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Interwar African Diasporic Responses to Fascism
and the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War**

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We are the people who have long known in actual practice the meaning of the word fascism—for the American attitude toward us has always been one of economic and social discrimination: In many states of our country Negroes are not permitted to vote or to hold political office. In some sections freedom of movement is greatly hindered, especially if we happen to be sharecroppers on the cotton plantations in the South. All over America we know what it is to be refused admittance to schools and colleges, to theatres and concert halls, to hotels and restaurants... We know Jim Crow [railroad] cars, race riots, lynchings, the sorrows of the Scottsboro boys. In America, Negroes do not have to be told what fascism is in action. We know. Its theories of Nordic supremacy and economic suppression have long been realities to us.¹

The writer and social critic Langston Hughes delivered these words in a speech entitled “Too Much of Race” on July 17, 1937. He spoke before an audience of the Second International Writers Congress in Paris, France that included a tremendous array of literary luminaries from around the world. Within weeks he would enter the country of Spain, where a revolution and civil war had exploded into international view exactly one year before Hughes presented these words.

This conflict in the large but economically weak country of Spain literally galvanized millions of people worldwide to predominantly advocate on the one hand—a social revolution for workers and peasants in Spain that could potentially spread elsewhere, or the other—a fascist victory for the Spanish General Francisco Franco and his prominent material and ideological supporters, Germany’s Adolph Hitler, Italy’s Benito Mussolini, and Portugal’s Antonio Salazar. In early 1936, Spanish people had widely voted into power a new left-wing Republic, which promised mass reforms for workers and peasants, while challenging the previous concentrations of power that the monarchy, wealthy elite, military, and clergy had long enjoyed. General Franco commanded a military insurrection in July of

¹ Danny Duncan Collum, ed. *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War: "This Ain't Ethiopia, But It'll Do"* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1992) 106-107.

1936 to overthrow this government and assume direct control. His efforts almost immediately began to receive military and economic aid from Italy, Germany, and Portugal, all of which by 1936 expressly identified as fascist states.

Langston Hughes went to Spain as a war and culture correspondent for the *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper to report and compose poetry on the experiences of ninety Black men and women from the United States who volunteered in the Abraham Lincoln Brigades to confront the fascist forces in Spain that they saw mirrored in the violent Jim Crow segregationist practices of their own country. Yet Hughes took his analytic scope one significant step further. He also sought to illuminate why and how tens of thousands of people from the North African colony of Morocco were serving in Franco's revolt. These Moroccans were under orders to employ the same vicious methods of atrocity and subjugation that they themselves had experienced as Spanish colonial subjects since 1910. Hughes contemplated, "Divided Spain, with men of color fighting on both sides. To write about them I had come to Spain."²

An exploration of this moment in African Diasporic history becomes even more complicated when analyzed alongside another historical phenomenon—that some sections of the Diaspora during the interwar period (between World Wars I and II) openly advocated ideas of fascism as a means towards Black liberation. As Mark Christian Thompson and Paul Gilroy argue, "Black Fascism" can be defined as an ultra-nationalist, anti-communist ideology that advances ideas of racial purity, with leaders who demonstrate "brutality and masculinity" as their main characteristics.³ These writers employ this term not to argue that mass Black fascist movements existed, but that indeed some Afro-descended people saw Hitler and Mussolini as charismatic leaders to emulate, and whose ideologies racially oppressed people could adeptly utilize. During the interwar period, many prominent Black radicals like Richard Wright and C.L.R. James theorized and advocated various radical strands of

² Langston Hughes. *I Wonder As I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964) 327.

³ Mark Christian Thompson. *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture Between the Wars* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007) 22.

Black nationalism, as well as multi-racial internationalism. And yet, for example, Jamaica-born United Negro Improvement Association leader Marcus Garvey argued at the height of his popularity that Black separatists could form alliances with the Ku Klux Klan, and even declared in 1937, “We were the first fascists.”⁴

Together with Langston Hughes, this group representing starkly divergent sides of the political spectrum produced during the interwar period time some of the most significant and overlooked contributions to the complexities of African Diasporic history and processes. The contentious locus of nationalism—how it can be shaped in radical or conservative ways by racially oppressed people; whether it must be embraced or superseded by Black social movements worldwide—was a variegated terrain on which members of the African Diaspora imagined their extended communities⁵ in order to provide emancipatory direction. While some of these historical figures connected the racist actions of the Ku Klux Klan in the U.S. with the developing fascist spread of power in Europe, as well as the need for racism to be fought on an international level of race/class struggle, others embraced similar ideas as the European fascism that was gathering momentum, with its first battleground being Spain.

This paper will examine the experiences of the Black anti-fascists in Spain, those of the Moroccan soldiers on the other side of the battlefield, interwar political debates on nationalism and fascism between Blacks in the United States and worldwide, and how Black radicals like Hughes engaged with these collisions within the African Diaspora by advancing a message of internationalism, anti-colonialism, and mass resistance to fascism from the Jim Crow United States to Spain.

Langston Hughes Investigates the Spanish Civil War

Langston Hughes' serious inquiry into the convoluted subject of race in the Spanish Civil War reflects the heightened nuance of members of the African Diaspora in examining what the spread of

⁴ Ibid. 1.

⁵ Although I do not draw from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* in my arguments, his book title offers a lucid yet flexible way to define African Diasporic practices that are addressed in the scope of essay.

fascism entailed for racially oppressed people worldwide. Hughes' curiosity about the racial situation in Spain was boundless, documenting this crucial question with the political urgency evoked in his address at the Writers Congress in Paris. Hughes' pioneering descriptions of ethnic and cultural commonalities between people of different national origins during his experiences in Spain serve as a unique proto-exploration into conceptualizing the contours of the African Diaspora. He writes about the various Black people he encountered,

Negroes were not strange to Spain, nor did they attract an undue amount of attention. In the cities no one turned around to look twice. Most Spaniards had seen colored faces, and may be quite dark themselves. Distinct traces of Moorish blood from the days of the Mohammedan conquest remain in the Iberian Peninsula. Copper-colored Gypsies like La Niña de los Peines are common. There were, too, quite a number of colored Portuguese living in Spain. And in both Valencia and Madrid I saw pure-blooded Negroes from the colonies in Africa, as well as many Cubans who had migrated to Spain.⁶

Hughes' ideological shovel was not hitting the Iberian soil for the first time. Several left-wing Spanish journals, such as *Nueva Cultura* and *El Mono Azul*, had already been publishing anti-colonial and anti-fascist articles and images that sought to link up struggles worldwide, with a particular emphasis on Africa and Afro-descended people. One particular page of a January 1936 edition of *Nueva Cultura* reads, “Fascism Destroys Cities/People of Somalia, Tripoli, Libya, Eritrea, Cyrenaica, Abyssinia.”⁷ Under the words “In Africa There is Land and Glory for All,”⁸ a collage of photographs depicts the carnage of colonialism—in one image several decapitated heads are held up on pikes, in another image several men hang from makeshift gallows, in two other images bodies are strewn on the ground in piles. In this same journal issue, Spanish readers are informed of Hughes' travels to Spain in a special feature that juxtaposes his radical poetry with images of lynchings, slave ships, and degraded Black performers, as well as summaries of African Diasporic struggles around the world.⁹

⁶ Ibid. 351.

