CONSCIOUSNESS OF AFRICA, if not coeval, certainly existed very early in the development of the Afroamerican community in Harlem. This consciousness grew almost as rapidly as the community itself expanded. From the few occupants of two houses on 134th Street west of Fifth Avenue in 1900, this unique community had grown by 1920 into a city within the City of New York. Embracing many thousands, this Harlem enclave then reached from 127th Street on the south to 145th Street on the north and from Fifth to Eighth Avenues. Now some 300,000 people of African descent reach down below 110th Street and up into the Washington Heights area, spread almost from the East to the Hudson Rivers.

Harlem's main thoroughfare in 1920 was 135th Street between Lenox and Seventh Avenues, with an almost solid block of houses and stores on its north side owned by St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church. In one of these stores, number 135 to be exact, sharing space with the weekly New York News, George Young conducted the first Afroamerican book shop in Harlem. A pullman porter who had made good use of his travels through the country to assemble a fine collection of Africana and Afroamericana, Young also endeavored to supply such literature to his people.

In Young's Book Exchange, known then as The Mecca of Literature Pertaining to Colored People, there was to be seen what would seem to many, even today, an astonishing array of material treating of Africa and her dispersed descendants. In this small establishment during 1921, a visitor would have seen several copies of the compact book by Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, which bore the all too current title The Negro, though this was chiefly devoted to Africa. Alongside would be seen From Superman to Man by J. A. Rogers, which exposed racism and pointed to the ancient history and culture of the African peoples.

On the shelves at Young's there reposed histories written by Afro-
americans such as George W. Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America*. These generally followed the pattern set by William Wells Brown in *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* and *The Rising Son*, which began with an account of the African background. *A Social History of the American Negro* by Prof. Benjamin Brawley of Howard University, then just published, also included an entire chapter on Liberia.


Numerous books by European and Euroamerican authors included important references to Africans by Abolitionists such as Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, Wilson Armistead, Abbe Gregoire, Anthony Benezet, Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, and Charles Sumner. Beside these were accounts of explorers, travelers, missionaries, and investigators—Mungo Park, Livingstone, Moffat, Bruce, Speke, Baker du Chaillu, Reclus, Barth, Schweinfurth, Caillie, Du Bois, Burton, Crawford, Talbot, Ellis, Cardinall, Duff Macdonald, Bleek and Lloyd, Pitt-Rivers.

Specially emphasized were Frobenius, *Voice of Africa*; Ratzel, *History of Mankind*; Mary Kingsley, *West African Studies*; Flora L. Shaw (Lady Lugard), *A Tropical Dependency*; Dennett, *At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*; Morel, *Red Rubber* and *The Black Man's Burden*. George Young's signed personal copy of this last, purchased from his widow, is still among the highly prized books in my collection. As a special indulgence to those who evinced great interest, Young would exhibit such rare, old, large tomes as Ludolph's *History of Ethiopia* and Ogilby's *Africa*.

Expressing the consciousness of Africa already existing among Afro-americans, there were revealing volumes like *The African Abroad* by Prof. William H. Ferris, and *Negro Culture in West Africa* by George W. Ellis which recorded the alphabet and script invented by a genius of the Vai-speaking peoples. There, too, was the masterful work of the Haitian scholar Anténor Firmin, *De l'égalité des races humaines,*
which marshalled evidence of early African culture and its significant contribution to Europe and the world in a crushing refutation of the racist theories of inequality propounded by Gobineau.

Though written in 1886, the challenging book *Liberia: The Americo-African Republic* by T. McCants Stewart urged Afroamericans to “put their own ships upon the sea... We must have our own vessels carrying our African workers, our civilization, and our wares back to the ‘Fatherland,’ and bringing back its riches.” This exhortation concluded with the confident vision of a great “Americo-African Republic,” extending ‘into the Soudan, throughout the Niger and into the Congo; and under a mighty African ruler, there will arise a stable and powerful Government of Africans, for Africans, and by Africans, which shall be an inestimable blessing to all mankind.”

Likewise far-visioned were the writings of Alexander Crummell: *The Future of Africa and Africa and America*. This last contained his classic essay on *The Relations and Duties of Free Colored Men in America to Africa*, originally published in 1861. This dedicated thinker affirmed “a natural call upon the children of Africa in foreign lands, to come and participate in the opening treasures of the land of their fathers.”

Further indicative of this consciousness of African provenience and common heritage were typical writings by scholars native to the African motherland, the Caribbean areas, and the American mainland. Pointed to with particular pride by George Young would be such books as the *History of the Yorubas* by Rev. Samuel Johnson, *Glimpses of the Ages* by Theophilus E. Samuel Scholes, *The Lone Star of Liberia* by F. A. Durham, and especially *African Life and Customs and Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* by Edward Wilmot Blyden.

