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Ethiopia Is Now: J. A. Rogers and the Rhetoric of Black Anticolonialism during the Great Depression

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The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 inspired grass roots political activism in black America. To understand how this foreign policy issue became such a pressing domestic concern for black Americans, this essay analyzes an influential interpretation of the crisis, a pamphlet by J. A. Rogers entitled The Real Facts About Ethiopia. *I argue that Rogers's text critiques the nature of race under colonialism by illustrating how state boundaries and racial categories are coordinate, strategic operations of colonial power. Second, I demonstrate how the text contrasts this parochial racial context with an alternative framework in which identity can be performed, a heterogeneous space represented by a characterization of Ethiopia. I contend that this figure of Ethiopia creates a temporal frame for remedying the geographic and historical dispersal of the African Diaspora. At the close of the 1930s, this anticolonial, transnational black identity influenced the tenor and focus of black political culture.*

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 inspired many African Americans to consider their relationship with the last free state in Africa and to reflect upon its symbolic configurations in their discursive past.[1] In speeches, protests, pamphlets, and newspapers, black Americans debated economic, political, and military action on behalf of Ethiopia.[2] This public argument did not resolve into consensus about a "black" foreign policy regarding the

invasion. Indeed, by and large, black Americans interpreted the invasion as more than a foreign policy issue. For many black Americans, the invasion of Ethiopia had decidedly local dimensions. The invasion was immediate, an act in the international contest between black and white, colonizer and colonized that simultaneously raged in Ethiopia and Harlem. As Roi Ottley recalls in his 1943 memoir of Harlem and black culture, *New World a-Coming: Inside Black America,* the Italian invasion of Ethiopia "permeated every phase of Negro life."[3] More recently, through a broader historical lens, John Hope Franklin views the Italian invasion of Ethiopia as the most important moment of international conflict for African American identity in the twentieth century. Franklin observes: "Almost overnight even the most provincial among Negro Americans became international-minded."[4]

Scholars in diverse fields have documented black America's response to the invasion, but the rhetorical dimensions of the crisis remain unstudied.[5] Specifically, scholars have yet to explore how rhetorical expression shaped perception of the Italian invasion as a crisis for black America and to investigate how this rhetorical solidarity with Ethiopia influenced black political culture. To better understand these issues, I analyze Joel A. Rogers's pamphlet "The Real Facts About Ethiopia." Rogers was one of the most prolific and influential commentators on Africa and black history in 1930s America.[6] This pamphlet combined political, historical, anthropological, and religious research into a single argument for black American solidarity with Ethiopia. The pamphlet's popularity and comprehensiveness make it an apt point of entry into the rhetorical texture of black America's response to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.

I first argue that the Italian invasion of Ethiopia precipitated a rhetorical crisis in which black America's relationship to Ethiopia became contested. Second, I contend that Rogers's pamphlet resolves this crisis by critiquing the nature of race under colonialism and illustrating how state boundaries and racial categories are coordinate, strategic operations of colonial power. Third, I demonstrate how the text creates an alternative racial context—a secular myth of Ethiopia—that does not rely on a colonial definition of race. "Ethiopia" is reinvented as a figure of racially heterogeneous community, a community bound together through shared experience in political and mythical time. This temporal frame recollects the dispersed elements of the African Diaspora, providing a framework for understanding transnational black community. At the close of the 1930s, this anticolonial perspective influenced the tenor and focus of black political culture in the United States.

THE ITALIAN INVASION OF ETHIOPIA

After the European colonial dash for Africa that closed the nineteenth century, Liberia and Ethiopia remained the only "independent" nations on the continent. Though technically independent, Liberia suffered an economic occupation. Largely beholden to U.S. and European corporations, burdened by foreign loans, and watched closely by the League of Nations for its past human rights abuses, Liberia could not resist European colonial encroachment.[7] Ethiopia, however, had maintained an independent monarchy that traced its patrimony to the Bible, its royal court enjoyed intimacy with European monarchies, and the nation as a whole appeared poised to reap the fruits of modernity on its own terms.[8]

In 1935 the Italian government prepared to invade Ethiopia, invoking the glorious legacy of Imperial Rome and citing a skirmish between Ethiopian troops and Italian soldiers on Ethiopian soil. As tensions between Ethiopia and Italy intensified, European powers were either silent or openly supportive of Italian aggression. Despite the provision against international aggression established in the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, the League of Nations refused to censure Italy's violation of Ethiopia's sovereignty.[9] Ignoring an agreement not to sell arms to either combatant and to impose sanctions on aggressor nations, League members continued to sell Italy the oil it required to fuel its mechanized troops. In practice, Europe's principle of neutrality crippled Ethiopian self-defense but did not retard significantly Italy's ability to make war.[10]