⁷ Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia Archives, Madrid, Spain. Author's translation. Figure 1 at the end of the essay.

⁸ Author's translation.

Hughes illustrated these powerful interrelationships of the African Diaspora's convergence in Spain—as well as Spanish radicals' attention to the Diaspora—in the poetry he wrote while living there for a year, which was published in various African American newspapers in the United States. Several of his poems were also published in Spanish journals. His analyses are most evidently seen in one particular series of epistolary poems that he wrote, embodying the dialect of a Southern Black Brigadier named Johnny. In one stanza of a poem entitled “Love Letter from Spain: Addressed to Alabama,” in which Johnny is writing home to his girlfriend, Hughes explains:

Just now I'm goin' out
To Take a Fascist town.
Fascists is Jim Crow peoples, honey—
And here we shoot 'em down.¹⁰

Like the Black U.S. volunteers in the Abraham Lincoln Brigades, Hughes saw direct connections between the fascism that was being waged by Franco and the fascistic Jim Crow conditions in his own country—the extralegal killings, virulent racism, and simultaneous electoral and “street-fighting” terror campaigns. By chronicling the means by which Black men were taking up weapons to concretely oppose this ideology, Hughes was making implicit arguments for his radical readership that the same could be done to fight racism in the United States.

In another poem, Hughes specifically investigates the complexities of Black soldiers coming into contact with whom they and Hughes perceived as their Diasporic brothers—the Moroccan soldiers against whom they were fighting. This poem is thoroughly suffused with politically contextual analyses about the war and Hughes' examinations on race.

Dear brother at home:

We captured a wounded Moor today.
He was just as dark as me.

⁹ Figures 2 and 3 at the end of the essay.

¹⁰ Harry Ransom Center Archives, Austin, Texas.

I said, Boy, what you been doin' here
Fightin' against the free?

He said something in a language
I couldn't understand.
But somebody told me he was sayin'
They nabbed him in his land

And made him join the Fascist army
And come across to Spain.
And he said he had a feelin'
He'd never get back home again.

He said he had a feelin'
This whole thing wasn't right.
He said he didn't know
The folks he had to fight.

And as he lay there dyin'
In a village we had taken,
I looked across to Africa
And seed foundations shakin'.

Cause if a free Spain wins this war,
The colonies, too, are free—
Then something wonderful'll happen
To them Moors as dark as me.

I said, I guess that's why old England
And I reckon Italy, too,
Is afraid to let a workers' Spain
Be too good to me and you—

Cause they got slaves in Africa
And they don't want 'em to be free.
Listen, Moorish prisoner, hell!

Here, shake hands with me!
I knelt down there beside him,
And I took his hand—
But the wounded Moor was dyin'
And he didn't understand.¹¹

First, Hughes immediately identifies the visual likeness of the “Moor” and the Black U.S. soldier so as to concentrate on the crux of these two ethno-historically linked groups being on opposing sides of a conflict that would similarly affect them both with the potential spread of fervently racist mass fascist power. Then the issue of forced migration is addressed, with the specters of both the slave trade and night-time lynching raids instantly swooping into the poem's lens, with the words “They nabbed him in his land.” The Black volunteers from the U.S. came on their own free will to fight fascism, which existed as a sort of dialectical inverse to the conscripted Moroccan soldiers who were being used to advance fascism. With the words “He said he didn't know / The folks he had to fight,” Hughes illustrates the irony of this situation in Spain. The Moroccans, so historically intertwined with Spain as well as their fellow members of the African Diaspora, were unable to experience the same intense solidarity as these Black volunteers did in the Brigades.

In regards to Hughes' use of Southern dialect in the poem, some African American writers during the interwar period such as James Weldon Johnson and Claude McKay saw dialect as an unnecessary and even dangerous style that may actually serve to undervalue expressions of intelligence in their communities.¹² However, Cary Nelson writes, “this use of dialect is not simply an appeal to a popular audience in the US; it also makes the ‘political point’ that ‘the common sense possessed by oppressed people gives them an appropriate experiential basis for understanding international politics.’”¹³ Hughes may or may not have known the Greek origin of the word diaspora—which means a

¹¹ Harry Ransom Center Archives, Austin, Texas.

¹² Michael North. *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 10-11.

¹³ Brent Hayes Edwards. "Langston Hughes and the Futures of Diaspora -- Edwards 19 (3): 689 – American Literary

“scattering, separation, branching off, departure, banishment, or winnowing”¹⁴[for example, of seeds]—when he wrote the words “I looked across to Africa / And seed foundations shakin'.”

Nonetheless, he precisely—and presciently—evokes the potentiality of liberation struggles for African and Afro-descended people in fighting to shake off the yoke of racism, colonialism, and the history of mass enslavement. Cary Nelson explains,

"Seed," an improper usage quite proper to dialect, is actually a pun: it is a moment of sight and insight which is also the fertile seed of radical change. The proffered handshake is an offer of alliance politics, a simple gesture of solidarity dependent on nothing less than a different understanding of the world. Yet the difficulty of reaching such understanding, the power national cultures have to impede such knowledge, is apparent in the Moor's failure to recognize the speaker's offer.¹⁵

In this instance, the use of dialect offers a profound vehicle for political argument through wordplay.

The “seed foundations shakin’” are literally a clarion call of what Hughes and other radical members of the African Diaspora were seeing in the developments of international Black radical consciousness and political networks that could be effectively cohered and harnessed.

And yet, Hughes' political arguments here encapsulated a central dilemma in the Spanish conflict in regards to the participation of the Black U.S. volunteers—these Black participants were brought by the U.S. Communist Party to fight fascism in Spain as an extension of a fight against fascism at home in the U.S., despite the fact that the Russia-based Communist International¹⁶ was doing everything it could to halt genuine revolutionary struggle in Spain and Morocco that could actually strike a blow against international racism and colonialism. How did this contradiction transpire? A more detailed examination of African Diasporic practices during the interwar period can illuminate

History." *Oxford Journals* | Humanities | American Literary History. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Cary Nelson. "On 'Letter from Spain'" Department of English, College of LAS, University of Illinois. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

¹⁶ Grouping of Communist parties worldwide that was formed in 1919 but experienced major ideological changes with the rise of Joseph Stalin's reign of power in Russia, a subject which this essay will only briefly address.

these inquiries while demonstrating that diasporic identification and practice are not monolithic, essentialist phenomena in history and literature.

