colonialism and imperialism, racialism and discriminatory laws and practices, tribalism and religious separatism, and the hopes of achieving a United States of Africa.<sup>126</sup>

At this conference, Graham Du Bois read her husband’s speech which encouraged Africans to unite and adopt socialism as the way to develop while avoiding the tactics of imperialists.<sup>127</sup> While her presence at the conference was to represent her husband, she undertook an event which made her be celebrated by those present and later in Beijing. Graham Du Bois gave a speech, which ended with her pulling down the flag of Chiang Kai-shek to mark an end of his political affiliations, with Africa.<sup>128</sup> Gerald Horne writes that at a banquet held in Beijing, “Graham Du Bois was hailed for her temerity in hauling down the Taiwanese flag in Accra.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> George P. Hagan, “Nkrumah’s Cultural Policy” in *The Life And Works Of Kwame Nkrumah*, 7.

<sup>125</sup> Colin Legum, *Pan-Africanism*, 44.

<sup>126</sup> All African Peoples Conference, Du Bois papers.

<sup>127</sup> W. E. B Du Bois’ speech read by Shirley, at the All African Peoples Conference, 1958 (Du Bois Papers).

<sup>128</sup> Shirley Graham Du Bois, *His Day Is Marching On: A Memoir Of W. E. B Du Bois* (Philadelphia: Lippincott 1970), 301.

<sup>129</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race Woman*, 159.

By 1962 Graham Du Bois had settled in Ghana and started making her contribution to the African personality pursuit. The life of Graham Du Bois in Ghana is hardly known by many. In a letter to her attorney Bernard Jaffe, she showed concern about the fact that people thought she was idle in Ghana especially after her husband's death in 1963. According to Horne, her first project in Ghana was to help remake pro-colonialist books, to reflect the independence of the country and also to help Africans appreciate their uniqueness.<sup>130</sup> Colonial educational policies were European oriented and for Ghana, it was a British curriculum. The colonial educational system was more of a study of Britain or European history since for a long time the widely held opinion was that, Africa had no history. But with respect to changes to education Hagan notes that Nkrumah saw "his educational policy as the centre-piece of his cultural policy and his aim of the development of an African personality."<sup>131</sup> Thus, this remaking of pro-colonialist books and themes in education was necessary to reflect the new independence and Graham Du Bois with her writing and intellectual skills supported this venture. As a member of the board of directors of the State Publishing House, she helped in producing educational materials and booklets to support the pursuit.

Graham Du Bois also participated in the heads of state summit in Ethiopia in 1963 because her husband could not attend. This gathering served as the founding of Organization of African Unity (OAU) now known as African Union (AU). Graham Du Bois attended with the presidential team and her competent nature qualified her representation at those momentous events. Being a writer, she shared the moment and progress that were made at the summit with friends, *The Drum* and *Freedom Ways* journal as a way of spreading Africa's good news and

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<sup>130</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race woman*, 167.

<sup>131</sup> George P. Hagan, "Nkrumah's Cultural Policies", 7.

development to encourage others to join the revolution. She will continue with the African Summit and for the third summit held in Accra in 1964, she was a member of the publicity committee. These engagements reveal the community feminism framework as used by Taylor in that, Graham Du Bois performs her duties as a wife by ‘obeying’ (taking care of her aging and ailing husband while honoring his invitations) her husband while engaging in a black nationalist discourse which often had less room for women. These opportunities built her a network of influential men like Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Zhou En-lai of China. However, her impact in Ghana was greatly felt in the area of television which had become a tool of nation-building.

The relevance of television to the political struggle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is as important as it is in the era of social media in influencing public opinions. In a letter to president Nkrumah encouraging the latter to give his attention to television, Graham Du Bois wrote “television today is recognized as the most powerful, useful and effective medium of communication devised by Man. We have the glorious opportunity in Ghana of building television from the bottom, taking full advantage of all the trial and errors which have been made since BBC started television twenty-six years ago.”<sup>132</sup>

As part of Nkrumah’s initiative to Africanize independent Ghana, there was a move for a Ghanaian television (GTV) and Graham Du Bois was appointed to support its establishment. She worked at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation as the television director with over 600 workers under her supervision. The setup of Ghana’s television was to change British oriented programs to Ghanaian or African oriented programs to underscore its African personality. Nkrumah in a broadcast announcing the Ghana television indicated that “Television will be used to supplement

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<sup>132</sup> Letter from Graham Du Bois to President Nkrumah, November 13 1963, (PRAAD)

our educational programme and to foster a lively interest in the world around us. It will not cater to cheap entertainment nor commercialism. Its paramount objective will be education in the broadest and purest sense.....” “Ghana Television will be Ghanaian, African and Socialist in content.”<sup>133</sup> For Graham Du Bois, as Vaughn Rasberry records, television was to create an alternative to Western mass cultural production.<sup>134</sup> It was to aid Ghana’s development and to have African centered programs. Ghana television under Graham Du Bois had six departments; Educational, Film, Engineering, Design, News and Cultural departments. The major two considered here will be the Education and Cultural department. According to Graham Du Bois, the educational section was to “organize school programs, for young people out of school and for adults who wish to extend and broaden their education.”<sup>135</sup> Thus, under her supervision as director, she initiated “a school telecast where they broadcast programs for schools in Science, Geography, Literature.” They also broadcast evening programs for illiterates.”<sup>136</sup>

Graham Du Bois with her team established a television and writing class, which had about 76 students. This class was made up of people from all walks of life. For instance, it had English teachers, journalists, member of parliament, clerk, chief and what she calls “the curb reporters in Accra.”<sup>137</sup> The purpose of the class was to learn about basic writing and television to help in TV program production. This also served as a significant contribution to the founding of Ghanaian journalism. Apart from outsiders patronizing this endeavor, it was also a requirement for all workers at GTV to know bits and parts of the entire operation from editing, recording to

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<sup>133</sup> PRAAD, October 15, 1963, Ghana Television Pamphlet.

<sup>134</sup> Vaughn Rasberry, *Race And The Totalitarian Century: Geopolitics In The Black Literary Imagination* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 258.

<sup>135</sup> Graham Du Bois, “Report on Ghana Television”, to Board of directors. (PRAAD), 1.

<sup>136</sup> Gerald Horne, *Race Woman*, 178.

<sup>137</sup> Shirley Graham Du Bois to Bernard Jaffe letters October 17, 1964. (Bernard Jaffe Papers (MS906).

technical repairs so this program benefitted a large group of people.<sup>138</sup> Most brilliant students of the television class were sent abroad either to Canada or the United States to gain advance knowledge in Television.<sup>139</sup> She planned the telecasting of programs to help women.

President Nkrumah did not have a cultural policy, but he employed many ways of promoting African culture, such as wearing African clothes.<sup>140</sup> Famous for wearing the smock, a northern Ghanaian cloth and the Kente a southern- Ghanaian outfit, his clothes projected African aesthetics, unity and encouraged the use of locally produced items. Ghana television worked to exemplify pride in African aesthetics. Graham Du Bois reported on the cultural department as being “a channel through which the rich cultural heritage of Ghana may freely flow from the people out to the people.” Some of the cultural programs were to explore different regions and villages to “draw historical chronicles, traditional dances, (and) music...”<sup>141</sup> Graham Du Bois, like many African Americans in and outside the country proudly embraced the African print as a way of identifying with the country’s prestige and the African culture. She also indulged in the promotion of African art, especially that of African Americans. Ghanaian newspapers employed illustrators to help send the message of African freedom across to the world and show the development that the country had achieved. Artists like Tom Feelings and Ted Pointiflet were among the African Americans who contributed in that manner. Feelings assisted Julian Mayfield as an illustrator for the *African Review* magazine of which the latter was its editor.

As a host to president Nkrumah’s dignitaries, Graham Du Bois helped to enhance diplomatic relations. In addition to hosting Chinese and Russian dignitaries, she helped to form

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<sup>138</sup> Christine X Johnson, *Ghana under Nkrumah* (Chicago, Illinois: Christine Johnson 1994), 22.

<sup>139</sup> Graham Du Bois, “Report on Ghana Television”, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Christine Johnson, former president of African American Heritage Association, had a longstanding friendship with Nkrumah which will continue to the latter’s death. She always remembered Nkrumah of doing what he preached especially wearing of African clothes of which Johnson also adopted.

<sup>141</sup> Graham Du Bois Report on “Ghana Television”, 2.

links that benefited the country. For instance, she ‘sold’ Ghana to Japan to help in the formation of the Ghana-Sanyo Corporation, which in 1965 she would become its chair.<sup>142</sup> In a letter of appreciation to Mr. T. Tue president of Sanyo Electricals, president Nkrumah acknowledged Graham Du Bois’ role in influencing his decision by writing that “Mrs. Du Bois has returned to Ghana with glowing tales of Japanese television and of Japanese friendship. She has quoted your statement on the importance of Ghana beginning its television services in colour and after learning that Sanyo Electric will consider setting up a television plant in Ghana I believe that colour television will be possible next year.”<sup>143</sup> In another letter, president Nkrumah wrote to the president of Nippon Television Network in Japan that “Mrs. Du Bois...has told me of the near miracles you have performed in bringing about reconstruction of your country... I am deeply impressed and encouraged in my own efforts to wipe out colonialism and to realize a united Africa.”<sup>144</sup> The Ghana-Sanyo corporation was a joint state-private company between the government of Ghana and Sanyo Electric Trading Company in Japan, to provide electrical equipments including portable television, plants and lightening systems for television production as well as training Ghanaians to run television programs. Her role in securing the Ghana-Sanyo Corporation was appreciated by W. Baideo-Ansah the Ghanaian ambassador to Japan. Baideo-Ansah is quoted in a letter to Graham Du Bois where he stated that “there is no doubt that this Corporation can be regarded as your ‘baby’ and I hope to see it grow to contribute its share to the educational cultural and industrial advancement of Ghana.”<sup>145</sup> It yielded fruits in 1965 when Ghana television started running officially and even to contemporary times, Sanyo corporation is still aiding Ghana’s development.

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<sup>142</sup> From Graham Du Bois To Bernard Jaffe, 21 Feb. 1965. Accessed from Bernard Jaffe Papers (MS 906).

<sup>143</sup> Letter from President Nkrumah to Mr. T. Tue, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1964. (PRAAD)

<sup>144</sup> Letter from President Nkrumah to Mr. Matsutare Shorkid, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1964. (PRAAD)

<sup>145</sup> Vaughn Rasberry, *Race and the totalitarian Century*, 265.