The Italian government that violated Ethiopia's borders in 1935 had intimate ties to U.S. capital. Wealthy American Zionists supported Mussolini's rise to power and donated to his government in the hope of gaining Italian support for a Jewish state. Henry Ford and other wealthy U.S. industrialists supplied economic aid to Mussolini and were responsible for sympathetic portrayals of the Italian dictator in domestic periodicals. Popular American icons such as Will Rogers publicly supported Italian fascism, and mainstream periodicals such as the *New Republic* and the *Saturday Evening Post* editorialized in favor of Mussolini.[11]

Western complicity in Mussolini's colonial ambitions and the interests of U.S. capital in the Italian fascist regime encouraged African American identification with Ethiopia. The political climate of the invasion suggested analogous relationships between international and domestic phenomena: Mussolini's avarice recalled the graft and decadence of U.S. industrialists, Ethiopian suffering echoed black America's struggle for political and economic progress, and the League of Nation's hypocrisy and impotence recalled

the U.S. government's inability to protect the lives and rights of African Americans. Many black Americans viewed the United States' official statement of neutrality in 1935 as a tacit endorsement of Mussolini's regime that was motivated by racial prejudice. People like Joseph Johnson were left with the impression that the United States "will not help Ethiopia because she is black. She won't do no more for Ethiopia than she will do to stop mob rule in the south."[12] Thus, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia complicated black America's relationship both to the African Diaspora and to U.S. democracy.

"OF WHAT RACE ARE THE ETHIOPIANS?"

Within this political context, the meaning of the invasion to black America pivoted on a discursive negotiation of the racial status of the Ethiopian people. This general controversy had two related dimensions: were Ethiopians "black" enough for political solidarity with black Americans, and how would racial affinity between Ethiopians and African Americans matter in the context of U.S. white supremacy?

Sympathetic or accurate information about Ethiopia and its relationship to the African Diaspora was scarce. At the close of 1934, Carter G. Woodson wrote a letter to the editor of *Afro-American Magazine* in which he lamented:

> With the approach of Negro history week, many teachers are planning to build their programs around Ethiopia, but historians can give them little assistance . . . . the books which are already available supply little of much needed information and most of those now tumbling in large numbers from the presses are not intended to inform the people but to exploit the gullible American public, which feasts upon falsehoods and scandal.[13]

Furthermore, white European and European American tourists published travelogues that detailed their experiences in Ethiopia, but often relied on racist evaluations of the continent as a whole and adopted the format of the adventure novel. William Chaplin Watts's *Blood and Ink* and Mortimer Durand's *Crazy Campaign: A Personal Narrative of the Italo-Abyssinian War,* for example, characterized Ethiopia as comically barbaric and a playground for the bold.[14] Responding to black American appetites for more accurate information about Ethiopia, the *Afro-American Magazine* suggested that its readers attend to Gordon McCreagh's *The Last of Free Africa,* a collection of pro-Ethiopian articles that lauded the "island of Christianity in a sea of blackest paganism."[15] McCreagh's apparent credibility as a resource for African history, despite his jaundiced appreciation of the African continent as a whole, reveals the dearth of information about Ethiopia available for U.S. audiences

in the middle 1930s. The texts that did address the race of the Ethiopians tended either to cast Ethiopians in a racist category suffused with the derogatory assumptions of primitivism or to laud the Ethiopian people by dissociating them from Africa itself.

Prominent Ethiopians contributed to the uncertainty surrounding Ethiopia's relationship to the African Diaspora. The government of Ethiopia considered its sovereignty evident, and thus did not participate in the Pan-African conferences in the early years of the twentieth century. In addition, Ethiopian nobility publicly denied any membership in the "Negro" race. In 1897, for example, Haitian poet Benito Sylvain asked Emperor Menelik, Haile Selassie's predecessor, for financial support to uplift the race. According to U.S. diplomat Robert Skinner, Menelik's answer was negative; his response was that he was "not a negro." "I am a Caucasian," he proclaimed.[16] Still, at the close of World War I, the Ethiopian government sent a delegation to congratulate the U.S. government and to foster better diplomatic relations between the two nations. In August 1919, members of the delegation attempted to dine at the National Democratic Club in New York City but were denied entry because they were "black." Significantly, this slight received a great deal of coverage in African American newspapers.[17]