The Development of Interwar African Diasporic Politics

Many incredible social changes occurred for African Americans at the end of World War I. One and a half million of them would move upwards in the Great Migration from the south between 1915 and 1930, concentrating in major cities and profoundly transforming urban society.¹⁷ Black Americans began to increasingly demonstrate that Jim Crow was not just a vicious product of the South. Economic and social crises produced resistance and new directions. They began to call themselves “Afro-American,” actively identifying with Haile Selassie's Ethiopia and forging connections with Afro-Europeans and Afro-Caribbeans.¹⁸ Various political forces contended for leadership in Black communities. Of most significance was Marcus Mosiah Garvey and the United Negro Improvement Association's “Back to Africa” separatist movement. Investigating Garvey's role in theorizing African Diasporic practice is crucial because his organization commanded the largest movement of African Americans in U.S. history by the early 1920s. However, with European fascism emerging later on, Garvey saw this violent ultra-nationalist ideology as the most effective one for Afro-descended people to espouse.

From its beginning in 1914, Marcus Garvey's stated mission for the UNIA was “uniting all the Negro peoples of the world into one great body to establish a country and Government absolutely their own.”¹⁹ The self-identified Black nationalist organization grew massively, claiming by the early 1920s “seven hundred branches in the United States, with 35,000 dues-paying members in New York City alone.”²⁰ Garvey strove to aesthetically embody a new type of militant African American leader. In

¹⁷ Steven Hahn. *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2005) 465.

¹⁸ Peter N. Carroll and James D. Fernandez. *Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 2007) 26.

¹⁹ Ahmed Shawki. *Black Liberation and Socialism* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2006) 103.

²⁰ Ibid. 104.

public speeches, he wore military uniforms, crowns, feathered hats, and sashes; he ordered bodyguards brandishing swords to flank him; and he was deemed “a prophet, a man that was sent by God” by those who saw these famous outdoor declarations.²¹

Steven Hahn writes of Garvey's significance,

Garvey presented an argument and set of projects—first and foremost, retaking their African homeland from European colonizers—that took the sobering of black prospects in the depth of the Jim Crow era and offered a breathtaking vision of political struggle and redemption.²²

However, an assessment of Garvey's politics is more complicated, as Ahmed Shawki reveals,

Garvey's nationalism did not lead him to oppose the major imperialist powers. Instead he praised them for helping to “civilize” Blacks. Garvey believed the UNIA could continue the colonial project, leading to the establishment of Black nations ruled by Blacks...

In a letter to the [British] Secretary of State for the Colonies in September 1914, Garvey wrote, “We sincerely pray for the success of British arms on the battle fields of Europe and Africa, and at Sea, in crushing the 'Common Foe,' the enemy of peace and further civilization. We rejoice in British victories and the suppression of foreign foes. Thrice we hail, 'God save the King! Long live the King and Empire.'”²³

And yet, Marcus Garvey's energetic leadership and arguments for Black pride, self-determination, and self-reliance undoubtedly activated a nascent political movement among Black Americans as well as elsewhere in areas like “Central America, the Caribbean basin, and southern Africa.”²⁴ The UNIA's newspaper *Negro World* had a global readership, which was the very first time the African Diaspora experienced such a collective inter-communication. Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James explains,

[I]n 1921 Kenya nationalists, unable to read, would gather round a reader of Garvey's newspaper... and listen to an article two or three times. The they would run various ways through the forest, carefully to repeat the whole, which they had memorised, to Africans hungry for

²¹ Colin Grant. *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 418.

²² Steven Hahn. "On History: A Rebellious Take on African-American History" - The Chronicle Review – The Chronicle of Higher Education." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

²³ Ahmed Shawki. *Black Liberation and Socialism* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2006) 103-104.

²⁴ Steven Hahn. "On History: A Rebellious Take on African-American History" - The Chronicle Review – The Chronicle of Higher Education." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

some

doctrine which lifted them from the servile consciousness in which Africans lived.²⁵

By the early 20th century, Black nationalist and separatist ideas were simultaneously an assertive and defensive expression of African American self-protection and self-determination. Concrete historical factors suggest why the UNIA's political program briefly flourished. The Ku Klux Klan had been vigorously revived in 1915 after forty years of inactivity, and “from 1918 to 1927, 416 African Americans were killed” in reported cases of lynchings, while unreported statistics were without a doubt much higher.²⁶ Law enforcement actively colluded with the Klan, exchanging one uniform for the other without any punishment meted against their legal and extralegal violence. A question James Baldwin poses in his 1963 book *The Fire Next Time* resonates even more for this era several decades before the book is published: “Do I really *want* to be integrated into a burning house?”²⁷

However, the pro-Black independence ideologies that fueled Garvey's incredible rise in leadership after World War I became severely distorted in the face of several factors. A postwar decrease in social radicalization occurred. The U.S. government vigorously suppressed the UNIA's activities. Also, internal financial controversies arose in the organization regarding mass fraudulent ticket sales for Garvey's Black Star Line's voyage back to Africa—a project that received great interest in the Black community, but ultimately no boats to secure passage across the sea. Garvey's arguments for Black pride and self-determination winnowed into a staunchly singular advocacy for racial purity. This conservative turn illustrates the complexities and potential cul-de-sacs of diasporic processes. Garvey formed precarious political alliances as a result of this new focus on race-cleanliness. Shawki writes,

[Garvey] began to identify white supremacists as the only true friends of Blacks because they understood the need for racial purity. On a trip south in 1922, he thanked whites for having

²⁵ C. L. R. James. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1989) 397.

²⁶ John Hope Franklin. *Race and History: Selected Essays 1938-1988* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

²⁷ James Baldwin. *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage International, 1993) 94.