Graham Du Bois helped president Nkrumah host Edgar Kaiser in hopes of securing funds for the Volta River project. Nkrumah with the assistance of Graham Du Bois held a feast to entertain Edgar Kaiser in the establishment of the ground-breaking aluminum work in Accra. Edgar Kaiser was the president of the Kaiser company that will help to bring into reality the Volta River project and the Volta Aluminum Company (VALCO) to help in the production of aluminum in Ghana and generating electricity for the nation by developing the Volta Dam. VALCO continues to play a key role in modern Ghana. Graham Du Bois was also a close advisor to the president like many of her male counterparts. The likes of Julian Mayfield and Graham Du Bois were among the special advisors of the president. And they were often called upon to give advice and to attend to matters of national concern. The famous poet, dramatist, and civil rights activist, Maya Angelou who was also living in Nkrumah's Ghana noted: "it was said that Nkrumah called her [Graham Du Bois] little mother and that she telephoned him each night at bedtime."<sup>146</sup> An FBI report also confirmed the regular conversation between Graham and president Nkrumah. As a close ally to the president of Ghana, Graham Du Bois helped him to agitate for a possible United States of Africa, a feature of the African personality. President Nkrumah believed a United States of Africa would protect independent African countries from neocolonialism. Graham Du Bois also indulged in Ghana's foreign relation as she represented Ghana at various events outside the country. For instance, in 1965, she was invited by the United Nations to represent Ghana in Senegal to discuss issues towards Africa's development. She was not alone, Julian Mayfield also attended conferences as Ghana's delegate. The circle of Nkrumah

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<sup>146</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes* (1991), 138.



and Graham Du Bois was further widened as she was appointed a member of the National Planning committee of which the president was chairing.<sup>147</sup>

Print media for a long time became the battleground for Soviet and U.S Cold War propaganda in the quest for an alliance with independent African countries. It also became a platform for Black Nationalists and all activists to argue out their case. James H. Meriwether's *Proudly We Can Be Africans* and Penny Von Eschen's *Race Against Empire* are examples of works that reveal the potency of print media in the battle against the oppression of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Graham Du Bois wrote several articles regarding the African project. Her father had encouraged her to wield the sword of the pen, and she adopted this tactic of advocacy. Among the many articles she wrote, one in particular to James Aronson, the executive director of *The National Guardian* newspaper, requires mention. She wrote;

“I feel it is essential that the people of the world know what is happening in Africa today. Because of suppression of some news governments are allowing forces to run wild which will plunge the entire world into war.....I am sending you these latest moves on the part of Ghana not as an hysterical outburst but in the hope that your publication may have some influence in bringing the serious situation into the open.”<sup>148</sup>

Graham Du Bois understood the power of the media in inciting and controlling public opinion, especially Western opinion towards African development. Rhodesia, South Africa, and the Congo crisis were top issues for Nkrumah and other independent governments during the 1960s. Conferences and meetings were organized to address racial discrimination in South Africa, colonial rule in Rhodesia and the disruption of a legitimate government in Congo, which negated the projected African personality. Unfortunately, Western media turned blind eye to the

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<sup>147</sup> Shirley G. Du Bois, Letter to Bernard Jaffe, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 1964 (Bernard Jaffe Papers MS 906).

<sup>148</sup> Shirley Graham Du Bois to Aronson, November. 28 1965 accessed James Aronson-W.E. B Du Bois Collections (MS 292) Special Collections, University Archives, University of Massachusetts, June 2017.

negative impact of those crises. Thus, it was necessary to bring the issues to public knowledge and in an era of suppression of news and where anti-colonial activities were tagged communist, explains her attempt to dissuade any notion of “a hysterical outburst” on her part.

One of the steps taken against South Africa apartheid regime in the 1960s was to adopt an economic sanction against the country and isolate it, especially from African activities. In 1962 Nkrumah called upon leaders across the globe to impose economic sanctions against it. To this Graham Du Bois added her voice. She wrote;

[it is absolutely obligatory that we warn Europe-everybody in Europe-that unless the Verwoerd regime is brought down that third world war they so much dread, is going to START IN SOUTH AFRICA. What we can the rest of the world do to prevent this? IMPOSE THE STRICTEST ECONOMIC BOYCOTTS ON SOUTH AFRICA. This is the only hope! And all our FRIENDS-the socialist countries must lead the way. China has already done so- but you know who has some kind of a diamond deal with South Africa! THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR THIS AND IT MUST STOP! Africans have already started counting noses. Any country which trades with South Africa IS NOT A FRIEND OF THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA and no amount of diplomatic sweet talk is going to alter this basic fact.]<sup>149</sup>

In this piece, she highlights many issues. First, she highlights the negative impact apartheid regime was likely to have on not just South Africa but the entire world. She therefore, adds her voice to demand an immediate end to apartheid. The statement which she emphasized in uppercase also show its seriousness, and her support of the global call to impose economic sanctions on South Africa. This call was finally accepted, and sanctions were imposed in the 1970s and 1980s. She also shows her support for the pursuit of socialist state for Africans over capitalism as advocated by the western world. And to this, she cites China as a friend of Africa for supporting independence movement as opposed to U.S who still had trade relations with

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<sup>149</sup> Correspondence between Graham Du Bois and Ruth Lazarus, June 12, 1963 (W. E. B Du Bois Papers).

apartheid South Africa and even meddled in the Congo crisis. It should be noted that this was during the Cold War era and people who became this vocal were considered a threat by the Western world, thus Graham Du Bois will be Ostracized by the West. She was even banned from entering South Africa and the U.S until the 1970s. Such articles called for an end to colonial rule. These were ideals projected by the African personality espoused in pan-Africanism. In another article published in the *New World Review*, she discussed how Africa must save Congo following the fact that colonialists had stymied the effort of the UN to bring any peace in the country.<sup>150</sup>

Aside from the blind eye of Western media to events in Africa, there were attacks on president Nkrumah which inadvertently affected the pursuit of an African personality or African unity. As Naomi Chaz and Deborah Pellow rightly stated, President Kwame Nkrumah was “the embodiment of the African nationalism and the personification of the quest for continental unity.”<sup>151</sup> Thus keeping Nkrumah’s image abroad as positive as possible was necessary for the African personality to continue the liberation struggle. Emphasizing the importance of the pursuit, Tawia Adamafo, Nkrumah’s Civil Service minister said, “it was our aim that Ghana’ representation abroad should reflect the African’s rediscovered personality.”<sup>152</sup> Graham Du Bois and Nkrumaist like Mayfield and Horace Mann Bond who resided in the U.S during the period were among the defenders of Nkrumah’s personality and Nkrumaism abroad. In line with keeping his imagery, Bond went to a considerable extent to ensure a proper representation of Nkrumah by criticizing editors of newspapers for what he perceived as the misrepresentation of

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<sup>150</sup> FBI Files on Shirley Graham Du Bois, file 16, 5

<http://omeka.wustl.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/fbeyes/duboisshirley> accessed 9/6/18

<sup>151</sup> Quoted by Brempong Osei-Tutu, “Ghana’s “Slave Castles”, 185.

<sup>152</sup> Tawia Adamafo, *By Nkrumah’s Side*, 87.

Nkrumah.<sup>153</sup> He also wrote articles and sent information to media outlets to help propagate Nkrumah's vision of liberating the oppressed. For instance, in correspondence with Mr. Claude A. Barnett director of the Associated of Negro press, he quoted huge figures of financial progress in Ghana and continued by writing that "I really think this deserves special headlines in view with what is usually said about the capacity of the black man to handle government."<sup>154</sup> The statement, 'the capacity of the black man to handle government' resonated with Nkrumah's slogan for the New African Personality which was; "the black man is capable of managing his own affairs."<sup>155</sup> Again this was also an attempt at refuting claims of Nkrumah embezzling state funds or Africa being on the brink of collapse. Bond took those steps because he believed that the status of Afro-Americans would be improved by helping improve that of Africans. For Bond, his purpose as an African American was to "glorify God in Africa,"<sup>156</sup> by supporting Nkrumah's vision for the continent.

Also, in line with the pursuit of the new African personality was the setup of Encyclopedia Africana. Nkrumah invited W. E. B Du Bois, the 'father' of Pan-Africanism to establish Encyclopedia Africana, a lifelong dream of the latter. Nkrumah's objective for Encyclopedia Africana was "to publish many volumes of information that detailed all aspects of the life and culture, and resources of our [Africa] great continent."<sup>157</sup> Due to W.E.B Du Bois' age which he acknowledged reduced his role to advisory status, Graham Du Bois served as a link

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<sup>153</sup>Correspondence; Bond to Dr. Edward R. Archer, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1951. On the same issues John Sampson of London *Daily Mirror* wrote an apology for the possible misrepresentation of Nkrumah. Sampson to Bond 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1951 (Accessed from Horace Mann Bond Papers (MS 411) UMass Special Collections, February 2018).

<sup>154</sup> Correspondence; Bond to Mr. Claude A. Barnett. July 16, 1953, Bond Papers (MS 411).

<sup>155</sup> Independence Speech, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957, Accra Ghana.

<sup>156</sup> Correspondence; Bond to Nkrumah and Nnamdi Azikiwe, 25<sup>th</sup> February 1955 (Bond Papers MS 411)

<sup>157</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 138.

between the director of Encyclopedia Africana, and the Academy of Sciences, and passed information back and forth for the project.

According to FBI report kept on Graham Du Bois, Nkrumah had set up a Marxist-Leninist school with about 5,000 enrollments, and she was “in charge of broadcasting Marxist-Leninist propaganda from a government-operated radio station.”<sup>158</sup> It is widely accepted that Nkrumah sought for a socialist country and was in many ways a Leninist thus these FBI findings are not surprising. What can be garnered from this report is that Graham Du Bois played a significant role in Nkrumah’s Ghana. She encouraged African Americans with technical skills to join the African Revolution. She brought in William Gardner Smith, journalist and a civil right activist who had long relations with the NAACP and other civil rights groups in Philadelphia. Smith worked as editor-in-chief for the Ghana Television news section and would later accept a job as head of the Ghana school of journalism.<sup>159</sup> Smith was one of the radicals that were monitored by the FBI for promoting “anti-American” activities and articles that discredited America’s democracy abroad. The service of Donald Ogden Stewarts was also employed by her to help in the running of the television and news program.