Euro-American scholars argued against affinity between black Americans and Ethiopians. In 1935 Euro-American intellectuals argued that African American sympathy for Ethiopia was a "hollow groundless form of idealism, based entirely on misconceptions."[18] Some argued that Ethiopian civilization was too advanced to be the product of a Negro race and posited ancient white ancestors for modern day Ethiopians:

> Maintaining that indigenous Africans lacked the capacity to create the complex state structures found among the Abyssinians, white commentators on African ethnography typically attributed a Caucasian rather than a Negro ethnicity to the Ethiopians. Whether racial liberals or conservatives, they generally referred to the sharp-featured Abyssinians as Hamites—a mythical dark branch of the white race that had allegedly introduced high civilization to parts of the African continent.[19]

Some Euro-American journalists and popular anthropologists claimed that Ethiopians were not of "Negro stock" because of their hesitance to call themselves "negro," while others interpreted photos and their personal experience to prove that Ethiopians did not have Negro features and were, therefore, Arabian or Hamite. In this sense, both Ethiopians and racist commentators on Ethiopian ethnicity argued that Ethiopia's proximity to European modernity erased its cultural, historic, and even geographic relationship to Africa.[20]

This discursive context is significant for three reasons. First, it highlights the authority of a specific rhetoric of blackness at this moment in history. The characteristics of authentic blackness were both physiological and anthropological in nature, but interestingly, the barometer of Africanness in domestic racial politics was decidedly New World. Thus, Ethiopians from Africa could be less "African" than African Americans, who may not have ever visited the continent. Second, arguments in favor of African Diasporic solidarity were rhetorically problematic. Such appeals were sometimes interpreted by white supremacists as a sign of gullibility or as a political miscalculation. Third, black America had a significant interest in and need for an independent field of knowledge, not only about American or even black American history, but also about black American experience in the context of the African Diaspora.

Speaking to this need, academic intellectuals such as Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois created sympathetic knowledge about the African Diaspora.[21] Meanwhile, black popular intellectuals self-published pamphlets about Africa and African America that reached a mass black audience. Hubert Harrison's 1919 *When Africa Awakes* and George Wells Parker's 1918 *The Children of the Sun,* for example, countered white supremacy with visions of a redeemed Africa.[22] Pamphlets like these were inexpensive to publish and purchase and were read multiple times after being circulated through various parties, public spaces, restaurants, barbershops, and the like. Moreover, they often provided the content of orations by Harlem's many street speakers. As Myrtle Pollard argued in her 1937 dissertation at the City College of New York, "Harlem as Is . . .," street speakers provided political and cultural leadership in black urban communities. The street speaker stimulated memory of racist humiliation and exploitation:

> One person will be made to recall the years of segregation at the Alhambra Theater on Seventh Avenue and 126th street; another will be reminded of having his money returned at Loew's Victoria on 125th street in preference to allowing him to sit in an empty orchestra.[23]

Thus the street speaker in black urban centers accomplished more than oral journalism, more than a recitation of current events; he stimulated public memory in the service of politics. Street speakers related local, national, and global political issues to the memory of everyday experiences. The rhetoric of a street speaker, could, for example, equate the real, personal memory of a Jim Crow street car with the ignominies suffered by black communities abroad— the unrepentant venality of Western colonialism in Africa could evoke an experience with an Italian American shopkeeper in Harlem or Chicago's South Side.

Shared in public urban spaces and cited by street speakers, pamphlets reached specific audiences without relying on mainstream editorial protocols, major advertisers, or industries of distribution. Those that did include advertising usually notified readers of other works by the text's author or suggested like reading from another popular intellectual on a similar topic. Pamphlets cited each other and the experiences of their authors and, in their oral presentation by street speakers, evoked the experiences of their audiences. In this sense, they facilitated the development of a field of independent, self-referential knowledge in black American life.

Joel Augustus Rogers was one of the more popular pamphleteers.[24] He wrote pamphlets that were sympathetic to the African continent as a whole and that grew from his personal experience in Africa. In 1930 Rogers was appointed the first official foreign correspondent for a black newspaper and traveled to Ethiopia to cover the inauguration of Ras Tafari as Emperor Haile Selassie. In 1936 he returned to Ethiopia, this time as a war correspondent. Upon his return to the United States later that year, Rogers published a pamphlet, *The Real Facts About Ethiopia*.[25] This pamphlet was both a compilation of his research into Ethiopian history and an argument for African American solidarity with the Ethiopian people.

THE REAL FACTS ABOUT ETHIOPIA

The pamphlet is a collection of brief essays, timelines, personal reflections, and pictures. In subheadings, the text addresses topics such as, "The Sex Lure of Ethiopia," "Slavery in Ethiopia," "What the Ethiopians Might Expect under Italian Rule," and a "General History of Ethiopia." The individual sections weave together the author's personal experience in Ethiopia and in the United States with journalistic insight and academic and Biblical sources.