That this consciousness of Africa was active and widespread was perhaps significantly shown in the reprinting and distribution by George Young in 1920 of *The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans*, the Inaugural Address delivered by Edward Wilmot Blyden, LL.D., President of Liberia College, January 5, 1881. Nor was this interest in Africa a new thing. For despite ruthless repression under the chattel slave system, the transplanted Africans could never be reduced to total cultural blankness.

**early ties to Africa**

Consciousness of their ancestral homeland has thus been historically evident from the first arrivals when some of these Africans, brought
as slaves into the Americas, killed themselves believing that they would thereby return to Africa. Awareness of their heritage of culture and dignity continued during the colonial period and the early days of this republic. The name *African* was then preferred and used instead of the slave-masters' degrading epithet "negro." Witness thus The Free African Society, founded in Philadelphia in 1817 by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones. This was the forerunner of the African Protestant Episcopal Church of St. Thomas and also of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Note also the African Lodge of Prince Hall Masons in Boston; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, African Society for Mutual Aid, African Grove Playhouse in New York; and many so named throughout the country.

As early as 1788 an organized body of Afroamericans in Newport, R. I., which included Paul Cuffee who was soon to make history in this respect, wrote to the Free African Society of Philadelphia proposing a plan for emigration to Africa. In 1811 Paul Cuffee sailed in his own ship to Sierra Leone to investigate the feasibility of founding a settlement there. In 1815 at his own expense amounting to some $4,000, Captain Paul Cuffee, consummating twenty years of thought and effort, sailed forth again to Sierra Leone, this time commanding the good ship *Traveler* with 38 Afroamerican emigrants aboard, which included several whom he had boldly rescued from slavery along the Atlantic seaboard.

Paul Cuffee's achievement gave impetus to the founding of the American Colonization Society in 1817. But this body was dominated by slaveholders with the object of getting rid of free Afroamericans whose very presence and example encouraged the slaves to seek freedom. Hence the American Colonization Society was powerfully opposed by free-spirited Afroamericans and their Abolitionist allies.

Nevertheless, several Afroamerican leaders took advantage of the operation of the American Colonization Society to foster self-government in Africa through the founding of Liberia. Outstanding among these were Daniel Coker, Elijah Johnson, Lott Cary, Colin Teague, John B. Russwurm, Hilary Teague, and Joseph Jenkins Roberts who was elected first president of Liberia in 1848. By this time the population of Liberia included some 3,000 persons of African descent who had emigrated from the United States of America and the Caribbean.

The distinguished Afroamerican scholar, Rev. Alexander Crummell, after graduating from Cambridge University in 1853, spent 20 years teaching and laboring in Africa. Commissioned by a convention of Afroamericans held in Chatham, Canada West, in 1858, Martin R.
Delany led an expedition into what is now Nigeria and published his *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party* in 1861. This mission had even signed a treaty with African rulers at Abeokuta which authorized a projected settlement, but this project lapsed after the outbreak of the Civil War in the U.S.A. The other commissioner of this expedition, Professor Robert Campbell, published his report in *A Pilgrimage to My Motherland*.

After the Civil War and Reconstruction, interest was revived in African settlement as a great exodus began from the south, due to the wholesale massacre of some 40,000 AfroAmericans by such terrorist organizations as the Ku Klux Klan. This reign of terror reached monstrous proportions after the withdrawal of federal troops from the south. A new movement for migration to Africa was fostered jointly by AfroAmerican Baptists and Methodists; Bishop H. M. Turner played a leading part in this endeavor. Organizations were established in several states, notably the Liberian Exodus and Joint Stock Company in North Carolina and the Freedmen's Emigration Aid Society in South Carolina. This last acquired the ship *Azor* for $7,000 and this ship actually carried 274 emigrants to Africa on one of its trips, despite the efforts of prejudiced European Americans to impose outrageous costs and to hinder its operation. The *Azor* was soon stolen and sold in Liverpool; the attempts to recover it failed when the U.S. Circuit Court refused even to entertain the suit brought to this end.

About 1881 a descendant of Paul Cuffee, Captain Harry Dean, sailed to Africa commanding his ship the *Pedro Gorino* with the object "to rehabilitate Africa and found an Ethiopian Empire as the world has never seen." Another expedition took 197 emigrants from Savannah, Georgia to Liberia. "Chief Sam" of Kansas launched a movement to sail ships and build a state in Africa but this movement failed to achieve its goals.