The argument by Kevin Gaines and James T. Campbell notes that African American women in Ghana were disadvantaged or limited in their contribution to the new nation because of the patriarchal society and male dominance often associated with Black nationalist movements. This presupposes that African American women were not as active or contributive as their male counterparts in Nkrumah’s Ghana. This argument is flawed for it fails to examine other factors that played into hindering African American women and again, proper examination

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<sup>158</sup> FBI declassified files on Shirley Graham Du Bois, 18. (Accessed August, 2017 <http://omeka.wustl.edu/omeka/files/original/33fec021748934b174ebe7b1a25fbe28.pdf>)

<sup>159</sup> Pamela Newkirk, ed., *Letters From Black America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 158.

of the factors will reveal that it was not just ‘a woman issue’ but a black expatriate in Ghana issue.

To begin with, there was the existence of Nkrumah’s Afro-American network. This network favored Graham Du Bois unlike Maya Angelou, Vicki Garvin or Alice Windom. Nkrumah’s Afro-American network was formed during his days abroad and later political circles. Some of Nkrumah’s colleagues from Lincoln University who will later show up in his political life included the celebrated poet, Langston Hughes, Franklin Williams, the first African American ambassador to Ghana who was sent to Ghana after Nkrumah had asked for a black ambassador. Another significant Afro-American in Nkrumah’s political life was George Padmore, whom the former met in London. Civil rights activists Christine Johnson of African-heritage,<sup>160</sup> Julian Mayfield, W. E. B Du Bois, Graham Du Bois, Bill Sutherland, and Preston King were part of this network. He interacted with this network and most served as special advisors to him. This network was held together by people who believed in the African liberation struggle but most importantly people who identified as Nkrumaists or were “religiously loyal to Nkrumah.”<sup>161</sup> This meant they believed in African socialism or supported Nkrumah’s Pan-African vision that unification of Africa was the basis for Black freedom across the globe. There was a clear line between those who fell within this network and those who fell outside it. Others like Ted Pointiflet, or some of the “Revolutionary Returnees”<sup>162</sup> had no idea about Nkrumah’s beliefs which could have positively impacted them. Thus, those outside the network struggled to be a part of the pursuit or to contribute to the revolution as well as make a living. The members

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<sup>160</sup> The writer interviewed Curtis Kojo Morrow, an Afro-American veteran, who lived in Ghana for a decade. A journey he had anticipated to be for only a year. 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018 Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>161</sup> Leslie Alexander Lacy, *The Rise And Fall Of A Proper Negro: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan 1970), 175.

<sup>162</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes*, 18.

of this Afro-American network easily got jobs with better conditions than those outside this network. Then again it was not a gender issue but one that cut across to even Ghanaians where job opportunities often went to Convention Peoples Party (Nkrumah's party) members.

President Nkrumah proved one of the foremost African leaders to encourage the inclusion or participation of women in Parliament, development and the Black liberation movement. The fact that colonial systems did not have room for women made things difficult for new nations like Ghana, but scholars often ignore this reality. Significantly, Nkrumah's government was the first to engage women in the public sphere. For instance, Mabel Dove, Ruth Botsio, Ama Nkrumah, Evelyn Amarteifio and many others were working as politicians, journalists, organizers and sharing platforms with major political leaders who were men.<sup>163</sup>

At the 1960 Women of Africa and African descent conference held in Accra Nkrumah said, "There is a great responsibility resting on the shoulders of all women of African and African descent. They must realize that the men cannot complete the gigantic task we have set. The time has come when the women of Africa and African descent must rise in their millions to join the African crusade for freedom."<sup>164</sup> Takyiwaa Manuh also adds that "Nkrumah catapulted women on the political scene in a way that was new both in Ghana and Africa..." For her, this became part of the "attempt at projecting the African personality and at raising the status of womanhood."<sup>165</sup> Graham Du Bois like other African American women through articles, conference participation, and personal circles contributed to the struggle and projections of the

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<sup>163</sup> Wilhelmina J. Donkoh, "Nkrumah and His Chicks: an Examination of Women and the Organizational Strategies of the CPP" in *Africa's Many Divides And Africa's Future: Pursuing Nkrumah's Vision Of Pan-Africanism In An Era Of Globalization*, Charles Quist-Adade and Vincent Doodoo, eds. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 108.

<sup>164</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Selected Speech Of Nkrumah*, Samuel Obeng, ed. (Accra, Ghana: Afram Publications Ghana, 1997), Vol. 1, 114.

<sup>165</sup> Takyiwaa Manuh, "Women And Their Organization During The Convention People's Party Period," in *The Life and Works of Kwame Nkrumah*, 109.

African personality. For instance, Maya Angelou worked with Efua Sutherland, the Pan-African culturalist to promote Africanness through plays. Efua Sutherland was then director of the new Ghana national theatre while Angelou worked as an administrator at the Institute of African Studies. With the flair for writing, they both pursued Nkrumah's idea that "Ghana must use its own legends to heal itself."<sup>166</sup> Angelou recalls her contribution to one play that sought to find the similarities between Chinese and Ghanaian culture, where she had to be student actors' coach, props and even stage management among others. She will write that "I chose to try to be all things to all the people at all times."<sup>167</sup>

One also needs to give a second look to Graham Du Bois' portfolio in Ghana to understand how integral women were to Nkrumah's political pursuit. She was not the only female in a prominent position. Others included lawyer Pauli Murray, professor Sylvia Bone, physician Dr. Ana Livia Cordero and even the celebrated American historian Nell Irvin Painter also taught at University of Ghana. Others focused on business as they "did not fit the nation builder profile."<sup>168</sup> President Nkrumah had given an open call, yet he expected a certain caliber of people to respond. If one examines his call, he made reference to scientist, teachers, basically people with academic or technical skills. It therefore, shows that the likes of Vicki Garvin, Alice Windom who were active in the U.S could not find jobs in Ghana not because of an androcentric or some systemic factors but because some had skills which Nkrumah's Ghana could not absorb at the time. It was a matter of who "fit the nation builder profile."

Kevin Gaines writes that although most of the African Americans in Nkrumah's Ghana were not actively engaged in Ghanaian politics, their presence in the country was a political

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<sup>166</sup> Maya Angelou *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, 13.

<sup>167</sup> Angelou, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, 81.

<sup>168</sup> James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African Americans Journey To Africa*, 320.



statement which gave tangibility to Pan-Africanism in Ghana.<sup>169</sup> Many African American radicals from across the globe aided Kwame Nkrumah's pursuit. In this chapter, I have examined African Americans' response to Kwame Nkrumah's call for help to develop the continent by exploring the lived experience of Graham Du Bois. Graham Du Bois never identified as a feminist despite her role with Sojourners of Truth and Justice, a movement which was aimed at defending women and black nationalists that were indicted during the McCarthy era. The group helped in the case brought against Alphaeus Hunton and Du Bois in 1960. But in many ways, she did not publicly assert herself as a feminist, she was one who allowed patriarchy to rule and created a space for herself within that patriarchal dominion.

The lived experience of Graham Du Bois and other African Americans in Nkrumah's Ghana revealed challenges of Pan-Africanism, its dynamics and incorporations. It also revealed the politics of identity for diaspora Africans in Africa and the extent to which a diaspora African can contribute to the construction of the African narrative or the African personality. These challenges will be explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>169</sup> Kevin Gaines, *American Africans*, 143.

#### CHAPTER IV: CHALLENGES WITH THE CALL

*“it is noteworthy that not a single member of the committee of ‘ghost’ is Ghanaian or even African. Their only common denominator is adherence to Marxism-Leninism.” “I will leave it to the Ghanaians to decide whether it satisfied their national pride to accept the true voice of Ghana the work of an exclusively foreign band owing allegiance to a foreign ideology that very few Ghanaians have accepted of their own free will.”*<sup>170</sup> Wole Thomas

Even though decolonization and the civil rights movement connected Africans and those of the diaspora, the efforts to create new identities and imagery for Africa encountered many divergent views on race and ethnicity. Nkrumah’s proclamation that “the concept of Africa for the Africans -does not mean that other races are excluded from it... It only means that Africans who naturally are in the majority in Africa, shall and must govern themselves and their own countries,”<sup>171</sup> makes the point that everyone including diaspora Africans is welcomed in the development of Africa, but continental Africans must govern Africa. While this would be looked at as a point made in support of self-governance and an end to colonialism, its trickled down effect would be seen in the challenges that diaspora Africans faced in their attempt to help in the development of Africa. W. E. B Du Bois’ article on the role of African Americans in West Africa mentioned the sensitive issue of diaspora African’s role in Africa. He noted that “for many years...my thought was that on this account, Black Africa must at least temporarily find leadership outside Africa itself. That was the idea back of the Pan-African Congress I tried to establish.” He then added that “today the whole picture has changed...it is this growing provincialism of American negroes which has made inevitable indigenous leadership of Africa by Africans.”<sup>172</sup> Du Bois’ early thought about Africa was

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<sup>170</sup> Wole Thomas, “The Ghost That Worked For Nkrumah”, *West African Pilot*, Vol. 1, December, 1965.

<sup>171</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, opening speech at the Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security in Africa, Accra, April 7-10, 1960, 2.

<sup>172</sup> W. E. B Du Bois, “On The Role Of West Africa,” (Du Bois Papers), 1.

similar to Marcus Garvey's idea of Africa for the Africans, which was also premised on the idea of African Americans going to take over the leadership of Africa. Garvey felt they would better develop Africa than white imperialist or 'native' Africans who "unfortunately had not been schooled in the appreciation of the valuable mineral wealth of Africa."<sup>173</sup> Though decades apart, Nkrumah was greatly influenced by Garvey yet their ideas of African Americans being involved in Africa's development differed greatly. While Nkrumah wanted the skill of African Americans to develop the continent, Garvey wanted them to 'take over' from white imperialists. But in hindsight, the entirety of Garvey's struggle was based on the idea of "we believe in the freedom of Africa for the negro people of the world. We demand Africa for Africans."<sup>174</sup> This not only called for an end to colonialism, but it also called for Black unity and empowerment with all facets of life that sought to elevate an African Personality.

This chapter will look at the politics of identity entangled with reverse migration. It will also look at some of the challenges that African Americans who went to help the African revolution faced. These are very important issues as they are still encountered in contemporary times largely because the spirit of Pan-Africanism tends to overlook or deny its existence. First, it will explore the various groups of African Americans in Nkrumah's Ghana to help get a sense of their community. It will further explore some of the challenges encountered and conclude with the impact of the challenges on both Nkrumah's pursuit and themselves.