The first section of the text, "Of What Race are the Ethiopians," distinguishes between "American" and "universal" notions of "Negro." Through this distinction Rogers denaturalizes race within the boundaries of a state and proposes an alternative, more material sense of racial community in a global context. The text's critique of American race begins by asserting that the label "Negro" is applied with ludicrous imprecision in the United States. Rogers cites Hubert Harrison's encounter with the U.S. government during his naturalization proceedings. Harrison, though "coal-black," was designated white because of his Danish surname. His experience proved that "'Negro'" was a capricious term applied inaccurately by a bureaucracy out of touch with reality. In this first, American context, "Negro" is so haphazardly applied that it is "sometimes caste, sometimes race, sometimes both." Moreover, to define who is truly "Negro" in the United States, "a scrambled brain is the first essential.

And a touch of lunacy qualifies one as an expert." Despite the sloppiness, this act of categorization managed to establish discrete cultural spaces, concrete and artificial borders between black and white. For example, Rogers states that the American sense of "Negro . . . includes all the shades from black to light-yellow and white, and all textures of hair from silky blond to tightly-curled wool."[26] This American sense of race imposed artificial categories on the self-evident complexity of human social groups and identities. Fundamentally, then, race in its American context was both artificial and irrational.

The political processes that create this artificial dichotomy between black and white in the United States also create subject and abject classes. "Negro" in an American context is applied to "peoples of native African and Arabian descent" in "an attempt by the English-speaking to denote social status."[27] Thus, the creation of distinct racial types perpetuates the hierarchy between those empowered to create the fiction of race and those who actually live with race. Rogers claims that popular portrayals of Emperor Haile Selassie further evidence this relationship between race-ing and status. U.S. newspapers depict Selassie as light skinned, when in actuality he "is lightish black-brown, and considerably darker than one would infer from the published pictures of him."[28] In this way, the pamphlet argues that race in America is an exercise of power, not a reflection of material reality.

The text dissociates this American practice of race from an alternative, race in its universal sense. Rogers describes the universal sense of race to demonstrate the depth and scope of the relationship between race in America and colonialism, and to supply the ground for his eventual articulation of Afrodiasporic racial solidarity in a secular myth of Ethiopia. In stark contrast to the American sense of the term, race, in its universal sense, is obvious to an untutored eye. Anyone who has experienced race can recognize racial reality *and* the subterfuge of those who would establish and enforce artificial racial categories:

> In reality there are truly only two varieties of mankind, the black and the white. All the others, as the Mongolian and the Indian, are in between. This is a com-monsense view. But in ethnology, as in phrenology and theology, there is need for a mass of mystifying names in order to impress the uniformed.[29]

The universal sense of race implies a continuum of racial identification; although black and white are polar opposites, racial grades like Mongolian and Indian punctuate the space between the polarities. In its global, universal sense, race occurs in grades, shades of black and white. This racial continuum creates a sense of blackness that may include Africans in America and in Africa—both communities exist toward the black half of the racial spectrum.

Equally important, however, the universal sense of race is not tied to a particular institution. It is not grounded in a specific geographic space, nor is it shaped by political borders or derived from an ethnic origin. Refuting the popular claim that Ethiopians were of Asiatic ancestry and thus not African, Rogers argues, "White people have been living in the New World only five centuries. Does one still call the descendants of Europeans in America, European?"[30] The answer for Rogers is an emphatic no, because racial community in its universal sense is produced through perception of commonality in the present rather than through a debt to history, a shared geographic space, or state authority. Racial solidarity is recognized, not certified, and experience with "reality" beyond the stultifying physical and ideological borders of America is the only qualification needed to perceive racial community in its true form.

Other influential black Americans interpreted the crisis in Ethiopia in a similar fashion—as proof of an opposition between state-defined community and a racial-political solidarity that transcended state boundaries. W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, came to the same conclusion, using very similar reasoning, in an October 1935 article titled "The Inter-Racial Implications of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View."[31] After acknowledging surface similarities between some people, citing "pictures of Abyssinians now widely current," Du Bois stated: "Of course there are not and never were any 'pure' Negroes any more than there are 'pure' whites or 'pure' yellows. Humanity is mixed to its bones."[32] Du Bois understood race as having a symbolic dimension.[33] Particular symbolic constructions of racial community served specific interests:

> The belief that racial and color differences made exploitation of colonies necessary and justifiable was too tempting to withstand. As a matter of fact, the opposite was the truth; namely that the profit from exploitation was the main reason for the belief in race difference.[34]

Du Bois argues that in the contest over colonies, European states create race. Race was an effect of state and economic power—racial community was created as a negative product of exploitation. Du Bois suggests that Ethiopia represented an alternative sense of community: Ethiopia was free from race-ing relationships.[35] Indeed, Ethiopia was "an example and a promise of what a native people untouched by modern exploitation and race prejudice might do."[36]

In this article, published at a critical juncture in Du Bois's life and thought (and black America's relationship to the African Diaspora), Du Bois implied that "race" had multiple valences: it could serve state power and create artificial distinctions between people, or it could be "natural" and reflect an authentic, complicated, international community. Like Rogers's pamphlet, Du Bois's

article interpreted Italian imperialism as evidence of binaries imposed on the geopolitical scene. The entire globe was divided in terms of exploiter and exploited, artificial and authentic, and, ultimately, race-ing and raced.

As Matthew Pratt Guterl argues in his study, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940,* in the late teens and early twenties, the concept of race in the United States underwent significant change. In pre–World War I nationalisms, race was defined by ethnicity and inherent, biological characteristics. In this milieu Irish, German, and white Anglo-Saxon were coordinate but distinct racial categories. As a result of political pressures, social change, and intellectual developments related to WWI, the myriad "ethnic" races that existed at the turn of the century gradually fused into fewer categories; "race" increasingly referred to color or to position within the global dynamics of imperialism. It was within this context that global "whiteness" and "blackness" emerged.[37] This development can be seen in the rhetoric of Lothrop Stoddard, Madison Grant, and others who diagnosed the bifurcation of the globe with some anxiety.[38] In contrast, the critique offered by Rogers and Du Bois acknowledged the polarization of the globe and its attendant impending apocalypse, but believed that neither was necessarily bad news.

African Americans throughout the country interpreted the conflict in similar, starkly black and white terms. In a letter to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier,* physician Joe Thomas of Cleveland, Ohio, argued that "every son and daughter of African descent" should not "desert our Race in Africa. We must stand 'One for all, All for One.'"[39] Another letter to the editor of the *New York Tribune* opined, "Ethiopia is the land of our heritage. . . . This is a war of black against white."[40]

The universal sense of racial identification that emerges in these interpretations of the Italian invasion appears to replicate some of the assumptions of the colonial, American paradigm it critiques. Rogers diagnoses the geopolitical scene as having two fundamentally opposed camps, white and black; these definitions pivot on a dichotomy between white and not-white, oppressor and not-oppressing. In this sense, it seems as though Rogers's universal sense of race does not really escape the context of colonialism; indeed, his universal sense of race depends upon colonialism through its opposition to colonial practices. At first blush, then, the universal sense of racial solidarity is, in Mark Lawrence McPhail's terminology, "complicit" in the rhetoric of negative difference. In his analysis of the rhetoric of Afrocentricity, McPhail argues that potentially progressive rhetoric is complicit in the logic of racism if it posits interracial relations as a "conflict of essentially competitive world views."[41] Rogers's antagonism between American and universal racial politics, between the forces of white imperialism and an international anticolonial community, appears to rely on just such a polarized opposition.

However, Rogers's anticolonial, universal citizenship grounded in race retains some progressive potential. First, it inverts primitivist and white supremacist conceptions of old and new world intellectual milieus. Since the Enlightenment, thinkers and rhetors interpreted the non-Western world as the irrational Other of the centered, Western subject.[42] Rogers's critique exposes the patina of rationality that cloaks the caprice and self-interest of U.S. racial politics, implying that it is in fact the rest of the world that has privileged access to reality. Indeed, Rogers's formulation of race argues that the universal experience of race is the norm from which the artificial, American sense deviates; in so doing, Rogers rhetorically constructs both blackness and whiteness from the perspective of one who has *experienced* race rather than from abstract principle.[43]

Second, this critique illustrates the complicity of bourgeois institutions in the perpetuation of racial inequity and thus interrogates the systems and structures of racism. The argument identifies the relationship between bourgeois knowledge industries (such as ethnology and the mainstream media), the state, and the categorization of people into subject and abject classes. Thus, the critique has power through its opposition, not only to colonialism, but to bourgeois sensibilities and institutions. As a critique of the systems of racism and Western imperialism, Rogers's rhetoric complicates the notion of "complicity." For, as Kirt Wilson argues, complicit rhetoric becomes racist "only when it reinforces *systems* that produce racially disparate power relations."[44] Although it is complicit in some aspects of colonial discourse, Rogers's critique of global systems of domination intervenes in structures that perpetuate racism.