**role of speakers and press**

This tradition was known in Harlem and interest in Africa was constantly stimulated by the generally well-informed outdoor speakers of the twenties. Free lance advocates such as William Bridges, Strathcona R. Williams, Alexander Rahming, Edgar M. Grey, Arthur Reid, and the Basuto "Prince" Mokete M. Manoede held forth constantly on African history and stressed unity with the African people.

Militant socialists like Chandler Owen, A. Philip Randolph, Rev. George Frazier Miller, Grace P. Campbell, Anna Brown, Elizabeth
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Hendrickson, Frank Poree, Otto Huiswoud, W. A. Domingo, Tom Potter, Frank D. Crosswaith, Rudolph Smith, Herman S. Whaley, John Patterson, Victor C. Gaspar, Ramsay, Ross D. Brown, and the writer of this account—all steadily emphasized the liberation of the oppressed African and other colonial peoples as a vital aim of their world view. Above all Hubert H. Harrison gave forth from his encyclopedic store, a wealth of knowledge of African history and culture which brought this consciousness to a very great height.

A vigorous press which circulated widely in Harlem also intensified this consciousness of Africa. Notable among these journals were The Amsterdam News while edited by Cyril V. Briggs, the Crisis magazine under Dr. Du Bois, the Challenge of William Bridges, the radical Messenger magazine projected by Chandler Owen and A. Philip Randolph, the African Times and Orient Review, published by Duse Mahomed in London, imported by John E. Bruce, and distributed by this writer, the Crusader magazine edited by Cyril V. Briggs as the organ of the African Blood Brotherhood, the powerful Voice of the Liberty League of Afro-Americans then being led by Hubert H. Harrison. Later the Emancipator conducted chiefly by W. A. Domingo and this writer, warned against the weaknesses of the Garvey movement, while striving for an end to colonialist subjugation and all forms of oppression.

Vibrant echoes too had reached Harlem of the Pan African Conference, organized in London during 1900 by Henry Sylvester-Williams, a barrister-at-law born in Trinidad of African ancestry. This Conference elected as general chairman Bishop Alexander Walters of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois chairman of the Committee on Address to the World. Stimulating news had come also of the Second Pan African Conference organized by Dr. Du Bois and held in Paris early in 1919, following the significant though unsuccessful attempts made independently by William Monroe Trotter and Dr. Du Bois to present the case of the oppressed peoples of African descent before the Versailles Peace Conference in 1918.

Several distinguished visitors to Harlem contributed greatly to this ever growing consciousness of Africa, among them F. E. M. Hercules, a native of Trinidad and founder of an organization seeking to unify all the descendants of Africa everywhere. Dr. J. Edmeaston Barnes, born in Barbados, came directly from London with a similar program calling also for the rejection of the disrespectful and denigrating name “Negro,” which he condemned as “a bastard political
colloquialism.” Likewise, Albert Thorne of Barbados and Guiana projected the ideas of his African Colonial Enterprise which was designed to embrace all peoples of African origin.

**arrival of Marcus Garvey**

Harlem had thus become considerably Africa conscious and this consciousness was soon to build the movement which was carried to great heights of mass emotion, widespread projection, and stupendous endeavor by the skillful propagandist and promoter, Marcus Garvey. When Garvey arrived from Jamaica in 1916, Harlem was emerging as the vanguard and focal point, “the cultural capital” of ten million AfroAmericans and to some extent also of other peoples of African origin in the Western Hemisphere. The demand for labor, due to the first World War, rapidly augmented the growth of Harlem, as thousands poured in from the south, the Caribbean, and Central America.

Harlem then seethed with a great ferment, bitterly resenting oppression and discrimination, particularly the treatment meted out to its crack Fifteenth Regiment. Harlem reacted vigorously also against the brutal lynchings then growing throughout the country, and especially against the frightful wholesale massacre in East St. Louis in July 1917. Some 10,000 of Harlem’s citizens marched down Fifth Avenue carrying placards in the Silent Protest Parade led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The hanging of 13 AfroAmerican soldiers following the Houston affair, when they had retaliated against wanton attack by prejudiced southerners, stirred mounting anger, frustration, and despair.

Marcus Garvey saw the opportunity to harness this upsurge against oppression and to direct the existing consciousness of Africa into a specific organized movement under his leadership. Realizing the deep-seated if unconscious desire of the dispossessed people of African origin for equal or similar status to that of others in every phase of human thought and endeavor, Garvey projected various means and enterprises which appealed to and afforded expression of this basic human desire.

After a poor initial meeting at St. Mark’s Hall and some outdoor attempts, Marcus Garvey secured his first favorable public response when introduced by Hubert H. Harrison, leader of the Liberty League of Afro-Americans, at a huge meeting at Bethel A. M. E. Church. Following several abortive attempts, Garvey finally launched the reorganized New York Division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. With the publication of
the *Negro World* in January 1918, carrying sections in French and Spanish as well as in English, the movement spread through the United States and abroad.