President Nkrumah's call for assistance from African Americans gave most of them an opportunity for a new life or adventure in Africa. However, most saw it as an escape from Jim Crowism or McCarthyism. Kevin Gaines notes that Ghana became a haven for most emigres

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<sup>173</sup> Marcus Garvey, *Philosophy And Opinions*, ed. Amy Jacques Garvey (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 1: 66

<sup>174</sup> Marcus Garvey, *philosophy and opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York City: Universal Publishing House, 1923-25), 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. 51 <https://bltc.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bltc/getvolume.pl?S7950#DIV36>

and according to Julian Mayfield, the number of African Americans in Nkrumah's Ghana during 1960, was around 300.<sup>175</sup> This is likely to be the number of African Americans largely based in Accra or those that kept in touch with the Accra based African Americans. Because there were some outside the country's capital excluding the American Corps. Leslie Alexander Lacy, an African American who taught at the University of Ghana recorded in his memoir that there were three categories of African Americans in Nkrumah's Ghana; there were the politicals, non-political and the 'opportunists.'<sup>176</sup>

The politicals were also known as the radicals. They included W. E. B Du Bois, Graham Du Bois, Preston King, Alphaeus Hunton, Bill Sutherland, and Julian Mayfield. The latter was the leader of this group. The politicals were people who had been 'blacklisted' by the United States government and were often under FBI surveillance. Most of them adopted a self-imposed exile or became one by default of their activism in the United States. They were the kind of people who were sympathetic to Nkrumah's revolutionary ideas and as such got much support from Nkrumah that facilitated a 'smooth' stay in the country. They easily got jobs and worked closely with the president. For instance, W. E. B Du Bois was director of Encyclopedia Africana, Graham Du Bois was director of Ghana Television (GTV), Julian Mayfield taught at University of Ghana and was also the editor of *African Review* Magazine, Preston King was a lecturer at University of Ghana, Bill Sutherland worked with the finance minister and Alphaeus Hunton was assistant to the director of Encyclopedia Africana. Most of them served as special advisors to the president.<sup>177</sup> In their contribution to Nkrumah's Pan-African pursuits, Graham Du Bois used GTV and wrote articles that advocated for the independence of colonized countries.<sup>178</sup> Mayfield

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<sup>175</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, 6.

<sup>176</sup> Leslie Alexander Lacy, *The Rise and Fall Of A Proper Negro*, 175.

<sup>177</sup> David L. Lewis, Ghana, 1963; A Personal Memoir. *The American Scholar*, vol. 68., No. 1 (Winter 1999), 47.

<sup>178</sup> Letter from Shirley Graham Du Bois to Bernard Jaffe July 3, 1964. (Jaffe Papers)

like Graham Du Bois also wrote articles to support the Pan-African movement. They supported the African Revolution of which Ghana served as the base due to president Nkrumah's proclamation that, "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa." Most of them also identified as Nkrumaist that is; ardent supporters of Nkrumaism. Nkrumaism or Nkrumahism was another term for what president Nkrumah called African Socialism and according to historian D. Zizwe Poe, it "also asserted the African Personality as a cultural unifier of a continental-wide African nationalism."<sup>179</sup> Describing these Nkrumaists, Leslie Alexander Lacy notes they were "religiously loyal to Kwame Nkrumah, zealously rationalizing his political moves and followed the ruling party" (CPP).<sup>180</sup> They were more likely to be the brain behind the civil right protest staged in Accra, in 1963, to support the March on Washington Movement.<sup>181</sup> They mobilized in Accra and with the support of some Ghanaians marched towards the U.S embassy in Ghana driving home the same message which, A. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King Jr. sought to project in Washington on 28 August 1963. The March in Ghana occurred on the day the 'father of Pan-Africanism' died which Angelou and few others saw as a sign of victory for the African American struggle.

The non-political group that is those who were not part of Nkrumah's political elites included Alice Windom, Vicki Garvin, Maya Angelou, and Ted Pontiflet among others who confined themselves to their work. Maya Angelou worked as an administrator for the African Institute in the University of Ghana and Alice Window worked as a secondary school teacher and secretary at the Ethiopian embassy. The artist Tom Feelings was the leader of this group.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> D. Zizwe Poe, *Kwame Nkrumah's Contribution to Pan-Africanism: An Afrocentric Analysis*, 4.

<sup>180</sup> Lacy Alexander, *The Rise and Fall of A Proper Negro*. 175.

<sup>181</sup> *Evening News* Newspaper, October 23, 1963.

<sup>182</sup> Lacy Alexander, *The Rise and Fall of A Proper Negro*, 178.

According to Lacy, this group of people was “the hippies of Ghana”.<sup>183</sup> They were people who had come to Ghana on their own terms or were transitioning through the country like Maya Angelou who was on her way to Liberia for a job but, had to stay after her son was involved in an accident.<sup>184</sup> Unlike the politicals, they lived among the people and engaged the country culturally. They supported Nkrumah but were not Nkrumaists.

Finally, the last group of people Lacy termed as the ‘opportunists.’ He writes that they were “always coming, always leaving, always stealing, never feeling.”<sup>185</sup> This group of people were often separate from the ‘bigger’ African American community since they were not seen as making any significant contribution to Ghana or the U.S struggle. They were the ‘hustlers’ looking for opportunities which could not be found in the U.S and often not very technical like Dr. Ana Livia or scholars like David Levering, Nell Irvin Painter or Pauli Murray. The ‘opportunists’ sought for jobs and relied heavily on the ‘senior’ African Americans in the country. Leslie Alexander Lacy’s description of this group of people as opportunistic is based on a very narrow view or perception of them. The term reveals a community besieged by class because Lacy, was part of the educated elite and well-to-do in comparison with others, who did not have both money and the technical skills to make them resourceful in the country. According to Ted Pontiflet, he often felt disrespected by the politicals who felt they were better off than the others.<sup>186</sup> Reba Lewis also adds that the likes of the Du Bois always looked down

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<sup>183</sup> Lacy Alexander, *The Rise and Fall of A Proper Negro*, 177.

<sup>184</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God’s Children*, 3.

<sup>185</sup> Lacy Alexander, *The Rise and Fall of A Proper Negro*, 179.

<sup>186</sup> Interview of Ted Pontiflet by Camille Billops, March 19, 1976 In *Artist and Influence* (New York: Hatch Billops Collection, 2005), 122.

on people because of their elevated status.<sup>187</sup> Maya Angelou also shared a similar sentiment with Ted Pontiflet.<sup>188</sup>

It should be noted that some of the supposed opportunists despite their lack of specific skills or eliteness, were very supportive of the African Revolution. In spite of Lacy's categories, it is difficult to restrict any of the above-mentioned names to a particular group, because there is no straight line between them. The significant thing is that they had all come in hope of effecting a positive change in the country. This, however, does not rule out that, others may have gone with the intent of exploiting the country. The unifier among all these people coming from different directions whether as special guest of the president or not, was a desire to make a difference in the new nation. But it can be concluded that the politicals were better off than other expatriates.

For Maya Angelou, there were four groups which included; first, the farmers who had families and had moved to the countryside to melt into the country. Second, were those sent in by the American government. She noted that African Americans stayed away from them because they treated the Africans with contempt and, they often associated with the Europeans. She also adds that Ghanaians were very suspicious of them. The third group was the business committee who had settled in the country trying to find their foot in the country's economy. And the final group were the politicals perhaps the largest and elevated of all the groups. Maya Angelou notes "its members were impassioned, volatile, dedicated to Africa, and Africans at home and abroad."<sup>189</sup> All these groupings give one a sense of the African American community in Ghana. While the assumption has been that of a unified group, accounts of most returnees reveal

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<sup>187</sup> Letter from Reba Lewis to Kwame Nkrumah in *The Conakry Years*, 235.

<sup>188</sup> [Interview of Ted Pontiflet by Camille Billops, March 19, 1976.](#)

<sup>189</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes*, 23.

otherwise. For instance, when Jean Pierre Wendell, an African American professor at the University of Ghana was asked to leave the country, Lacy described that no effort was made by other African American members to challenge Wendell's deportation or to assist him.<sup>190</sup>

Despite their involvement in African development or politics they faced many challenges, especially with the Pan-African agenda. There were fears of African Americans being denied significant role in Pan-Africanism. President Nkrumah's engagement of the African diaspora for the purpose of continental unity and a new personality attempted to allay some of the fears. The movement which used to be under the leadership of African Americans, by 1950s, had shifted to Africa, which was believed to be its rightful place.<sup>191</sup> Not only was the geographic location of the movement changed but Du Bois echoed the fears of African Americans in the movement which was that African Americans were being sidelined with respect to the leadership of the movement. Prior to his invitation to the All African Peoples Conference, W. E. B Du Bois wrote,

"I expected to be invited to the Sixth Pan-African Congress in Accra, but no invitation came...While I was in Tashkent an invitation arrived but not from Nkrumah nor for a Pan-African Congress. It was from a new "All-African" body for an conference in December...I sensed immediately that opposition had arisen in Africa over American Negro leadership of the African peoples.... American Negroes had too often assumed that their leadership in Africa was natural. With the rise of an educated group of Africans, this was increasingly unlikely..."<sup>192</sup>

Apart from the delayed invitation, there were other causes which fed Du Bois' fears. As Du Bois mentioned, "American Negroes had too often assumed that their leadership in Africa was natural" in other words, diaspora Africans assumed the position of tutoring continental Africans. Both Du Bois and Bayard Rustin shared the believe that the rise of African educated

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<sup>190</sup> Alexander Lacy, *The Rise And Fall Of A Proper Negro*, 182.

<sup>191</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues*, 34

<sup>192</sup> W. E. B Du Bois, *The Autobiography Of W. E. B Du Bois*, 401.



elites posed a threat to black American's leadership and role in Africa. Rustin worked with Nkrumah in the early 1950s to set up the youth division of the Convention People's Party (CPP). He was later sent by Nkrumah to help Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria<sup>193</sup> which was to free the latter to focus on the struggle and African Unity. Bayard is also significant to the Nkrumah administration because he set up a network that took skillful African Americans to work in Nkrumah's Ghana.<sup>194</sup> Rustin's plan was to recruit young black American graduates to help reconstruct the new Africa. An idea which resonated with Nkrumah's call to help develop Africa. Unfortunately, Rustin's experience with Sutherland's 'expulsion' from Ghana, "did not create a healthy experience" which ended the program earlier than expected. According to Rustin, the emergence of young Ghanaian graduates from British institutions posed a threat to black American graduates. One example was Sutherland's case. Rustin recounts that Sutherland after years of service to Ghana, "was picketed as an European and asked to go back to where he came from."<sup>195</sup> He surmised that it was the acts of Ghanaian graduates seeking to take over affairs from foreigners. After this encounter, Rustin concluded that black Americans will always be foreigners in Africa. For Rustin, A. Philip Randolph was justified in his opposition to the back to Africa idea because he felt African Americans would not be welcome in Africa.