Third, by casting U.S. racial politics as parochial, the text creates the opportunity for a more inclusive and expansive environment in which racial subjects may form, a space that is true to the complexity of raced experience. *The Real Facts About Ethiopia* gives texture to this alternative context through its commemoration of Ethiopia.

THE FIGURE OF ETHIOPIA

The text combines anthropological, historical, and journalistic modes of writing in its description of Ethiopia. These empirical approaches to Ethiopia are faithful to the particularity of Ethiopian culture and history. However, the text also employs Ethiopia as a metaphor for a new, international context in which black community can be performed, a space free from the artificial political borders and racial categories created by Western imperialism. This Ethiopia is heterogeneous and without political borders; it achieves coherence not because of the borders of its state or its consistent racial essence, but because it is a shared experience in time.

Initially, the text establishes surface similarities between African American and Ethiopian "strains," marshalling evidence about the "Negroid" features in depictions of ancient and modern Ethiopians. Still, the text critiques its own assertion of surface, physiological similarity through its inclusion of photos of Ethiopians that demonstrate a widely diverse field of physical characteristics. These pictures manage the exoticism of the Ethiopian people by displaying the diversity of Ethiopian appearances. For example, the text includes several pictures of Emporer Selassie and Ethiopians of a variety of social classes and physical types. They portray members of different tribes and ostensibly display the "Negro" features of each. However, the individuals depicted possess such radically diverse physiognomies that their inclusion actually reinforces the text's argument against simple constructions of race that rely exclusively on appearance, biology, or the possibility of racial purity. The photos illustrate Ethiopian existence as variegated, as complicated and various as that of any other "normal" people. Through these images, the text manages the exotic nature of the Ethiopian subject—Ethiopians are not *pure* Africans, nor are they representatives of a pure black culture. Instead, they are "normal," mixed. Thus, these photos support the text's argument that Ethiopia is without the "purity" that characterizes race as it is performed within the political borders created by Western colonialism. Indeed, according to Rogers's history, culturally and politically, Ethiopians have never policed racial categories, they "have never drawn a color-line."[45]

This portion of the text provides a key to its fundmental epistemological assumptions. The pictures appear to reinforce the adage that seeing is believing; they provide empirical evidence of the Ethiopian racial "type." However, the pictures illustrate no consistent physiognomy, thus the pictoral evidence appears to rebut the text's fundamental argument for Afro-American and Ethiopian identification by undercutting the possibility of an identifiable Ethiopian character. Still, these pictures function enthymatically, and through a materially specific hermenuetic protocol, a shared "common sense," the empirical realities they represent reaffirm the impossibility of a concrete understanding of race. In other words, the pictures ironically identify what "everyone" knows is unidentifiable.

Rogers makes a similar argument about the complexity and dynamism of Ethiopia's social classes. Curiously, Ethiopia's practice of slavery provides his main evidence. Rogers argues that slavery in Ethiopia is not a function of racial (or any other) identity. Indeed, it encourages social mobility and the mixture of castes. Rogers explains how Ethiopian slaves often enter into slavery voluntarily, becoming members of their owner's families. The offspring of slaves and their owners are free and treated "in all respects" like legal members of the family. In this sense, Ethiopian slavery blurs the distinction between personal

and public spheres, between family and employee. This admixture, however, brings with it the possibility of social mobility.[46] Rogers's articulation of Ethiopian slavery transmutes a problematic component of Ethiopian culture into evidence of Ethiopia's lack of pure, static social categories. Moreover, Rogers's characterization of slavery confronts America's past and present exploitation of labor. Ethiopian slavery is more humane than American chattel slavery in the nineteenth century. Rogers compares slavery in Ethiopia to the experience of racialized labor in the context of Western imperialism:

> But if we are inclined to be impatient with slavery in Ethiopia let us remember that although it was abolished in America seventy years ago that it survives as peonage in the United States today. . . . Peonage in America is not only more harsh than slavery in Arabia and Ethiopia, but there is far less economic justification for it.[47]

This passage employs the Ethiopian labor practices as a frame to critique U.S. labor practices, but it also demonstrates the associative logic that underwrites the text's articulation of Afrodiasporic solidarity as a whole. Rogers's treatment of Ethiopian slavery clearly illustrates his preference for practice over principle, induction over deduction. He argues that although officially Ethiopia practices slavery, in actuality, Ethiopian slavery is much more progressive than labor relations perpetuated by Western imperialism. Rogers's dissociation of slavery in name from actually existing inequity relies on an inductive privileging of experience over deductive generalizations. The imposition of the general category "slavery" upon Ethiopian labor relations is akin to the application of racial categories to black experience in a domestic context. Indicting Ethiopian "slavery" is as superficial as policing "black and white." In contrast, Rogers's inductive approach observes commonalities between the experiences of contemporary raced labor and the practices of slavery in America's past.