'lynched race pride into the Negroes.' He met with the Ku Klux Klan's second in command in Atlanta, Georgia. According to Garvey's worldview, the Klan and other white supremacists shared common aims with the UNIA.²⁸

In an essay entitled “Black Fascism,” Paul Gilroy quotes Garvey even legitimizing Jim Crow conditions in the United States:

This is a white man's country. He found it, he conquered it and we can't blame him because he wants to keep it. I'm not vexed with the white man of the South for Jim Crowing me because I am black. I never built any street cars or railroads. The white man built them for their own convenience. And if I don't want to ride where he's willing to let me then I'd better walk.²⁹

In this quotation, one can see the contradictions within a diasporic community's political outlooks. While many African Americans reviled the entrenched system of segregation, Garvey validated its existence in his attempt to argue that Black people needed their own homeland, street cars and railroads. By the time he was deported from the U.S. in 1927, Garvey had lost major support from African Americans. This titan of Afro-political agency, who had commanded so much vibrant leadership for Black communities and oppressed people worldwide, by 1937 asserted in an interview in London,

“We were the first fascists... when we had 100,000 disciplined men, and were training children, Mussolini was still an unknown. Mussolini copied our fascism.' Later the same year, he declared that the 'UNIA was before Mussolini and Hitler ever were heard of. Mussolini and Hitler copied the program of the UNIA—aggressive nationalism for the Black man in Africa.’”³⁰

Political arguments for Black nationalism and separatism, which as has been argued above were wholly defensible convictions in the U.S. and around the African Diaspora globally, here in Garvey's distorted analysis demonstrate a potentiality for a “scattering, separation, branching off, departure, banishment, or winnowing” of members within a diaspora to isolate themselves from that diaspora's most effective strategies for survival and development. Nationalism can become ultra-nationalism—

²⁸ Ahmed Shawki. *Black Liberation and Socialism* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2006) 108.

²⁹ Paul Gilroy. "Black Fascism" *JSTOR: Transitions*, No. 81/82 (2000). 2000. Web. 25 May 2010.

³⁰ Ahmed Shawki. *Black Liberation and Socialism* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2006) 109.

separatism can become arguments and actions for racial purity—in various political and historical contexts. Garvey's identification with European fascism was not of a mirror image, but rather, in a sense, a *politically diasporic* relationship of the general ideas of fascism. Mark Christian Thompson explains, “the essential characteristics of black fascism, then, cannot be thought of as an imitation of a purely “white” political form... All political ideologies are open to appropriation and improvisation across racial lines.”³¹ Garvey's espoused fascism was his own, yet it was indeed related to the European formations of the ideology that were being practiced.

However, Black nationalism does not inherently lead to reactionary conclusions. During the 1930s, African Americans and Afro-descended people around the world saw radical nationalism as a vehicle towards much more revolutionary actions of an international scope. The U.S. Communist Party, that was singularly responsible for bringing the 90 Black volunteers to fight fascism in Spain, experienced a profound transformation of this kind when thousands of Black men and women joined the Party and interwove radical nationalism with global class struggle.

The Communist Party and the “Negro Question”

When the 1929 Great Depression occurred, Black communities especially endured unemployment and general political disenfranchisement, but this treatment had indeed long been suffered. In the wake of this economic catastrophe and the renewed racism it engendered in society, political arguments against both racism and capitalism began to gain a wider hearing. By the 1930s, improbably, it was the mostly white U.S. Communist Party that was seen by many African Americans in major Northern cities as the most vigorously effective force in resisting racism and capitalism from a multi-racial organizing perspective.

At this time, in particular, the Harlem Communist Party most aggressively began to implement the perspective that, Mark Solomon writes, “racial segregation and the savaging of black identity

³¹ Mark Christian Thompson. *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture Between the Wars* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007) 24.

represented both an institutional foundation for American capitalism and its weak point.”³² Ahmed Shawki distills the profound significance of this period as follows: “At a time when segregation was rampant—legally in the South, de facto in the North—the CP [became] virtually the only integrated organization in the country.”³³ The Harlem CP waged a campaign to racially integrate every single aspect of its political and social spheres to prove anti-racism in practice. The goal, as Mark Naison quotes Black CP member Otto Hall saying, was to "'sear out with a red hot iron' all signs of prejudice in its ranks.”³⁴

As a result, by the late 1920s into the early 1930s, the Communist Party in the northern cities of the United States (especially in New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit) finally began to establish serious political roots in Black communities. The Harlem CP's multi-racial efforts were tested when “in December, 1934, the Italian government of Benito Mussolini used the pretext of a border clash between Italian and Ethiopian troops... to initiate a campaign to turn Ethiopia into an Italian colony.”³⁵ While other Harlem organizations like Garvey's UNIA “mobilized to aid Ethiopia, calling variously for a boycott of Italian products, a movement to recruit black American volunteers for the Ethiopian army, and a campaign to drive Italian merchants out of Harlem,” the CP worked to direct an anti-fascist rather than anti-Italian campaign.³⁶

To be clear, anti-fascist politics weren't imported into Black communities. Quite the opposite. Black newspapers were among the first to lucidly compare Hitler to U.S. racist policies, producing articles with titles such as “Hitler Learns Jim Crow Art from America” and “Americans Set Pace, Nazis Answer.”³⁷ One article quotation from the Philadelphia Tribune in 1933 reads: “The lynchings of

³² Mark Solomon. *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998) 128.

³³ Ahmed Shawki. *Black Liberation and Socialism* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2006) 140.

³⁴ Mark Naison. *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1984) 34.

³⁵ Ibid. 138.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Edgcomb, Gabrielle Simon. *From Swastika to Jim Crow: Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger

Negroes, disenfranchisement and economic oppression have caused only a few Americans to shed any tears over the plight of Negroes. It is easy for America to condemn Hitler for his atrocities against the Jew, but American atrocities against colored citizens remains unchallenged.”³⁸

Robin D.G. Kelley articulates how the Ethiopian defense movement acutely affected Blacks in the U.S., and what its political implications were for the development of Black radical consciousness:

The defense of Ethiopia did more than any other event in the 1930s to internationalize the struggles of black people in the United States. Also known as Abyssinia, this particular section of the Horn of Africa held considerable historical, religious, and cultural significance for black communities throughout the world.³⁹

Thousands of Black men from around the country volunteered to go to Ethiopia to fight the Italian invasion. However, the Communist Party did not throw its weight into these efforts. To make the left's response to the conflict even more problematic, one of the clearest examples of the disconnect between the actions of the U.S. Communist Party and Russia occurred when in September 1935 *The New York Times* reported on “Soviet sales of coal, tar, wheat, and oil to Italy at below market price.”⁴⁰ The news horrified and confused many people who had seen the CP as the most effective political force to defend Ethiopia.

However, this was a contradictory moment in several respects for the African American community. In Harlem, anti-fascist anger at Mussolini invading Ethiopia became translated into very similar tactics and ideologies that Mussolini was using in this invasion as well as his own country. A Black nationalist group called the Black Shirts would raid and demolish Italian stores. Mark Naison writes that nationalist street orators “spoke of Ethiopia as a race war, encouraged attacks on Italian-Americans, and affected a paramilitary air reminiscent of European fascism.”⁴¹ A Black anti-Semitic

Publishing Company, 1993) 48-50.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Robin D.G. Kelley. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, Distributed by Simon & Schuster, 1996) 128.