The founder of the *Negro World* was astute enough to secure the editorial services of Professor William H. Ferris, graduate of Yale University and well versed in African lore, of the able and erudite Hubert H. Harrison, and of such skillful writers as W. A. Domingo, Eric Walrond, and Hudson C. Pryce. Duse Mohamed, the Sudanese Egyptian nationalist who had formerly employed Garvey in London, and from whom Garvey derived the slogan "Africa for the Africans," also worked for a time on the *Negro World*. Contributors like John E. Bruce (Grit), William Pickens, T. Thomas Fortune, Anselmo Jackson, and Hodge Kirnon presented various aspects of the ancient history, noteworthy achievements, and the current aspirations of people of African origin.

The convention held in August 1920 in Liberty Hall, Boston, the dramatic, colorful, and impressive parade, costumes, and pageantry, and the mammoth meeting at Madison Square Garden, established the Garvey movement as a powerful international force. Stirring hymns with African themes, especially the U.N.I.A. anthem composed by Rabbi Arnold J. Ford of Barbados, were rendered by choral groups and massed bands. Thousands joined the U.N.I.A., the African Legion, the Black Cross Nurses, and later the African Orthodox Church. Enthusiastic supporters poured their savings into the enterprise started by Garvey, the restaurants, hotel, grocery, millinery, tailoring and dressmaking establishment, publishing concern, and finally the Black Star Line, and the Negro Factories Corporation.

**estimate of Garvey**

It is difficult and still perhaps somewhat hazardous to attempt an objective estimate of the Garvey movement, yet this is necessary if we are to learn from its lessons and to apply them wisely in our present endeavors. To the present writer it appears that the founder and leader of the U.N.I.A. demonstrated two powerful drives which were basically opposed to each other. One was clearly the progressive tendency which projected "the redemption of Africa" and the "Declaration of Rights of the Negro People of the World." The other was obviously reactionary in its Napoleonic urge for personal power and empire, with the inevitable accompaniment of racial exclusiveness and hostility. This latter tendency was evident when Garvey declared, on taking the title of Provisional President of Africa in 1920, "The
signal honor of being Provisional President of Africa is mine. . . . It is like asking Napoleon to take the world.'

Unfortunately, Marcus Garvey veered evermore toward the more extreme forms of empire building, unlimited individual control, and unrestrained racism. At length these destructive forces were allowed to overshadow and outweigh the constructive, pristine ideas of African nationalism, liberation, and independence. Stridently advocating "racial purity," Garvey came at length to agree openly with the worst enemies of the Afroamerican people—the white supremacist leaders of the Anglo-Saxon clubs and even of the murderous Ku Klux Klan—in declaring America to be "a white man's country."

Besides, the constant attacks which Marcus Garvey made upon people of both African and European ancestry, whom he derisively called "the hybrids of the Negro race," did not conduce to the unifying of all people of African descent, who, regardless of varying shades of color and other physical characteristics, were compelled to suffer similar oppression whether as colonial subjects or as oppressed minority groups. Likewise, Garvey's condemnation of the principal leaders and organizations who were striving for human rights and equal citizenship status for the Afroamerican minority group in this country, was bound to arouse opposition and internal strife.

Finally, the open condemnation of Liberian officials by Marcus Garvey, his severe reprisals against several of his chief associates, his poor choice of certain officers, and the inept conduct of the business enterprises which he controlled, left the movement wide open to the disastrous blows of those who began to fear its growing power. Following his conviction and imprisonment on February 8, 1925, upon a charge of using the mails to defraud in connection with the sale of Black Star Line stock, the Garvey movement split into wrangling factions, and despite efforts to revive it only a few splinter groups remained. Nevertheless, the Garvey movement did heighten and spread the consciousness of African origin and identity among the various peoples of African descent on a wider scale than ever before. This was its definite and positive contribution.

**Harlem literary renaissance**

Developing almost parallel with the Garvey movement was what has come to be known as the Harlem Literary Renaissance. A number of creative writers of poetry, fiction, essays, and criticism then emerged: Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, Eric Walrond, Rudolph Fisher, Wallace Thurman, Nella Larsen,

This literary movement was no Minerva sprung full-fledged from the head of Jove, for while its immediate inspiration lay in the surrounding social conditions, its roots, too, went back through earlier Afroamerican writers to the bards of ancient Africa. Alain Locke in his preface to The New Negro which proclaimed this movement in 1925, noted "the approach to maturity" and the role of Crisis, under the leadership of Dr. Du Bois, and Opportunity, edited by Charles S. Johnson, in fostering this movement by publishing many of the works of these budding authors. Locke further observed two constructive channels: "One is the advance-guard of the African peoples in their contact with Twentieth Century civilization; the other, the sense of a vision of rehabilitating the race in world esteem. . . ."