Historian Elliot P. Skinner writes that "Continental Africans have not always been happy with returnees."<sup>196</sup> Campbell writes that Africans often saw African Americans as an extension of colonial rule for the latter often served as colonial clerks. But fueling the gap

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<sup>193</sup>*The Reminiscences of Bayard Rustin, no. 8: Interview of Bayard Rustin by Ed Edwin, November 6, 1985.* Edwin, Ed, interviewer. (Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press, 2003), 339. Retrieved from <https://bltc-alexanderstreet-com.libproxy.lib.ilstu.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bltc/sourceidx.pl?&sourceid=S11279>.

<sup>194</sup>*The Reminiscences of Bayard Rustin, no. 2: Interview of Bayard Rustin by Ed Edwin, January 24, 1985.* Edwin, Ed, interviewer. 37.

<sup>195</sup> Bayard's Interview No.2

<sup>196</sup> Elliot P. Skinner, "The Dialectic Between Diasporans and Homelands" in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, 30.

between them were Cold War politics. The problem of leadership or role of African Americans in Africa is quite a delicate matter. As Nkrumah indicated while everyone was welcomed in Ghana, “Africans who are in the majority must govern themselves.” Ghana at independence did not have enough experts to build the new nation but as the years went by with Nkrumah’s educational policies and investments, many Africans or Ghanaian graduates emerged who wanted to help in shaping their country. This appeared to pose a challenge for diaspora Africans who willingly relocated to Ghana to aid the new nation based on ancestral ties and similar political aims. One of the issues that still run into contemporary times is the Ghanaian perception that African Americans often come with an air of know-it-all because of the position of United States in the world. African Americans also have the view that Ghanaians or Africans do not have an understanding of the racial discrimination they had to endure or continue to endure and do not sympathize with them. Touching on Ghanaians insensitivity to racial issues, Maya Angelou once wrote that African Americans in Ghana had come to “a home which had shamefully little memory of them.”<sup>197</sup>

While there are so many historical events that connect Africans and African Americans, colonialism and Jim Crowism were different historical experiences except apartheid which occurred in South Africa. These events have shaped each other’s understanding and response to racial discrimination and how they perceive each other. While some Ghanaians may be insensitive to racial issues, during the Nkrumah era, some Ghanaian journalist wrote articles to criticize racial discrimination in the U.S. For instance, one correspondent for the Ghanaian *Evening Newspaper* wrote an article titled “President Kennedy Where Is The Civil Rights

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<sup>197</sup> Maya Angelou, *All God’s Children Need Travelling Shoes*, 20.

Bill.”<sup>198</sup> Another correspondent also wrote an article titled “Help Civilize American Racialists” all critiquing racial discriminations against African Americans and even Africans in America.<sup>199</sup> The first Ghanaian female member of parliament and pan-Africanist Mabel Dove also wrote articles criticizing racial inequality in the U.S. She wrote articles like “We Want Freedom-Afro-Americans Cry” and “Teach White America-the Afro-America Story.”<sup>200</sup> In those articles she discussed the delayed in granting civil rights or recognizing African Americans as full citizens. These articles discussed United States’ racial discriminations and ridiculed the country’s attempt to promote democracy in Africa. These point to Ghanaians or Africans awareness of racial problems in the U.S. On the other hand, the presence of African Americans in Africa to help decolonization and nation-building efforts also shows the latter’s genuine desire to help mother Africa. Thus, while Africans may not be sensitive to African Americans in that respect and vice versa, it is more of historical events that have shaped such responses.

In the Spirit of Pan-Africanism, such conflicts will recede especially as they seek to promote an African personality. W. E. B Du Bois would later write that “I realized that my vision had been too narrow, that American Negroes were not the center of the African world but that besides these off-shoots of Africa there was Africa itself. That in Africa lay a history and culture which one day would assert itself. I decided to get Africans and the children of Africa into contact with each other so that they would get personally acquainted.”<sup>201</sup> This message came at a time while Du Bois was working on *Encyclopedia Africana* in Ghana. His thoughts about African leadership changed and instead, he sought a union between Africans allowing “Africans who are

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<sup>198</sup> Evening Newspaper, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1963.

<sup>199</sup> Evening Newspaper, 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1963, 5.

<sup>200</sup> Mabel Dove, “We Want Freedom-Afro-Americans Cry’ and “Teach White America-the Afro-America Story”, *Evening Newspaper*, 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1963, 2.

<sup>201</sup> W. E. B Du Bois, “Report To The Ghana Academy Of Sciences,” December 21<sup>st</sup> 1961 (Du Bois Papers), 3.

the majority to rule” and dictate the course of their development while working with diaspora Africans.

Despite the unfortunate turn out of events with Rustin’s group, Ghana has been one of the most sought-after countries among diaspora Africans. The country continues to have a great appeal to people of African descent in contemporary times, which has a lot to do with Nkrumah’s pursuit of an African personality. Again, the encounter reveals the complexity of diaspora African and African relations which will further be explored. But the more African elites emerged the wider the gap between diaspora Africans and the development of Africa.

Furthermore, whereas the early Pan-African Congress had focused on the political liberation of Africans and people of African descent, the 1950s was geared towards decolonization and African unity, in other words, it was African oriented. Nkrumah also pursued a non-racial African Personality embedded in Pan-Africanism. He noted that the African Personality, “is not associated with a particular state, language, religion, political system, or colour of the skin.” And “for those who project it, it expresses identification not only with Africa’s historical past but with the struggle of the African people in the African Revolution to liberate and unify the continent and to build a just society.”<sup>202</sup> This notion of Pan-Africanism was not widely popular with many Africans and some diaspora Africans. For instance, Leslie Alexander Lacy whom Tom Feelings described looked like Nkrumah and could pass for a Ghanaian because of his complexion<sup>203</sup> resented the idea of Whites working in Ghana including white South Africans. Lacy in an encounter with some said “frankly I was rather shocked to discover that a South African white was working in Ghana. I had seen and

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<sup>202</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 206.

<sup>203</sup> Tom Feelings, [Interview of Tom Feelings by Elton Fax, April 12, 1987](#), 11.

knew about European expatriates working in Ghana but a South African was another cup of tea.”<sup>204</sup> While his position reflected his dislike of apartheid in South Africa, it also reflected Garvey’s notion of black nationalism excluding white or people with light skin. Lacy was not alone on the issue as other African American colleagues with him concurred.

Colin Legum discussed the challenges of incorporating North Africa into Pan-Africanism as the movement was seen more as Sub-Saharan or Pan-blackness. The north of the Sahara for a long time considered themselves non-Africans or Arabs. There was a great divide between North African countries and those below the Sahara with respect to the Pan-African movement. Presidents Nkrumah and Abdel Gamal Nasser sought to close that gap during the 1960s. It is believed that president Nkrumah’s desire to close the gap between the North and Sub-Sahara Africa was one of the reasons why he married an Egyptian which many found strange since Nkrumah and his wife, Fathia had no mutual language of communication. In another instance, whereas Graham Du Bois instantly saw a connection with a group of Egyptians and went on to write an article titled “Egypt Is Africa” and would continue to propagate that to support the Afro-Arab Solidarity.<sup>205</sup> It will take Maya Angelou some time to accept Egypt as part of Africa even though she had lived in the country. Angelou on her way to Ghana having lived a couple of months in Egypt writes that she never felt she had been in Africa until she saw Ghana.<sup>206</sup> This was in reference to the white complexion of most Egyptians which for her, did not make Egypt any different from the United States.

These point to issues of colorism which is overlooked by the black nationalist movement but has negative implications on the participators of the movement. For instance, the

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<sup>204</sup> Alexander Lacy, *The Rise And Fall Of A Proper Negro*, 152.

<sup>205</sup> Shirley Graham Du Bois, “Egypt is Africa” in *Pan-Africanism* eds. Robert Chrisman and Nathan Hare, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill 1974), 25.

<sup>206</sup> Maya Angelou, *The Collected Autobiographies Of Maya Angelou* (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 864.

Ghanaian term ‘obroni’ which means White has been considered a derogatory word against black expatriates irrespective of complexion which reminds them of not fully accepted. In Campbell’s discussion on the politics of identity in this transatlantic endeavor, he also touched on this issue with the examination of the journey of the poet, Langston Hughes to Africa where the latter was disappointed to be identified as a white American due to his light complexion and mannerism.<sup>207</sup> Campbell noted that, while Hughes was black in America, he was seen as white in Africa, pointing to the fluidity of racial ideologies. But this only reveals Nkrumah’s non-racial movement which was misunderstood by the majority. Nkrumah’s administration had nationals from across the globe especially when it became a center of refuge for political activists. Most saw the movement as an all-black and racial movement like Garvey’s movement, but Nkrumah’s notion was to welcome all-hands-on-deck for the unification of Africa as a pre-requisite of freedom for blacks across the globe.<sup>208</sup>

The African personality was projected to be non-racial but in so many ways it was racial with its African oriented projections. A feature of the African personality was the policy of Africanization set to put Ghanaians or Africans in various administrative positions. This policy of Africanization was later development of the colonial policy to include few Africans in colonial administration. Nkrumah’s pursuit of that policy challenged his diaspora obligations. In Nkrumah’s Ghana, the policy of Africanization required one to be an African but largely a Ghanaian in order to receive a job or any significant position. For instance, in education, when expatriate professors threatened to leave the country because of attempt to make some Ghanaian teachers full-fledged professors, Tawia Adamafio, responded that, “good riddance, let them pack

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<sup>207</sup> James T. Campbell, *The Middle Passage*, Preface, xx.