⁴⁰ Mark Naison. *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1984) 174.

⁴¹ Ibid. 196.

public speaker named Sufi Abdul Hamid, nicknamed the “Führer of Harlem” and “Black Hitler,” would command crowds of people railing against Jews in Harlem, which received the praise of Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay.⁴² Similar to Garvey's above-explained identification with fascism, these members of the African Diaspora saw ultra-nationalist racial purity, even anti-Semitism, as ideological tools that could be wielded for their collective gain in society.

However, in a landmark 1937 essay entitled “Blueprint for Negro Literature,” Richard Wright, a leading member of the Communist Party for several years, insightfully engaged with these disparate ideas on Black nationalism in thought and action. He asserts,

Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because in order to transcend it they must possess and understand it. And a nationalist spirit in Negro writing means a nationalism carrying the highest possible pitch of social consciousness.

It means a nationalism that knows its limitations, that is aware of the dangers of its position, that knows its aims are unrealizable within the framework of capitalist America; a nationalism whose reason for being lies in the simple fact of self-possession and in the consciousness of the interdependence of people in modern society.

For Negro writers, even more so than for Negro politicians, nationalism is a bewildering and vexing question... But among the Negro workers and the Negro middle class the spirit of nationalism is rife in a hundred devious forms; and a simple literary realism, which seeks to depict the lives of these people, devoid of wider social connotations, devoid of nationalist tendencies, devoid of the revolutionary significance of even its nationalist tendencies, must of necessity do a rank injustice to the Negro people and alienate their possible allies in the struggle for liberation.⁴³

Wright is arguing here that *through* nationalist ideas a more powerful internationalist consciousness can be generated. Nationalist ideas musn't be automatically disregarded as myopic or counter-productive,

⁴¹ Ibid. 196.

⁴² Mark Christian Thompson. *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture Between the Wars* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007) 3, 88.

⁴³ Wright, Richard. "Blueprint for Negro Literature." Web. 25 May 2010.

but rather the vehicle towards a broader scope of struggle. This alternate definition of the utility of nationalism shows that within the African Diaspora, fundamental ideological foundations such as the one Wright proposes were being “shaken” up and lucidly examined. The processes of diasporic thought and action were made manifold.

Radical nationalism was given the opportunity to expand its lens with the conflict in Spain. The experience by the Black volunteers fighting fascism alongside tens of thousands of fellow anti-fascists from around the world provided a tangible glimpse of the possibilities for broader solidarities.

Spain: “This Ain’t Ethiopia, But It’ll Do”⁴⁴

When the menace of fascism appeared again in Spain on July 17, 1936 with Franco's military insurrection, the Comintern immediately made international efforts to send volunteers to defend the Spanish people from this rebellion. A CP-coordinated U.S. volunteer force called the Abraham Lincoln Brigade sent thousands of men and women to fight and provide medical aid. Kelley explains that in the U.S,

The African American response to the Italian invasion in some ways prefigured the Left's response to Franco's rebellion in Spain... African Americans who joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade regarded the Civil War as an extension of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict...⁴⁵

Arguably, so as to save face on its contradictory actions in the Italo-Ethiopian war, the Communist Party placed aid to Spain on the forefront of its political work, employing the slogan that “Ethiopia's fate is at stake on the battlefields of Spain.”⁴⁶ The CP had not previously mobilized a volunteer response to defend Ethiopia, but it certainly used the support networks that had been created by Black activists advocating for Ethiopia for its efforts in Spain. In fact, aid that had been collected for Ethiopia was asked by the CP to be sent instead to Spain when the Ethiopian government was unable to receive

⁴⁴ Danny Duncan Collum, ed. *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War: "This Ain't Ethiopia, But It'll Do"* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1992) 5.

⁴⁵ Robin D.G. Kelley. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, Distributed by Simon & Schuster, 1996) 129, 123-124.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 132.

any more supplies. In this light, Black communities had served as the vanguard for later efforts to aid Spain.

Many of the almost one hundred Black participants in the Abraham Lincoln Brigades had been active fighters in social struggle before the war, and were cognizant of their people's legacies. One such volunteer, James Yates, recounts in his memoir entitled *Mississippi to Madrid* the explanation of another Black Brigadier that “so many volunteers were originally from Ohio because it was the major route of the Underground Railway.”⁴⁷ Another volunteer, Admiral Kilpatrick had come from a revolutionary family and CP background:

My father was an old socialist... [he] always told me that anyplace you go, where you are working, if anybody is organizing a union—a gutter union or even a dog union—join the union. That was his philosophy for me... [In 1927] I joined the Party, and later I was picked to go to school in the Soviet Union. I was able to travel to some other countries. I met with sessions of the Comintern... You had Party people from China and Germany and France and Czechoslovakia and Africa.⁴⁸

Crawford Morgan, who had met and been photographed with Langston Hughes while in Spain, had this to say about his experiences fighting in the Abraham Lincoln Brigades:

I felt I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was and most of its ramifications. Being aware of what the Fascist Italian government did to the Ethiopians, and also the way that I and all the rest of the Negroes in this country have been treated ever since slavery, I figured I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was... I got a chance to fight it there with bullets and I went there and fought it with bullets. If I get a chance to fight it with bullets again, I will fight it with bullets again.⁴⁹

Morgan said the following words about how as a Black man he was treated in Spain by, essentially, the complete strangers who he came to support because of his political convictions:

From the time I arrived in Spain until the time I left, for that period of my life, I felt like a

⁴⁷ James Yates. *Mississippi to Madrid: Memoir of a Black American in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Seattle: Open Hands, 1989) 128.

⁴⁸ Danny Duncan Collum, ed. *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War: "This Ain't Ethiopia, But It'll Do"* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1992) 166.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 176.

human being, like a man. People didn't look at me with hatred in their eyes because I was black, and I wasn't refused this or refused that because I was black. I was treated like all the rest of the people were treated, and when you have been in the world for quite a long time and have been treated worse than people treat their dogs, it is quite a nice feeling to go someplace and feel like a human being.⁵⁰

The participation of Blacks in the Spanish revolution and civil war effectively broke racial barriers in the history of combat. The Brigade volunteer, Oliver Law, who in the early 1930s fought evictions in Chicago, “commanded a machine gun crew under 120 days of heavy fire, was promoted to captain and subsequently rose to the rank of battalion commander, becoming the first African American in history to command a predominantly white military unit.”⁵¹ Law was killed shortly thereafter and remains one of the most well-known Black members of the struggle against fascism in Spain.