Through pictures of Ethiopians and analysis of Ethiopian slavery, the text depicts Ethiopia as fundamentally heterogeneous and free of the static social categories that structure life within the states created by Western imperialism. The text further dissociates Ethiopia from Western imperialism by articulating a secular mythology that elides Ethiopia's geographic and political boundaries. In so doing, it provides rhetorical time as the ground of political community rather than state borders.

In a section titled "Geography, Economic Conditions, etc.," Rogers describes Ethiopian physical geography and natural resources. He states that Ethiopia's only border is a desert and that its climate is "heavenly"; Ethiopia has gorges larger than the Grand Canyon and has mountains so great it has

been rightly called "The Switzerland of Africa"; and as the source of gold for ancient Egypt, Ethiopia's natives "still wash gold in the same streams five thousand years later."[48] Nature exists in extremes: the lion "attains its largest size there" and "the Ethiopian giraffe is the tallest and finest in the world" while Ethiopia's temperature can reach a remarkable "150 degrees in the shade."[49] These comparisons suggest imperial appreciations of the preternatural fecundity of colonized space. Indeed, the language of origin echoes explicitly the rhetoric of cultural diffusion, a relationship Rogers seems to acknowledge when he writes that "Ethiopia was generally believed by the most ancient scholars to have been the first of the nations and the mother of civilization."[50] However, Rogers's description of Ethiopian geography differs in that it characterizes the Ethiopian people as human actors in this space, not as mere reflections of the physical geography or as resources themselves.[51] Rogers compares Italian and Ethiopian diplomacy leading up to the crisis and argues that, despite Italian complaints of Ethiopian perfidy, "The simple truth is that there has been no faith involved on either side. It was a case of ruse against ruse with the Africans being the trickier of the two"; thus his description in no way compromises Ethiopian agency.[52] Indeed the description of Ethiopian political behavior suggests that political acumen is common coin and has no space from which to diffuse and no essential connection to Western civilization. Moreover, Rogers's writing of Ethiopia actually tropes on colonial modes of writing: rather than isolating a fundamental difference or policing racial and cultural distinctiveness, Rogers's "objective" perspective on Ethiopia actually denies the possibility of such an objective description. His archaeology unearths contemporaneousness; his ethnography of the "other" is explicitly *auto*ethnographic.

Rogers's description of Ethiopia also elides Ethiopia's political borders by suggesting that Ethiopia could, in a sense, be experienced anywhere. For example, the pamphlet tells the story of Haile Selassie's life through an appropriation of the life of Christ set in Ethiopia. Selassie's life is related as a series of learning experiences and challenges that develop according to his destiny. In his youth he "nearly lost his life" when "while crossing Lake Arumuya with seven others the boat capsized. He swam ashore; the rest were drowned." In this story young Ras Tafari could, in effect, walk on water when confronted with an experience that killed seven mortals. As "King of Kings of Ethiopia," Selassie also struggled with his own Pharisees. He fought against the "swarming Ethiopian clergy, which is very powerful, and ultra-conservative, and eager to keep the people in ignorance to serve its own ends."[53] Last, his body exemplifies humility. He "is barely over five feet tall, and weighs, it seems, not over a hundred and twenty pounds," and in his "general expression he has been aptly described by one writer as a 'black edition of the pictured Christ.'"[54] In

Rogers's narrative, Haile Selassie fulfills his destiny by maturing into a Christ-like king, and the space of Ethiopia is the site of a time-bending repetition of the birth and growth of Christ, a spiritual space coincident both with the ancient holy sites of the Levant *and* with present contexts in which the undeserving endure tribulation.

Significantly, Rogers argues for a common black identity grounded not in a shared promise of redemption but in present political conditions; not to hope for tomorrow but to struggle with today. Thus an Ethiopian state of mind is possible outside the borders of the Ethiopian state. "Ethiopian" is an identification that can be experienced in diverse political states within the larger context of modernity. Indeed an Ethiopian state of mind transcends state borders and develops within the struggle against bureaucratic power, against authority that retards the development of human potential. The political nature of this coincidence signals a departure from the language of Christian Redemptionism that had structured the early discourse of Ethiopianism.[55] Nineteenth-century Ethiopianism situated Ethiopia in a Christian teleology wherein it was either to be redeemed or to be the source from which redemption would diffuse.[56] This construction of the African Diaspora relied upon spatial and temporal distance between its constitutive parts. Essentially, in Rogers's formulation, "Ethiopia" secularizes and politicizes the cultural work of the Ethiopianist tradition. Distanced from the assumptions of Christian Redemptionism, the secular mythology of Ethiopia expressed in this pamphlet derives from a shared political condition. In Rogers's anticolonial vision, Ethiopia retains its mythic stature, but its metaphysical character has been displaced by political considerations. Indeed, this rhetoric replaces Christian teleology with a material one.