<sup>208</sup> Nkrumah, *The Struggle Continues*. 14

right now. We are not going to run this university with white professors. It is a Ghanaian university and we are creating Ghanaian professors to run it.”<sup>209</sup> The policy was not limited to education but almost all civil service sectors. Prior to the Du Bois living in Ghana, the pan-Africanist George Padmore was living in Ghana working hand in hand with president Nkrumah to fulfill the Pan-African agenda. Padmore worked in various positions including the Bureau of African Affairs. His appointment to the secretariat and presidential advisor was resisted.<sup>210</sup> A. L. Adu the head of foreign relations opposed Padmore’s appointment because the latter had not lived in Africa long enough to be able to occupy the position of advising Nkrumah. But it was the pan-Africanist ideas that drew Nkrumah to Padmore. Gaines writes that Padmore by the time of his death had vindicated himself “despite opportunistic whispering against the “stranger” and claims that it was inappropriate for a West Indian to exercise leadership in African foreign relations....”<sup>211</sup> William Gardner Smith who worked in the news department kind courtesy of Graham Du Bois recollecting his days in Ghana also wrote that, “in Ghana priority of job went to the home folks.”<sup>212</sup> This policy hindered some African Americans’ contribution to the pursuit of African personality or the African Revolution.

While the year 1960 was celebrated as the year of Africa because most African countries gained independence, Africa was immediately plagued with coup d’états in the ensuing years of the 1960s. The overthrow of legitimate governments in Africa believed to have been engineered by neo-colonialists threatened the lives and independence of Africans and diaspora Africans in Africa. President Nkrumah suffered multiple assassination attempts which led to enforce the

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<sup>209</sup> Tawia Adamafio, *By Nkrumah’s Side*, 67.

<sup>210</sup> Michael Dei-Anang, *The Administration Of Ghana’s Foreign Relations, 1957-1966: A Personal Memoir* (London: University of London), 13.

<sup>211</sup> Kevin Gaines, 107.

<sup>212</sup> William Gardner Smith, *Return To Black America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall,1970), 100.

infamous Preventive Detention Act of 1958. The attempts also led to a search for local and foreign spies undermining his government. A search that was geared towards ‘strangers’ or foreigners. One of the allegations leveled against president Nkrumah was surrounding himself with foreigners.<sup>213</sup> David Jenkins in *Black Zion* also explained that Nkrumah at times trusted African Americans in Ghana more than Ghanaians because they shared his vision.<sup>214</sup> The African American role in the development of Ghana would be questioned by cold war politics which made Ghana and United States suspicious of each other.

Graham Du Bois in a letter to her attorney expressed fear that she might be assassinated writing that “it is possible the next bomb might be thrown at ME!”<sup>215</sup> Her worry stemmed from the fact that she was a close ally to president Nkrumah, she was the director of television which was an enviable position and was on the verge of being appointed as chairperson of the Ghana-Sanyo corporation. However, she was not alone on fearing for her life because of the assassination attempts on Nkrumah. According to Pontiflet, there were “billboards signs up in Ghana saying, "Beware of the Afro-American," and that “they were checking everybody closely.”<sup>216</sup> The relationship between Nkrumah and his African American network was not all smooth. Those in Nkrumah’s Ghana were not spared during the search for CIA spies because of multiple assassination attempts on Nkrumah’s life. Nkrumah was identified as a communist and following his acceptance of radical activists and ‘communists’, many plans from the Western world was put in place for his overthrow. During the Freedom Fighters Conference, Adamafo observed that “Accra was filled to the brim by CIA agents and other spies. They had come in

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<sup>213</sup> Ghana Ministry of Information, *Nkrumah’s Deception of Africa*, 15.

<sup>214</sup> David Jenkins, *Black Zion*, 50.

<sup>215</sup> Letter from Graham Du Bois to Bernard Jaffe, 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1964.

<sup>216</sup> Interview of Ted Pontiflet by Camille Billops, March 19, 1976, 121.



their numbers as reporters and observers..."<sup>217</sup> U.S and Ghana's confrontations will question the loyalty of African Americans as some suspected the U.S government of infiltrating Ghana with spies, often African Americans who could pass as Africans. Graham Du Bois in a letter wrote that...there were infiltrators, this pointed accusing fingers at African Americans who could easily pass by as Africans and supposedly gather information for the U.S. In a letter to her attorney, Graham Du Bois mentioned her fears about the probability of her grandson Robert being recruited as a spy for U.S if they do not send him away from Ghana.<sup>218</sup>

The search for spies will cause many of them to leave Ghana before the country's first coup. Others were deported like Ana Livia and Jean Pierre under Nkrumah's administration. The former was a doctor who oversaw Accra district health program and according to Ted Pointflet, she helped to reduced mortality rate to almost zero and her deportation had so many women weeping at the airport.<sup>219</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> February 1966 while on a peace mission to Vietnam, Nkrumah's government was overthrown by the National Liberation Council putting into power General Emmanuel Kwasi Kotoka believed to have been a CIA puppet. Ghana's coup was blamed on CIA agents. The first African American ambassador to Ghana was also criticized for his possible role in the coup. Nkrumah wrote "it's particularly disgraceful that it should have been an African American who sold himself out to the imperialists...in the USA the "Uncle Tom" figure is well known. We have mercifully seen less of him in Africa."<sup>220</sup> Ambassador Franklin William was an alumnus of Lincoln University and his suspected involvement in the overthrow of Nkrumah, was seen as the deed of a "bootlicker" for whites and thus a traitor to blacks.<sup>221</sup> One

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<sup>217</sup> Adamafo, *By Nkrumah's Side*, 106.

<sup>218</sup> Letter from Graham Du Bois to Bernard Jaffe, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1964.

<sup>219</sup> [Interview of Ted Pontiflet by Camille Billops, March 19, 1976](#), 125.

<sup>220</sup> Nkrumah, *Dark Days In Ghana*, 50.

<sup>221</sup> Kathleen Neal Cleaver, [Kathleen Cleaver: From New York Radio Address In Black Panther 2 No. 19: 4](#)

of the interviewees of Obiagele's work Egala a Trinidadian was of the view that Nkrumah's close association with black expatriates especially African Americans added to the factors for the 1966 coup. There was Ghanaian resentment against these diasporas who were 'too close' to Nkrumah.<sup>222</sup>

According to James T. Campbell, most of the African Americans were "using Africa to prove a point".<sup>223</sup> In other words, they were concerned with using the country as a retreating ground to assert their rights in the US. In fact, Kwame Touré (Stokely Carmichael), a proponent of the Black Power movement called on African Americans to have a base which would help them have a revolution in U.S. This base was to be Africa and for him, Ghana was the best place in Africa for it.<sup>224</sup> Perhaps the conflicting revolutionary expectations may have made some indifferent towards internal happenings in Ghana and for others to say that "We wanted so much love that we sometimes lied in order not to hurt someone's feelings."<sup>225</sup> Perhaps this passive attitude towards Nkrumah's Ghana may have contributed to its overthrow. Despite the general passivity, the few ones that attempted to challenge Nkrumah's governance were deported or left the country before they could be served with deportation letters. The activist Pauli Murray recorded that while teaching Constitutional and Administrative law at University of Ghana, her classes were often monitored by soldiers and members of the Young Pioneers Movement who reported lecturers believed to be anti-Nkrumaist. Pauli Murray and Joyce Markham another African American worked with the Ghanaian Pan-Africanist, lawyer and politician J. B Danquah

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<sup>222</sup> Lake Obiagele, Dissertation, 88.

<sup>223</sup> James T. Campbell, *Middle Passage*, XXIII.

<sup>224</sup> Stokely Carmichael, "Land and Power" in *Pan-Africanism*, 14-15.

<sup>225</sup> Alexander Lacy, *The Rise And Fall Of A Proper Negro*, 179.

to oppose the Preventive Detention Act of 1958. Their challenge of the Preventive Detention Act was inadvertently an opposition of Nkrumah's government.<sup>226</sup>

The above engagements reveals misconceptions and misunderstandings with respect to the relations between African Americans and Africans. First, post-independent Ghana needed all the help it could get to rebuild itself from the damages of colonialism and hence welcomed all hands, be it white or black except that focus was given to Africans and people of African descent. One of Nkrumah's greatest concerns was education, so a lot of African Americans had jobs in the university as lecturers. African Americans without such scholarly skills often ended up disappointed. The unfulfilled expectation of African Americans also stems from the diverse Ghanaian culture. There are many ethnic groups in Ghana and tackling tribalism became one of Nkrumah's most difficult task, which led to the referendum for a one-party system.

Most of them also had an image of Africa where only blacks controlled everything and were surprised to see Europeans still in control of certain positions. Lacy wrote that "our concept of Africa never existed....hence we were doomed to be disappointed because what we saw and felt could not conform to the Africa in our skull."<sup>227</sup> Most shocking to some was to find Ghanaians behaving as Europeans or treating Whites as 'special' people.<sup>228</sup> Some expectations of the African Revolution were also shattered when they realized that certain positions in the country were occupied by whites. What most of them did not know or refused to acknowledge was that Nkrumah's idea of Pan-Africanism was non-racial which embraced all who supported the unification of Africa and the liberation of countries under colonial rule. Also, he had declared Ghana nonaligned during the Cold War. This position shaped his ideas of Pan-Africanism that

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<sup>226</sup> Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist*, 342.

<sup>227</sup> Alexander Lacy, *The Rise And Fall Of A Proper Negro*, 259.

<sup>228</sup> George McGray, "Colors in Ghana" in *Chicago Defender*, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1958, 11.

affected the image and expectations of African Americans in the country and beyond. Most people including some Ghanaians during the period did not embrace this concept of non-racial Pan-Africanism.

African Americans in Nkrumah's Ghana went to Africa not to take over but to 'improve' themselves for western life. This journey was not forced or organized by any political head or organization. Nevertheless, a complex journey that also advertised itself for will-be adventurers. The account of returnees varies due to the above factors and more, but most emphasize the need to visit Africa. A newspaper publication wrote, "Most of the negroes tickling to Ghana these days are finding not only an inner self, which has been buried under anti-negro propoganda...from what I see there is no longing to go back "home""<sup>229</sup>. Historian Nell Irvin Painter who lived through the country's coup said in an interview "I would have gone crazy if I had not visited Ghana" not only that, in an article, she said 'Ghana was one of the best things that happened to me' describing her Ghanaian experience.<sup>230</sup> Curtis Kojo Morrow having spent almost a decade in Ghana, a trip he anticipated to be only a year had this to say as he boarded the flight to America; "go and come, go and come. I could hear the crowd of people shouting...I waved goodbye unable to hold back the tears...I let the tears run free....yes go and come, I would do."<sup>231</sup> In an interview, Morrow who now lives in the U.S recounts his Ghanaian experience as the best he ever had in life. Ted Pontiflet reflecting about Ghana stated that "I've been to a few countries in Africa, but if I had a chance today to go back to Ghana, I would go in a minute. I love Ghana. I felt good teaching there. I felt very useful. I imagine I would feel that way here at Jackson State, too, if life at the university level were

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<sup>229</sup> George McGray, *Chicago Defender* April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1958, 11.