Moroccans in Spain

The issue of race in the Spanish conflict was manifested in the complicated situation of different sections of the African diaspora colliding with itself. Internationalist-minded Black volunteers came to fight fascism, and were inspired by what was essentially a worker-led social revolution occurring throughout the country. However, General Franco's fascist army included many conscripted soldiers from Morocco, which was a Spanish and French colony at the time. Judith Keene writes, “in July 1936 they numbered 17,000... By the end of the war the numbers of Moroccan mercenaries had been increased by conscription and enlistment to between 60,000 and 70,000.”⁵² Another writer, Sebastian Balfour, affirms the “total number of Moroccan troops deployed in Spain at 78,504. Of these about 11,500 were killed and 55,468 wounded, that is, one in every eight Moroccan soldiers were killed and almost every one of those who survived was injured at some time or other.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Robin D.G. Kelley. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, Distributed by Simon & Schuster, 1996) 140.

⁵² Judith Keene. *Fighting for Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain During the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (London: Continuum, 2003) 29.

The mass inclusion of Moroccan soldiers contained a fear-generating component that Franco consciously utilized. Beginning in the 8th century, Muslims from North Africa had taken control of Spain until they were ousted by Christian forces in the 11th century, so Spanish cultural perceptions of Moroccans up until the civil war began in 1936 had volatile historical foundations.⁵⁴ Even before the civil war began, Franco employed these long-established cultural fears of Moroccan invaders to his advantage.

The fascist uprising in Spain consciously utilized the tactics it had perfected in the colonization of Moroccans. The same grisly conditions Moroccans suffered under Franco—where “prisoners were decapitated and their severed heads exhibited as trophies”—were taught to them when they were conscripted to fight the radical defenders of Spain's government and the struggles for social progress.⁵⁵ This acute example of colonialism's inherent dehumanization is seldom discussed in the literature on the Spanish Civil War.⁵⁶ Neither is the sometimes racist response to the Moroccans' complicated involvement in the conflict. Republican propaganda posters depicted Moroccans with exaggerated physical features and much darker skin tones than they usually possessed phenotypically.⁵⁷⁶⁰

Historian Sebastian Balfour explains how Franco shrewdly appropriated the role of Moroccans as new partners in the liberation of Spain.

That colonial exclusiveness was expressed, for example, in Franco's chosen symbolic bodyguard, the *Guardia Mora* or Moorish Guard, the flamboyant squadron of Moroccan troops on horseback, dressed in flowing robes and carrying native pennants, which he chose to accompany him on march-pasts after the war. It was meant to be a constant reminder to the Spanish people that they had been saved by the Army of Africa... What Franco and his fellow Africanist officers set out to do was to rechannel Spanish colonialism internally toward the homeland.... With his Africanist officers, he would colonize Spain, ridding it of internal

⁵³ Sebastian Balfour. *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 312.

⁵⁴ Stanley G. Payne. *History of Spain and Portugal* (New York: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976).

⁵⁵ Paul Preston. *Comrades!: Portraits from the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Harper UK, 2000) 16.

⁵⁶ One prominent exception is Sebastian Balfour's book.

⁵⁷ Robin D.G. Kelley. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, Distributed by Simon & Schuster, 1996) 146.

enemies, decontaminating the minds of those who had been poisoned by them, and installing their own myths, just as they had tried to do in Morocco.⁵⁸⁶¹

One of the major prevailing ironies of the war is that, in this way, Franco kept his colonial subjects close, while the Spanish Republican government never advocated for the liberation of Morocco as a means to undermine Franco's army. To paraphrase Karl Marx, these Moroccans could have potentially been the army's own gravediggers. Russia's heavy intervention into the Spanish Republican government's affairs during the war did not include a genuine argument for Morocco's liberation, thus foregoing the whole project of popular revolutionary struggle for the sole goal of "winning the war" in Spain. Anti-Stalinist socialist historian Pierre Broué details this monumental misstep as follows:

It is in fact easy to grasp that the proclamation of Morocco's independence by the Republican government would have had incalculable consequences on the morale of the native troops serving in the rebel army...

However, in 1936-1937, the question of an alliance between the Spanish Republicans and the Moroccan Nationalists went far beyond the confines of Spain. France and England, from whom the Spanish Popular Front [which was directly influenced by the Stalinist Comintern] was expecting help, were colonial powers: revolutionary unrest in Morocco would constitute a direct threat to the French position in Morocco and Algeria and would disquiet the English, who were grappling with Egyptian and Palestinian Arab agitation...

The [Republican] government went further and suggested territorial concessions in Morocco to London and Paris. Its desire not to offend the Western powers now led it deliberately to renounce, not only the principle of self-determination for colonial peoples, but also a real chance to strike at the heart of Franco's power. The halting of the Revolution thus had a direct influence on the conduct of the war.⁵⁹

This fundamental reversal on the politics of national liberation meant that one of the major lynchpins for defeating fascism—the self-activity of Moroccans struggling against their colonizers—was not supported. ⁶²

However, it's indeed possible to argue that the Moroccans may not have seen themselves as members of the African Diaspora. Franco's Army of Africa heavily propagandized a sense of shared

⁵⁸ Sebastian Balfour. *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 316.

⁵⁹ Pierre Broué and Emile Témime. *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2008) 266-267.

identity between the Spanish fascists and the Moroccan soldiers. Perhaps these North African Muslims saw themselves more closely aligned with ultra-nationalist Catholicism rather than with the fate of fellow colonized Africans and those Afro-descended people scattered worldwide. It is true that five hundred North Africans from Algeria and Morocco joined the International Brigades to defend the Spanish Republic, but this numerically doesn't compare to tens of thousands of Moroccans participating in a fascist revolt.⁶⁰

Such contradictions in the African Diaspora—its concrete and ideological identifications not being easily figured, members waging war on each other, an extended ethnic family experiencing its own dissolutions as well as partnerships—illustrate the significance of this conflict and the general interwar period in understanding that shared birthplace origins does not necessarily translate to political solidarity.

Coda: Beyond Race

At the end of the speech that began this essay, “Too Much of Race,” Hughes asserted that radical and revolutionary writers and activists

represent the great longing that is in the hearts of the darker peoples of the world to reach out their hands in friendship and brotherhood to all the white races of the earth. The Fascists know that we long to be rid of hatred and terror and oppression, to be rid of conquering and being conquered, to be rid of all the ugliness of poverty and imperialism that eat away the heart of life today. We represent the end of race.⁶¹

This profound argument by Hughes must not be understood as a potentially ambiguous and apolitical suggestion for “post-racialism.” Rather, it is through directly confronting racism that its fetters can ultimately be destroyed. Brent Hayes Edwards explains,

if it means the abolition or overcoming of racial logic (and the persecution race enables), it also seems to mean the goal or aim of that very same logic—for it is precisely *through* race consciousness (the alliance of the “darker peoples of the world”) that it is possible to imagine a future of universal “friendship and brotherhood.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Ruano Francisco Sanchez. *Islam Y Guerra Civil Espanola: Moros Con Franco Y Con La Republica* (Madrid: Esfera De Los Libros, 2004).