How these Harlem avant-garde writers felt, expressed, and stimulated consciousness of Africa may be observed in a few typical outpourings. In the sonnet Africa published in Harlem Shadows, the Caribbean born poet Claude McKay extolled:

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The sun sought thy dim bed and brought forth light,
The sciences were sucklings at thy breast;
When all the world was young in pregnant night
Thy slaves toiled at thy monumental best.
Thou ancient treasure-land, thou modern prize,
New peoples marvel at thy pyramids!
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The rather pessimistic note on which this sonnet ended still persisted in Outcast when McKay lamented the ancestral motherland in a mood of wistful nostalgia:

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For the dim regions whence my fathers came
My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs
Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame;
Thy soul would sing forgotten jungle songs.
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In Enslaved the poet broods over his people

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For weary centuries despised, oppressed,
Enslaved and lynched, denied a human place
In the great life line of the Christian West;
And in the Black Land disinherited,
Robbed in the ancient country of its birth; . . .
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At length this searing consciousness gave rise to that famous cry of passionate revolt in If We Must Die—
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

And in *Exhortation: Summer, 1919* Claude McKay turns toward the future confidently with this clarion call:

From the deep primeval forests where the crouching leopard’s lurking,
Lift your heavy-lidded eyes, Ethiopian awake!

For the big earth groans in travail for the strong,
new world in making—
O my brothers, dreaming for long centuries,
Wake from sleeping; to the East turn, turn your eyes!

Similarly, in *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* in his first published volume *The Weary Blues*, Langston Hughes sang profoundly:

I’ve known rivers
I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older
than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised pyramids above it....

Langston Hughes further expressed his retrospective identification with Africa:

We should have a land of trees
Bowed down with chattering parrots
Brilliant as the day,
And not this land where birds are gray.

Again, in the poem *Georgia Dusk* included in *Cane*, Jean Toomer, while etching the toilers in southern canefield and saw mill, recalls the ancestors from the long-past life of dignity and freedom in Africa:

Meanwhile, the men, with vestiges of pomp,
Race memories of king and caravan,
High priests, an ostrich and a ju-ju man,
Go singing through the footpaths of the swamp.

Countee Cullen mused long and lyrically in the poem *Heritage* which is outstanding in the book *Color*:
What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?

Plaintively pondering his "high-priced conversion" to Christianity and humility, the poet needs must transmute this experience in terms consonant with his deeper ancestral self:

Lord, I fashion dark gods, too,
Daring even to give You
Dark despairing features where,
Crowned with dark rebellious hair,
Patience wavers just so much as
Mortal grief compels, while touches
Quick and hot, of anger, rise
To smitten cheek and weary eyes.
Lord forgive me if my need
Sometimes shapes a human creed.

The sense of dignity and power derived from Africa led this poet to an anguished effort to restrain with reason from a premature revolt against intolerable oppression:

All day long and all night through,
One thing only must I do:
Quench my pride and cool my blood,
Lest I perish in the flood,
Lest a hidden ember set
Timber that I thought was wet
Burning like the dryest flax,
Melting like the merest wax,
Lest the grave restore its dead.
Not yet has my heart or head
In the least way realized
They and I are civilized.
Finally, Lucian B. Watkins looked with serene confidence to Africa exulting in his *Star of Ethiopia*:

Out in the Night thou art the sun
Toward which thy soul-charmed children run,
The faith-high height whereon they see
The glory of their Day To Be—
The peace at last when all is done.

Following the failure of the Garvey movement, consciousness of Africa was bolstered in Harlem by the campaign of the American Negro Labor Congress for the liberation of the colonial peoples of Africa and Asia. Representing this body, the present writer went as a delegate to the Congress Against Imperialism held in Brussels in 1927. As the forerunner of the Asian-African Conference held at Bandung in April 1955, the Brussels Congress was recalled and noted by President Sukarno of Indonesia in his opening address, “At that Conference many distinguished delegates who are present here today met each other and found new strength in their fight for independence.”

The Commission on the African Peoples of the World elected at the Brussels Congress Against Imperialism included the brilliant Senegalese leaders Lamine Senghor, who unfortunately died shortly afterward in a French jail, and Garan Kouyaté who was shot by the Nazis during their occupation of Paris in 1940. Other outstanding members of this Commission were Mr. Makonnen of Ethiopia, J. T. Gumede, vice president of the African National Congress of South Africa, and J. A. La Guma, secretary of the South African Non-European Trade Union Federation. The writer of this present summary served as secretary of the Commission.