<sup>230</sup> Nell Irvin Painter, "Her" *New York Times*, 25 December 1981.

<sup>231</sup> Curtis Morro, *The Return of the African-American* (Chicago, Illinois: C. Morrow, 1983), 177.

simpler, I'm grateful that Ghana accepted me.”<sup>232</sup> Graham Du Bois never ceased to let people know how she enjoyed her stay and also tell people she had found her dream in Ghana.<sup>233</sup>

However, not all shared the same sentiments for instance, Lacy stated, “(we) soon discovered that our Africa was an illusion.”<sup>234</sup> There were others like Pauli Murray who felt that “America is home to me, however inherently alienated or disinherited I have felt at times”<sup>235</sup> and adding that “a dark skin does not automatically qualify one to fit into the African environment.”<sup>236</sup> This is indicative of the various experiences that African Americans had in Nkrumah’s Ghana despite its Pan-Africanist flames. While the pursuit of an African personality was to help both Africans and diaspora Africans redefine themselves, it faced racial and issues of ethnicity which are often overlooked. The issue of how ‘African’ diaspora African must be to be actively engaged in Africa’s development continues to be a challenge.

The above experiences often lead to two extremes; one is the exaggerated ‘disillusionment’ of African Americans who go to Africa and return sadly. The other extreme is the exaggerated image of Africa as ‘paradise’ by some ‘returnees.’ In an attempt to recount their experiences in Africa, they consciously and unconsciously sell an idea of Africa which incoming African Americans may not necessarily see in the sense that, the above-mentioned people could be classified as belonging to the middle class. They were people who had affiliations with the then president or intellectuals with an established network. Most of the African leaders of that period had been products of American education and as such had networks with African Americans which made it easy for some to travel to the country and have a ‘good’ time. Most of

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<sup>232</sup> Interview of Ted Pontiflet, 125.

<sup>233</sup> Letter from Graham. Du Bois, to Bernard Jaffe, August 16, 1964.

<sup>234</sup> Alexander Lacy, *The Rise And Fall Of A Proper Negro*, 240.

<sup>235</sup> Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray*, 328.

<sup>236</sup> Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray*, 329.

them also lived in Accra, the capital city of Ghana and had a city lifestyle, which is often different from rural or smaller town's experiences. However, ordinary people like Jablocks A. Rodieregue would not find it so easy. Rodieregue wrote to the *Chicago Defender* to ask questions pertinent to the 'less privileged' person who wanted to respond to the call. Rodieregue asked; "With only a high school education, what are my chances of a reasonable living in Ghana? What would be the general acceptance rate of the American Negro in Ghana? What are our obligations to the country? What is being done to integrate the American Negroes into Ghana?"<sup>237</sup>The new visitor without proper consultation of the political and cultural state of the country would have an experience marred by misconceptions.

The end of Nkrumah's government dealt a huge blow to many nations and people especially Africans and African Americans. Because for most Africans Nkrumah was the torchbearer in the fight against neo-colonialism which continues to be a problem in today's world. For most Africans, he was one of the few African leaders who were willing to sacrifice all to see Africa liberated and empowered. For diaspora Africans especially, those living and engaged in Africa's development the coup was a great blow because most were more politically connected to the country than cultural wise. Their engagement and circle were centered around Kwame Nkrumah. Thus, once he was overthrown, that link to Africa was severed. Activists like Graham Du Bois was put under house arrest until her escape to Egypt.<sup>238</sup> Alphaeus Hunton and many others were asked to leave the country after the coup. The impact of Nkrumah's fall was devastating for diaspora Africans as well. The Pan-Africanist Dudley Thompson in a letter noted

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<sup>237</sup> Jablocks A. Rodieregue, *Chicago Defender* 8/9/1958.

<sup>238</sup> Letter from Graham Du Bois to Bernard, June 26, 1966.

that, "when president Nkrumah was betrayed all of us, every negro, lost stature and fell at least a few inches, and some years."<sup>239</sup>

Cold War politics made Ghana and U.S suspicious of each other. The suspicions of the “returned brother” will not only challenge the effort of African Americans to help in the revolution but also their acculturation. Most of them lived in isolated places or lived close to each other and had less communication with the Ghanaian community or culture. Many either fraternized with Europeans or just lived among themselves in affluent residential areas like Cantonment and Ridge in Accra, where the Du Bois lived and close by were the Smiths. It is important to consider the lived experiences of African Americans in Africa because Pan-Africanism does not only liberate them, it also unites various distinct groups of people. The lived experiences in Africa helps to shape pan-African ideals and to measure its impact “beyond articulation and pronouncement to act and progress.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Letter from Dudley Thompson to Kwame Nkrumah, in *Conakry Years*, 154.

<sup>240</sup> Charles V. Hamilton, “Pan-Africanism, And The Black Struggle In The US” in *Pan-Africanism*, 151.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

*“You have all heard of African personality; of African democracy; of the African way to socialism, of negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet again. Once we are up we shall not need any of them anymore. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Sartre called an anti-racist racism, to announce not just that we are good as the next man but that we are better.”*<sup>241</sup>  
Chinua Achebe

The 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural revolution among African Americans had some influences of Nkrumah’s pursuit of an African Personality. Because activists like Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael visited Africa and engaged African leaders like Nkrumah, Azikiwe and Sekou Touré to discuss issues pertaining to the liberation of Blacks from oppression and their unification. Malcolm X and Kwame Touré strongly believed in strengthening the ties between Africa and the African diaspora. They also had militant ideas about African Americans role in U.S political life which Carmichael, will use in the development of the Black Power movement. Black Power was a redefinition of the status of African Americans in the United States and also a revival of their culture and pride in African heritage. Carmichael had declared that “...One of the most important things we must now begin to do is to call ourselves Africans....We are first of all and finally Africans.”<sup>242</sup> Thus, even though Black Power was of a political nature, it will lead to an explosion of Africanization of African Americans like Negritude and Harlem Renaissance. It called for self-redefinition where many sought to redefine their personality by changing their European or American names to African names, wearing African clothes, beads and indulge in African cultural practices which hitherto had been looked on as pagan or uncivilized. The effect of this Africanization was so strong to the extent that George Mason, the cultural minister of the

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<sup>241</sup> Quoted by Pal Ahluwalia, *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory: African Inflections* (London: Routledge, 2001), 26.

<sup>242</sup> Stokely Carmichael, “Pan-Africanism: Land and Power” in *Pan-Africanism* (1974), 10.



Black Panther Party, felt that not only did Africanization have little to do with their black liberation movement but also it was fueling black capitalism where black capitalists were amassing wealth by selling African products including African names.<sup>243</sup> Stokely Carmichael was of the view that African American Revolution in the United States will only be a success when they have a base in Africa and for him that base had to be Ghana.<sup>244</sup>

One of the significant features of the Black Power movement like the pursuit of an African personality was to help Black people develop both economically, politically and socially in the African or Black way. Both movements encouraged black businesses, black leadership or governing of black communities and countries. However, African Americans were divided on the relevance of maintaining ties with Africa. While activists like Stokely Carmichael saw it as necessary to the success of their revolution in America, the likes of A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin saw it as distractions to the success of their quest for racial equality in the USA.

Nevertheless, Kwame Nkrumah and some African leaders strongly held unto the belief that, the unification of Africans was the only way to win the fight against neocolonialism and oppression of Blacks across the globe. This battle required the efforts of the African diaspora. He believed and worked towards that vision so much that even in exile, Kwame Nkrumah never gave up on the idea of engaging the African diaspora for the betterment of Africa and African descendants. As he wrote to Eddie Stafford stating that “... I feel strongly that the coming of our African American brothers to Africa will coincide with the political unification of Africa.”<sup>245</sup>

Nkrumah believed diaspora Africans have a great role to play in the development of Africa. One

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<sup>243</sup> George Mason Murray, “Cultural Nationalism,” *The Black Panther*, March 3, 1969.

<sup>244</sup> Stokely Carmichael, “Pan-Africanism: Land and Power” in *Pan-Africanism* (1974), 15.

<sup>245</sup> Kwame Nkrumah to Eddie Stafford, in *Kwame Nkrumah: The Conakry Years*, 243.

of the Pan-African ways adopted to ensure the strengthening of the ties between Africans and African Americans was the promise of citizenship in Africa.

President Nkrumah was the first to promise citizenship to diaspora Africans who were willing to relocate and help in developing Africa. W. E. B Du Bois and his wife Graham Du Bois were among the beneficiaries of this venture. Other less known figures include the dentists from South Carolina Robert Lee and Sarah Lee. But the overthrow of Nkrumah's presidency put a hold on it as foreigners, and Nkrumaists were expelled from the country. That incident caused a decline in the number of diaspora Africans visiting Ghana. Flt. Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings who would later become the seventh president of Ghana supported Nkrumah's initiative and worked to revive the link between Ghana and diaspora Africans especially, that between Ghana and African Americans. This will lead to great investment in the promotion of cultural tourism aimed at increasing revenue and strengthening the ties between Africans and its diaspora.

Tourism has become an avenue to engage diaspora Africans, according to Adia Benton and Kwame Zulu Shabazz, cultural tourism has now become one of the booming sectors of the African economy.<sup>246</sup> And along with the 2015 findings of Ghana Tourism Authority, tourism ranked as the fourth largest source of foreign exchange earnings for the country, following gold, cocoa, and timber. The tourism industry in Ghana contributes about 4.8% towards the country's GDP according to the Ghana Tourism report.<sup>247</sup> Most of these tourists are diaspora Africans of which majority are African Americans. On one hand, Adia Benton and Kwame Zulu Shabazz write that focus of this tourism is more about using diaspora Africans as a source of revenue

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<sup>246</sup> Adia Benton And Kwame Zulu Shabazz, "Find Their Level". African American Roots Tourism In Sierra Leone And Ghana ("Trouver Sa Place" — Tourisme De Racines Africaines-Américaines En Sierra Leone Et Au Ghana), *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, Vol. 49, Cahier 193/194, Tourisimes: La Quête De Soi Par La Pratique Des Autres (2009), 477.