⁶¹ Brent Hayes Edwards. “Langston Hughes and the Futures of Diaspora -- Edwards 19 (3): 689 – American Literary History.” *Oxford Journals | Humanities | American Literary History*. Web. 29 Apr. 2010.

With these closing words of his speech, Hughes' ideas embody a qualitatively different sort of conclusion than what is asserted by conservative Black nationalist and separatist ideas, and at the very worst what is forwarded by such alliances for racial purity as Marcus Garvey and the Ku Klux Klan. He seems to be engaging with Wright's formulation of embracing radical Black nationalist ideas to drive forward new political directions, to surpass racial categories in a struggle for a wholly equitable world.

In 1939, Franco won the war and World War II was already toppling into view. Abraham Lincoln Brigadiers came home to be derisively called "premature anti-fascists" by the U.S. government. Some Black ALB members would join the U.S. army during WWII and be forced to serve in segregated units. But these experiences did not leave them or the African Diasporic community at large. The contributions by such radical Black leaders as Hughes, Wright, and James would influence the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the anti-colonial struggles throughout Africa that would erupt only a few decades later.

The inquiries and analyses of Langston Hughes and this broader history can still lay the foundations for future struggles that effectively fuse people across diasporas to forge a world without the racism and fascism that prevailed in Spain. Moreover, in order for diasporic consciousness and practices to be most dynamically considered, the contradictions of the diverging theoretical arguments laid out in this essay can provide a malleable template upon which to measure future diasporic disagreements and alliances. Organized fascist sentiments rising again in our times—such as in England, France, India, the Czech Republic, and even here in the United States—make these historical lessons not just relevant, but wholly necessary to rediscover.

⁶² Ibid.

Figures



Figure 1

ANTOLOGIA DE LOS POETAS DE LA REVOLUCION

2 LANGSTON HUGHES

POR MIGUEL ALEJANDRO



Langston Hughes, el poeta negro de la Revolución

E L E S C E N A R I O

«El problema del siglo XX es el problema de la línea de color.»—W. E. W. Du Bois.
«El corazón no es una rodilla para ser doblado.»—Proverbio negro.

«Ahoga a un blanco y se convertirá en negro también», ha dicho Waldo Frank, regalándonos una diapositiva nitida, universal y definitiva.

Se le podría oponer un «NO» rotundo y escueto, si no fuera verdad:
1.º Que B. Anderson, del Chase Bank,

autorizados voceros nacionales no lo desmienten, sino lo confirman acumulando datos.

Por Upton Sinclair, sabemos que la industria de maletas primas en Norteamérica está muerta y que significa que hay 10.000.000 de obreros que no trabajan, ni trabajarán mientras dure el sistema actual, y que como ellos no consienten en morir de inanición, se han de alimentar con dinero del erario público, lo que significa que nunca se podrá equilibrar el presupuesto. El 90 por 100 de las transacciones se realizan por medio de créditos.

La carga estadounidense de intereses se ha vuelto absolutamente intolerable y no obstante soportan esta carga abrumadora, colectivamente, por medio del Gobierno. Sistema singularísimo de la economía superada que permite que uno se preste dinero a sí mismo. Algo así como una dolorosísima broma de Marc Twain.

«Si pretendiéramos librarnos de estas calamidades, ¿qué deberíamos hacer? La única solución de la crisis se conseguiría distribuyendo las fuentes naturales de la riqueza, creando de producir mercancías para provecho de una clase reducida y fabricándolas para uso de todos los trabajadores útiles, sean intelectuales o físicos.

No trato de acusar a nuestros hombres de negociar con esta solución, sólo indicoles a pensar en su propio interés. ¿Por qué no ordenar y organizar las enormes fuerzas de la producción, en bien de la seguridad y comodidad de todos los habitantes de los Estados Unidos?»

También podrían tomarse estas palabras como ejercicio literario, si no las confirmaran los que fueron soluciones paliativas con sus panaceas librecas y financieras.



Rumbo a las Américas. El gráfico demuestra el horrible hacinamiento de la mercancía humana en las cajas de los buques negreros

Mister W. E. Woodward, ha escrito un libro titulado «Dinero para mañana», en el que propone una ruta restauradora al capitalismo norteamericano, basándose en proposiciones sugeridas por la Cámara Norteamericana de Comercio para la estabilización económica, la idea de un Congreso de Comerciantes de la Federación Olíptica Nacional, el proyecto de «Soviets Capitalistas», de Genard Swape y el plan de Stewart Chase. La mayor parte de estos planes tienden a proteger los intereses de la oligarquía financiera e industrial compuesta por minorías selectas.



A pesar de las cadenas y de un horizonte cerrado de incertidumbre, los pobres esclavos consiguen con triste alegría la antigua alegría de sus almas

La situación angustiosa sirve de plataforma para un nuevo tipo de escolasticismo que resuelve todos los problemas con «dédalos». Con este libro, se refuerza el capitalismo esclavista que se ha ido descomponiendo por el mismo durante 35 años y que ahora está al borde de la bancarrota.

Esta confesión de parte, evita el comentario.

Si todo esto es verdad para los trabajadores blancos, ¿qué será para los trabajadores de color? Aunque, si hemos de reconocer la verdad, los blancos, hoy en día, son también negros, y bien negros, por sus miserias. Por esta razón, esta línea de color es más extensa de lo que se cree. Tan extensa, que se ha convertido —por su génesis genética— en una dilatada superficie negra, con la paz de una vengadora y evi-



Arrancados a la primitiva ruda de sus aldeas africanas, los seres inferiores van a empujar con su sudor y con su sangre la riqueza y el esplendor del mundo capitalista que nace

contestó a una demanda informativa sobre la situación de la U. S. A.

—No sabemos nada —dijo modestamente—, estamos estudiándolo.

2.º Que Washington, es la capital de las estadísticas y que ocupa en estos momentos a 25.000 individuos (que algún día harán su propia y cruenta estadística).

3.º Que el «Empire State» tiene habitaciones varias.

4.º Que Ford, de 100.000 obreros, tiene ya menos de 10.000.

5.º Que hay parados en Bowery.