The resolution prepared by the Commission and adopted by the Brussels Congress Against Imperialism, called for the complete liberation of the African peoples, the restoration of their lands, and several other measures including the establishment of a University at Addis Ababa for the training of candidates for leadership in the trade union, cultural, and liberation movements of the oppressed African peoples.

**reaction to Mussolini’s aggression in Ethiopia**

A new wave of consciousness spread through Harlem as the people reacted strongly against Mussolini’s fascist, military aggression against Ethiopia in October 1935. Organizations were set up to mobilize support; the executive director of the International Council of Friends
of Ethiopia, Dr. Willis N. Higgins, was commissioned to deliver an appeal on behalf of Ethiopia to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. Arden Bryan, president of the Nationalist Negro Movement, sent petitions to the League and protests to the British Foreign Office and the U. S. State Department against their failure to aid Ethiopia.

When invading Italian airplanes monstrously rained down deadly yperite gas on the Ethiopian people, huge protest meetings were organized. The Ethiopian Pacific Movement, from a gigantic rally at Rockland Palace, forwarded protests and also sent telegrams to Asian, African, Australian, Central and South American nations, appealing for action in defense of Ethiopia. Several organizations joined in the United Aid to Ethiopia with Rev. Wm. Lloyd Imes, chairman, Cyril M. Philip, secretary, and Dr. P. M. H. Savory, treasurer.

The officers just named were sent as a delegation to seek to influence the First Congress of the International Peace Campaign, which met at Brussels early in September 1936, to take action in support of Ethiopia. The delegation interviewed Emperor Hailie Selassie in London and requested him to send a representative to cooperate in the work here. Dr. Malaku E. Bayen, cousin and personal physician to the Emperor, was appointed and was greeted with acclaim at a great meeting at Rockland Palace. Meanwhile funds were raised and medical supplies sent through the Medical Aid to Ethiopia, of which body, Dr. Arnold W. Donawa was chairman and Dr. J. J. Jones, secretary.

The Ethiopian World Federation, then organized in Harlem, spread through the country, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. The Voice of Ethiopia published news from the Ethiopian front and further stimulated the campaign of resistance. J. A. Carrington and Dr. R. C. Hunt published the pamphlet Yperite and Ethiopia, with the full text of Emperor Haile Selassie's Memorable and Immortal Speech at Geneva, along with pictures of victims of the horrible yperite gas, so called because this gas was first used at Ypres in France. Volunteers generally could not secure passports to go to join in the military defense of Ethiopia, however, the Afroamerican aviator, Colonel John C. Robinson, known as the "Brown Condor," executed many heroic missions in that ravaged land. The Pittsburgh Courier, then directed by Robert L. Vann, sent J. A. Rogers as a war correspondent who on his return published the booklet The Real Facts of Ethiopia.

After the Italian invaders were driven out of Ethiopia in 1941, this intense fraternal consciousness in Harlem subsided into a residual sense
of unity with all African peoples. But when Egypt was invaded in October 1956 by Israel followed by Britain and France, and ruthless massacre and destruction descended upon the people of Port Said, Suez, Alexandria, and Cairo, Harlem reacted with a rally organized by the Asian-African Drums and demonstrated its solidarity with President Nasser and the stricken people of Egypt. Harlem rejoiced when the note sent by Premier Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, demanding that withdrawal of the invading forces begin within 24 hours, led to the timely evacuation of these aggressors.

**Harlem rallies to African freedom**

Consciousness of Africa mounted again as more and more African nations regained their independence. The inhuman atrocities of the French colonialists against the Algerian people, who were struggling valiantly for their independence, aroused widespread sympathy and fraternal support among the people of Harlem. Active consciousness reached its zenith when the Congo was betrayed and dismembered and its dedicated leaders, especially the Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, were foully and brutally done to death. Harlem boiled with fierce resentment against the failure of the United Nations to support the government of the Congo Republic and to prevent the murder of its Prime Minister and other officials.

This white hot indignation among the people of Harlem gave rise to the outburst in the visitors' gallery of the United Nations on February 15, 1961. Reactionary forces loudly denounced this protest upsurge and pseudo-liberals like Max Lerner in his *New York Post* column presumed to lecture and to condemn the protesting Afroamerican people while excusing the Belgian and other colonialist seceders and murderers. An open letter, exposing Max Lerner's hypocritical and racist attack, was addressed by this writer to him and to the editor and owner of the *New York Post*. But this answer to Lerner's diatribe has never been published or even acknowledged by them.