<sup>247</sup> 2015 Ghana Tourism Report

because they encourage tourism but not resettlement.<sup>248</sup> On the other hand, tourism allows diaspora Africans to actively engage in the development of Africa which also creates a platform for self-determination. For instance, in 1995, journalist Stephen Buckley published an article in the *Washington Post* titled “US African Blacks Differ on Turning Slave Dungeons into Tourist Attraction.”<sup>249</sup> This article gave accounts of the conflict between Ghanaian and African Americans over the renovation and commoditization of the Elmina Castle. The problem that emerged between them was as a result of the Ghanaian authorities’ intent to restore the castles in a manner to generate revenue while, the African American group wanted preservation of the Castles to reflect the struggles and pains that their ancestors endured before the Middle Passage.

There was also an argument about the part of the castle’s history that should be recounted to tourists. The African American group believed that tour guides often focus more on colonialism to the neglect of the harrowing experiences of the slave dungeons and the thousands of people shipped into the New Worlds. The Ghanaian counterparts argue that the castles were not only slave dungeons but were also seats of colonial government and places where powerful rulers like King Prempeh I of the Asante empire, was imprisoned after their defeat at the hands of the British army in Gold Coast.<sup>250</sup> Each group has a legitimate argument and hence a middle ground can be the way out. According to Brempong Osei Tutu, one of the middle ways arrived at during a seminar for the stakeholders of the Cape Coast castle was the closing down of its restaurant out of respect for the African American argument that, the restaurant desensitizes the slave castle.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Adia Benton and Kwame Zulu Shabazz, 486.

<sup>249</sup> Stephen Buckley, “US African Blacks Differ on Turning Slave Dungeons into Tourist Attraction”, *The Washington Post*, 1995.

<sup>250</sup> Justin Williams, “The ‘Rawlings Revolution’ and the Rediscovery of the African Diaspora in Ghana (1983-2015),” *African Studies*, Issue. 74, No.3, (December 2015), 373.

<sup>251</sup> Brempong Osei-Tutu, “African Americans Reaction Towards The Restoration of Ghana’s Slave Castle,” 198.

Despite the above conflict, there is a major problem within Pan-Africanism; the main platform which allows interaction between Africans and the African diaspora. The problem of continental Pan-Africanism and what Sociologist St. Clair Drake calls Racial Pan-Africanism. During a college seminar which sought to explore the link between the Manchester Congress of 1945 and the All African Peoples Conference, Drake highlighted on the issue of discord between Africans and diaspora Africans with respect to the projections of Pan-Africanism. He discussed that Continental Pan-Africanism is more focused on uniting continental Africans and development in Africa while Racial Pan-Africanism seeks to address issues facing Blacks including those in the diaspora.<sup>252</sup> St. Clair Drake cited that during the Pan-African Congress of 1974 held in Algeria, the African American delegates showed their discontentment about the focus of the movement on addressing continental issues, to the neglect of those in the diaspora.

Despite the above challenges, many African Americans have set up businesses like Land Tours Ghana and Bakeshop Classics which employ a lot of Ghanaians and other nationals contribute their quota to the development of Ghana's the economy. For instance, Land Tours Ghana which operates as touring agency work towards bringing in more African Americans to see the country fueling the tourism industry and forging cultural links. The presence of a vibrant and engaging African American Association in Ghana reflects some of the foundations that Nkrumah and his African American network made. The mission of the Association is "to be recognized as a preeminent community vehicle for the cultural, social, spiritual and economic re-integration of African American and other people of African descent returning from the Diaspora into the Ghanaian society."<sup>253</sup> Some of their activities include helping to integrate new

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<sup>252</sup> St. Claire Drake and George Shepperson, "Fifth Pan-African Conference 1945 and the All African Peoples Congress," *Journal of African and Afro-American Studies*, Vol. 8, Article. 5, 25.

<sup>253</sup> <http://aaaghana.org/about.php> accessed on 12/18/2018

‘returnees’ into the country and also engaged in developmental projects. It is noteworthy to mention that some ‘returnees’ have also been enstooled as *nkosuohene* (development chief) in Ghana.

In the 1980s, President John Jerry Rawlings dedicated the residence of W. E. B DuBois and his wife Graham DuBois as a center for Pan-African studies.<sup>254</sup> The death of George Padmore and his service to Ghana was also commemorated with the George Padmore Research Library. The Du Bois Center and Padmore Library in Accra are major locations for tourist to see evidence of the works of diaspora Africans who assisted president Nkrumah in his quest to project a new African personality. In addition to strengthening the ties, the Ghana Immigration Act 2000 gives ‘Right of Abode’<sup>255</sup> to diaspora Africans willing to ‘return home.’ This policy allows diaspora Africans to take up residency in the country and many of those who have taken advantage of this policy are African Americans. Meanwhile, the policy has made Ghana the first among African countries to officially welcome diaspora Africans back to Africa.

Nkrumah’s impact on Pan-Africanism gave the movement a new face and will have an impact on the Black Nationalist movement which only became more relevant, after Africa’s post-colonial coup d’états. Nkrumah and the African American network helped to reengage non-Africans into the Pan-African movement after its shift to Africa. He was not only a “voice of Africa”<sup>256</sup> but beyond Africa especially for blacks across the globe and victims of white supremacy. He believed that the black man would be able to breathe freely only when the whole

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<sup>254</sup> Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, “Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore and W. E. B Du Bois,” *Research Review NS*, Vol. 7, NOS 1&2, 1991, 8.

<sup>255</sup> Justin Williams, “The ‘Rawlings Revolution’ and the Rediscovery of the African Diaspora in Ghana, 377.

<sup>256</sup> W. E. B Dubois, Kwame Nkrumah, *A Word Of Introduction*,” Unpublished Article, September 1960, (Du Bois Papers).

of Africa was united and free,<sup>257</sup> with this in mind, he fought against racism, colonialism, and neocolonialism by forming a global alliance which was dominated by non-Africans. This was to create a new Africa which showed that “the black man was capable of managing his own affairs.”<sup>258</sup> Nkrumah and his African American network saw a connection between the civil rights movement and colonialism which was the dominance of white supremacy. It should be added that although Nkrumah urged African Americans to visit and help the continent, he did not encourage mass emigration of African Americans to Africa as a response to the racial struggle in the United States. While his door was open for assistance to the African Revolution, freedom fighters and African Americans, he urged the latter to fight in U.S just as Africans were doing in Africa.

Notwithstanding the above issues, there are few issues that were not addressed or fully exhausted in this research and deserve to be looked at in the promotion of unification of Africans and the African diaspora. One of the challenges to diaspora engagement with Africa is the less recognition of African history among diaspora Africans and vice versa. Perhaps if more scholars engage in exploring the connections between Africans and diaspora Africans, and such courses are made available to students on both sides of the Atlantic, it will help to address the supposed ‘Black American-African Conflict.’ Because it will bring to the understanding of each group the colonial and racial struggles of their historical past. And reveal how their various leaders both African nationalists and civil rights activist navigated their boundaries to address issues of importance to them in other to project an African personality that will ensure Black pride.

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<sup>257</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, “Message to the Black People of Britain” in *The Struggle Continues: Six Panaf Pamphlets*, (London: Panaf Books 1973), 14.

<sup>258</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, Independence Speech, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957.

Another issue that should be further explored is the type of African personality projected in Africa and outside Africa especially among diaspora Africans in contemporary times. As indicated in this research, while the idea behind it was projecting an African personality that would uplift Black people, it was more African oriented. Its projections despite the efforts of African Americans does not reflect any major African American culture. An exploration of an African personality projected in Africa and in the diaspora will help to understand whether Pan-Africanism in the era of globalization goes beyond Pan-Blackness.

Furthermore, an equally important issue is the need to explore other non-traditional ways of examining women's contribution to transnational politics or history. Because the focus is often given to the major events and numbers leading to neglect of women's effort often seen as inconsequential. With the androcentric analysis of women in African diaspora history, the voices of women are recounted by men where imposition of thoughts are projected unto the women while certain things are deemed unimportant. One common argument is that African American women in Ghana found it difficult to interact with African men because they are not as submissive as the African women, but the African American women accounts do not make such assertions. In fact, Nell Irvin Painter said that if anything she was free to be a woman in Africa having all the fun and excitement she wanted. She wrote;

“In the United States I was a woman, but always-outside the tight circle of family and close friends-a Negro woman. A Negro woman in the United States was not the same thing as just a woman, without racial qualifier. In Ghana, I became just a woman. I let down my burden of responsibility to the 400 million people of African descent, for I was surrounded by friends who were thinking seriously about the future and also having a good time. I had love affairs. I had my heart broken and broke hearts in my turn. I was free to enjoy myself and be something I have often missed intensely in the years since I came home.”<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Nell Irvin Painter, “Hers”, *New York Times*, 25 December 1981

Maya Angelou turned down a marriage proposal with a wealthy African man when she realized the terms were unfavorable to her. The recent unveiling of a bust of Graham DuBois in Accra, strengthens the arguments made in Chapter three about the important role women played in the black nationalist movements under Nkrumah's regime. This also indicates that there are other women who may not have been as popular as Graham DuBois who made their contributions in this transnational politics, that need to be explored and their story recounted to get a whole picture of the extent, and impact of the engagement between Africa and its diaspora.

But as has been demonstrated, Africans and African Americans' attempt to reconstruct the African or black imagery in the face of racism can be described as one of the many positive outcomes of their transatlantic relations. This effort has been demonstrated in Negritude led by francophone Africa and African Personality led by Anglophone Africa, Garveyism and Harlem Renaissance in the United States in response to black intellectual prowess. While all these events emerged within specific time periods, they were in response to correcting negative perceptions about Black people. Nkrumah's African personality was a racial upliftment ideology that was used to fight against racism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism which he called the last stage of imperialism. His entire quest as a socialist, prime minister, president and co-president in Guinea was based on the premise that, Africa must unite to bring an end to the oppression of all blacks across the globe.

In summation, despite the negative effects of transatlantic slave trade, de-Africanization, deliberate efforts to fuel a possible 'African and African American' feud, Africans and diaspora Africans have navigated such obstacles to form transatlantic links to give pride, dignity and unity to Africans; a new African personality. This new personality was to replace Africa's personality lost to slavery, colonialism, and racism. The effectiveness of PANAFEST and other Pan-African



activities attest to the foundations laid by president Nkrumah and his African American network. Graham DuBois' lived experience and to an extent, Maya Angelou and Pauli Murray's lives in Ghana reveal that, the extent of one's role or embrace of the African personality is shaped by his or her mode of assimilation and alliances formed. It further goes to show the extent of contribution diaspora Africans would make to the nation when embraced as Nkrumah did. This is important especially in an era where more African descendants in the diaspora seek temporary and permanent homes in Africa and also, desire roles in the development and re-imagining of the continent.

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