6.º Que la crisis americana, y la mundial, se deben a «un inmenso error de contabilidad».

Se podrá juzgar esto como una bagatela, como un rasgo de humor latino, pero los más

Figure 2

dente situación económica, con precedentes seculares.

A mala situación de los trabajadores blancos, peor situación de los trabajadores negros, de los que durante muchísimos años han sido la sola clase trabajadora, y hay que contar con que el trabajo ennegrecerá las más albas visceras. ¡Negros, negros, negros todos los trabajadores de América y del mundo!

Y cuál no será la vida de estos —hombres— cuando dicen:

*«If a Thousand whites work at a place.
Each one There is my boss.»*

(Si mi blancos trabajan en alguna parte, cada uno de ellos es mi patrón.)

Su inferioridad perpetua, se consigna en lo publicado por el *Dayle News*: «Los blancos están levemente por debajo de los ángeles; los negros, levemente por debajo del bruto».

H. L. Mencken ha trazado el retrato del negro tal como lo ven los ojos del hombre blanco.

Los negros son cantores natos.

Tomad el adoquín más duro, golpead al negro en la cabeza, y el adoquín se partirá.

En todo momento se puede comprar por un dólar el sufragio de un negro.

Los negros nacidos en el Sur del Potomake, pasan el tiempo bailando y tocando el banjo.

Todos los negros que han combatido en Francia han tenido una querida blanca y están para siempre hastiados de las mujeres de color.

Todos los sirvientes negros gastan la mitad de sus sueldos en pomadas para desrizarse los cabellos.

Todos los negros un poco inteligentes son hijos de senadores americanos y son, además, en tres cuartas partes, blancos.

No hay cocinera de color que no tenga por querido a un holgazán, a quien ella alimenta con los mejores bocados.

Apenas un negro tiene ocho dólares en el bolsillo, corre a casa del dentista para hacerse revestir de oro todos los dientes.

Un baile negro acaba siempre en una pelea general, en que se mata a navajazos.



¡Los esclavos ya son libres!... Y pueden vender a bajo precio su cosecha de algodón al acaparador



7 Protesta. Unos céntimos más en la tasa... y todo el mecanismo mercenario del Estado democrático cae sobre su presa negra



Agradecimiento. A América los llevaron como bestias y como bestias continúan ante la ley. En Scottboro, nueve negros amenazados por la silla eléctrica por haber intentado violar a dos muchachas blancas



La justicia «popular» refleja de las leyes y de la educación oficial de odio hacia los antiguos esclavos. Un grupo de hombres «superiores» asando el cuerpo lynchado de un negro, en medio de la calle y en medio, también, de la mayor impunidad

Con todo esto, la línea de color, empiecia en el umbral de las habitaciones y confirma el segregated que tiene cuatro clases de leyes de segregación, a pesar de que, según cuenta Magdalena Paz, «la población negra es, en el suelo de América tranquila y próspera, la portadora de llamas, el elemento volcánico... el más temible de los males».

«Ha sido creado el hombre a imagen de Dios, y no siendo Dios negro, como todos saben, el negro no es un hombre», reafirma Charles Carroll.

«Será difícil encontrar un negro que pueda comprender y explicar los principios de Euclides», Tomás Jefferson.

«Que se enseñe un solo negro, una sola, capsa de declinar un verbo griego, y le devuelvo las armas y lo tengo por un hombre», remacha Calhoun.

«Pesando 150 cerebros negros (1) y 150 blancos, se puede situar biológicamente al negro entre el hombre y el bruto», diagnostica el doctor Bean.

«Era prudente y lógico que la oligarquía esclavista del Sur, en su tiempo, prohibiese, bajo las penas más graves, enseñar a leer a un negro», apunta Franck Shuell.

Todas estas insidiosas y groseras afirmaciones, mejor dicho, «negacioness», echan inmundas paletadas de cieno antihumano sobre el candor de una raza que permanece enclaustrada a la tierra con poquísima esperanza de mejorar su condición o de sustraerse a ella, pues hace falta haber visitado el Hill District, en Pittsburgh, el East Side de Cincinnati o South Chicago, para saber lo que es una termitera negra. Aspecto negros. Muros negros. Arroyos de tinta. A veces, la ciudad negra bordea la vía del ferrocarril, como ocurre en New Haven; en el Connecticut, en ocasiones, ha crecido a orillas de un río infecto, como en Akron, en Ohio.

Recientemente, leíamos a Ivan Post, que nos decía, que el hombre negro sigue siendo esclavo del amo blanco, ocupando un rango

de angustiosa inferioridad en la vida nacional, cargo más bien de bestia de trabajo que de ciudadano.

En los Estados del Sur, persiste el encono: en los tranvías hay separaciones: los asientos de atrás son para los negros, el resto para el hombre blanco.

Y hay reservados para gente de color y para gente blanca, y hay cines para unos y para otros, y vehículos, restaurantes, barrios.

En los Estados Unidos, sobre el espíritu profundamente democrático se alza esta gran tragedia de millones y millones de seres para proyectar una sombra negra imborrable.

Los trabajadores de los campos de algodón no han ganado nada. En Texas, Alabama, Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Virginia, Tennessee, los negros siguen su antigua labor de esclavos, atados a los algodones, recolectando los capullos de sol a sol, sin treguas, alternativas ni ganancias.

En los puertos, los espataces no guardan miramientos. Las tareas pesadas son para los estibadores negros, quienes tienen siempre sobre sí el insulto pronto de aquéllos. Y cargan bolsas y rieles, y fardos. Pero de nada vale apesurarse ni agotar energías; la recompensa es siempre la misma: desprecio.

Ante este espectáculo, Andrés Siegfried, y midiendo la magnitud de estas diferencias, de este gran «problema del siglo XX», exclama: «De cualquier lado que uno se coloque, la solución escapa... Este problema es un abismo».

El escritor de color W. E. W. Du Bois, nos informa exactamente:

Nunca los negros de Estados Unidos afrontaron una situación más crítica que la de hoy. Ni en 1836, ni en 1861 o 1867. Más que nunca, las quejas de los negros reclamando los elementales principios de justicia, caen en el vacío.

Las tres cuartas partes de nosotros carecen de derechos ciudadanos. La cruzada de Bull Moose en 1912, no nos tomó en cuenta; tampoco lo hizo el levantamiento de La Follette, en 1924. Los socialistas nos relegan al último plano. A los niños negros se les niega sistemáticamente educación. Todos los meses, negros convictos de ningún delito, son pública y libremente lynchados y quemados. El haber tenido abuelos negros es un delito.



El único plano de convivencia en que los hombres blancos aceptan al ser inferior

Figure 3

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