Harlem remains today quite conscious of its African heritage and basic kinship. This consciousness is by no means limited to the various groups which call themselves "nationalists," and who are quite vocal but who actually contribute little or no substantial, direct support to the African liberation movements. Yet such effective support is vitally needed at this very moment in the present critical and decisive struggle now being waged for the liberation of the peoples of Central and South Africa.

The limits of this article preclude more detail here. It should be
stated, however, that these “nationalist” groups are as yet unable to unite among themselves, due largely, it appears, to self-centered power drives and competition for leadership. The tendency persists among them, unfortunately, to oppose other organizations which have the largest following of the Afroamerican people and to condemn these leaders caustically and constantly. Obviously, this hinders rather than helps to achieve essential united action either in support of the African liberation movements or to further the struggle for civil liberties and human rights here in the U.S.A.

Returning to the main currents of Harlem life, it is fitting to recognize the chief intellectual forces which have heightened consciousness of Africa since the 1930's. Outstanding is the Schomburg Collection of literature on Africa and people of African descent, brought together during a lifetime by Arthur A. Schomburg and established as a special reference library by the New York Public Library. The development of this institution has been carried forward by Mrs. Catherine Latimer and by the present genial curator, Mrs. Jean Blackwell Hutson. The Countee Cullen Branch, under the supervision of Mrs. Dorothy R. Homer, displays and features books on Africa for general circulation. Stimulating study classes were led by Dr. Willis N. Huggins and of special note were the several profound and scholarly lecture series given by Prof. William Leo Hansberry.

Significant also has been the activity of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson. This dedicated scholar published many volumes treating of Africa, notably his own The Negro in Our History, with its opening chapter emphasizing our African heritage, and the African Background Outlined. Among other widely read books were those by Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Folk Then and Now and the World and Africa: the writings of J. A. Rogers, World’s Great Men of Color, Sex and Race, and Africa’s Gift to America; Dr. Willis N. Huggins and John G. Jackson, Guide to African History and Introduction to African Civilizations; George G. M. James, Stolen Legacy, J. G. de Graft-Johnson, African Glory; Jomo Kenyatta, Facing Mount Kenya, Elton Fax, West African Vignettes; the writings of George Padmore, concluding with Pan-Africanism and Communism; and those of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana and I Speak of Freedom. Making their contribution have been the works of the English author Basil Davidson, Old Africa Rediscovered and Black Mother, as well as that of the German writer Janheinz Jahn, Muntu: An Outline of Neo-African Culture.

Quite encouraging is the fact that today, in the main stream of life
and thought in Harlem, interest as well as identification with Africa grows apace. In homes, more books on African life and development are seen and read. This concurs with the increasing sale of African literature in Harlem bookshops; the trend in the Frederick Douglass Book Center has been markedly away from general fiction and toward the history and culture of peoples of African origin. Among fraternal societies and clubs, in church and school, library and lecture hall, more programs than ever before are being presented on various aspects of African life and liberation.

To mention a few indications: A program for African diplomats organized by Sudia Masoud, secretary of the African-Asian Drums, began at the Prince Hall Masons' Auditorium and concluded with a dinner at the Hotel Theresa. The Seventh Day Adventist Church presented several representatives of African states. The Afro-Arts Cultural Center, Simon Bly, Jr., Executive Director, in cooperation with Dr. Charles M. Schapp, Assistant Superintendent of District Schools, has conducted In-Service courses on Africa for teachers for several years. Along with its work to emphasize the names African and Afro-american as fitting and honorable designations, the Committee to Present The Truth About The Name “Negro” has conducted and plans more lecture series on The History and Culture of African Peoples.

in unity lies strength

Still more significant was the American Negro Leadership Conference held last November at Arden House in Harriman, New York. For this involved the principal Afroamerican organizations active or represented in Harlem and the country—the N.A.A.C.P., C.O.R.E., Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, National Council of Negro Women, National Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the American Society For African Culture. It has been alleged that these leaders suddenly evinced a new interest in Africa, but even in that case this interest definitely reflects the rising consciousness of Africa among the vast majority of the members and supporters of these organizations.

In any case such expressed concern for the African peoples should be welcomed and encouraged by all who are sincerely devoted to African liberation. If any of these Afroamerican leaders exhibit wariness or weakness, then those who honestly and wholeheartedly seek to aid Africa should, in order to infuse greater clarity and strength, indicate what they consider these weaknesses to be. Thoughtful supporters of African unity and progress must, therefore, regret the ill-
advised, intemperate, and harmful attack made in the article entitled *Negro Stooges Bid For Africans Challenged*, which stands out offensively in the January 1963 issue of *Voice of Africa*.

When the leaders in the American Negro Leadership Conference are challenged on the ground that "they had the audacity to make attempts to move ahead of the African nationalists in America," this statement admits motivation from selfish considerations on the part of those who make this challenge. It is also obviously feared that these Conference leaders might get ahead in securing diplomatic posts or other prized considerations. Branding these Conference leaders as "opportunists," after making such a charge, will be logically regarded as an unconscious confession of competition in opportunism. Again, to affirm that "these organizations represent American colonialism, imperialism, and exploitation," is patently to go beyond the bounds of truth.

Moreover, such a statement is destructive of unity and must offend and repel the hundreds of thousands of members of the organizations in this Conference who are rallying to the cause of African freedom and progress. Thinking people, too, must pause to question the strange self-praise projected in this article by self-styled "Ghana patriots," who are not known to have given up their United States citizenship or to have been accorded citizenship by the government of Ghana. Likewise deplorable is the unwarranted use of the good name of Osagyefo of Ghana in these derisive proceedings which tend only to separate the Afroamerican leaders and people from the African statesmen and their peoples.

But utterly reprehensible is the disruptive campaign being waged by George S. Schuyler and his accomplices in mind-twisting which has rendered aid and comfort to the Belgian and other neo-colonialist oppressors in the Congo Republic and to the Portuguese imperialist butchers of the peoples of Angola and Mozambique.

Completely disproving the false and venomous general accusations made by George S. Schuyler et al. in the *N. Y. Courier* against African statesmen, of indifference and hostility against Afroamerican people, was the reported reaction of African Foreign Ministers at the Conference of African States held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. *The New York Times* of May 19th published their special correspondent's report that the Foreign Minister of Nigeria rose "to denounce racial discrimination in South Africa and the United States." This report also states, "American observers have been dismayed to hear Alabama linked with South Africa in attacks on apartheid inside and outside the conference.
hall,” and further that “American correspondents approaching members of delegations frequently hear the question, “What’s the latest news from Birmingham?”

The Ethiopian Herald, which is the official publication of the Ministry of Information, is quoted as having commented:

“What happened in Birmingham last week shows the United States in its true light. To be black is still a crime... The colored American must fight hard for freedom rather than waste time and much needed energy bellyaching about Communism. The United States version of ‘civilized apartheid’ must be fought.”

Acting on behalf of the 30 African nations assembled in this Conference at Addis Ababa, Prime Minister Milton Obote of Uganda sent a letter to President Kennedy of the U.S.A. which condemned the “most inhuman treatment” perpetrated upon Afroamericans at Birmingham, Alabama, and which further stated:

“Nothing is more paradoxical than that these events should take place in the United States at a time when that country is anxious to project its image before the world as the archetype of democracy and champion of freedom.”

At a news conference held on May 23rd, as reported in the New York Times, Prime Minister Obote recognized that those “who had been doused with blasts of water from fire hoses in Birmingham were ‘our kith and kin,’” and declared further that, the eyes of the world were “concentrated on events in Alabama and it is the duty of the free world, and more so of countries that hold themselves up as leaders of the free world, to see that all their citizens, regardless of color, are free.”

It may be predicted confidently, despite the malicious efforts of a few venal slanderers, that consciousness of Africa will continue to grow in Harlem and among Afroamericans generally. An even more vigorous and healthy development of this consciousness will come when it is more fully realized that rationally no conflict really or properly exists between vital interest in our African heritage and the liberation of the African peoples and deep and active devotion to the cause of human rights and equal citizenship status here in the U.S.A. For the same social forces which spawned colonialist subjugation in Africa and other areas are the identical forces responsible for brutal enslavement and racist oppression in the Americas and elsewhere.

Freedom and the full development of the human personality, therefore, require independence for the African peoples as well as full citizenship rights with equal status and opportunity for the minority
people of African descent wherever they now exist. The same inherent self-respect and will to be free, which led Paul Cuffee to wage a successful struggle for the vote and equal citizenship rights in Massachusetts, immediately after the American Revolution of 1776, also led this great pioneer leader to promote self-determination through migration and the development of Sierra Leone in Africa. An enlightened awareness of African lore and liberty is, and will continue to be, the inevitable expression of the indomitable will to self-knowledge, self-determination, self-realization, and self-development on parity with all mankind.

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ON FREEDOM ROAD

"Sonneteer," said the traveller,
"Since you're going my way.
"Would you kindly help me onward,
"For I am old and grey?

"The trek is much too tedious,
"My wind is going fast.
"I want to see Utopia
"Before I breathe my last."

Sonneteer said, "Surely,
"I'll help you on, good friend.
"In fact, that's what I'm here for—
"My watch will never end.

"So lay aside your staff, sir,
"And put your trust in me.
"I'll take you to Utopia,
"Where every race is free!"

Ricardo Weeks