Ultimately, in *The Real Facts About Ethiopia*, "Ethiopia" refers to a time and not a place. Ethiopia is now, a present, a moment in which those who share in exploitation also share in the potential to make change through purposeful action. As the foreword to the pamphlet argues, for the past 400 years, "the European, or white race, has been colonizing in all the lands of the darker races," and "for centuries this animosity slumbered like a volcano, bursting at times into revenge as in the attacks on missionaries; the Indian mutiny; or the Zulu uprising."[57] President of the NAACP, Walter White, expressed a similar belief, claiming, "Italy, brazenly, has set fire under the powder keg of white arrogance and greed which seems to be an act of suicide for the so-called white world."[58] Now, however, is the time in which the cyclical disposition of power in history will complete its revolution.

Characterized in this fashion, the global political scene is a place of impending and inevitable crisis. Moreover, the forecast conflagration was preordained by the ancient actions of the forces of colonialism. The white

European world sealed its fate, its downfall, and the eventual unification and uprising of the "colored" people of the world by its initiation of the Atlantic slave trade and subsequent colonial practices. This construction conjoins the slave trade outlawed in 1808, racist practices such as lynching that were still practiced domestically, and the continuing international economic program of imperialism. The distant racist work of colonialism in foreign countries is immediate, a part of a repeating cycle of oppression and redemption materialized in the present moment.[59]

RHETORIC, TIME, AND COMMUNITY

Rogers's commemoration of a mythological Ethiopia creates a frame for the performance of black American community that transcends the political borders of the United States. "Ethiopia" orients black community in time rather than space; it creates a perspective on the past, present, and future of black experience, configuring the memory of a black public.[60] In this sense, Rogers's "Ethiopia" enacts a public memory that functions as what Pierre Nora calls a *lieu de mémoire*.[61]

Les lieux de mémoire is translated as "realms," "sites," or "places" of memory. In contrast with history, which is narrative and intellectual, a recollection of things that no longer exist, *les lieux de mémoire* are lived, metaphorical, affective, and material. Memory is not subordinate to past fact, nor can a performance of memory be judged by the accuracy of its representation of past fact. Memory "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects," whereas "history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions."[62] *Les lieux de mémoire* are outside the totalizing vision of history because they contradict history's linearity and purchase on the real. A moment of silence at a baseball game, for example, functions as a realm of memory in that it disrupts the narrative progression of time, creating a now that includes both past and future. In this sense, this performance of memory also establishes and orients community. Memory is "*political gestus,*" that is, "not just memory of past events, but the memory of the future, in anticipation of action to come."[63]

The *lieu de mémoire* concept has been used to explain the commemoration of space in black American expressive traditions.[64] Elizabeth Rauh Bethel argues that "Hayti" functioned as an African American *lieu de mémoire* in the nineteenth century. As Haiti's symbolic currency grew in black communities through emigration and the circulation of "myths" about the Haitian revolution, black Americans increasingly saw narratives of Haiti's past as constitutive elements of black experience in the United States.[65]

The circulation of *The Real Facts About Ethiopia* in black urban centers during the Great Depression constituted a similar Afrodiasporic *lieu de mémoire*.

Celebrating "Ethiopia" as a heterogenous, borderless present, the text allowed for the rehearsal of pre-diasporic black unity (*without* reliance on an empirically verifiable past). Through the lens of the Ethiopian *lieu de mémoire,* 400 years of slavery, the present fact of Jim Crow, and European occupation of Africa are constituted as repetitions of the fundamental spirit of Western civilization, a spirit that is in decline. Moreover, domestic segregated public spaces themselves reify the identification of the community and the position of that identity in a vision of history. With this present Ethiopian community in mind, an everyday racist act becomes proof of the transitional nature of racism and the eventuality of political change. Thus, this construction of Ethiopia as a foundational space provides a political explanation for present hardship and implies agency for intervention in domestic and international institutions.

THE POLITICS OF BLACK ANTICOLONIALISM

This analysis of Rogers's rhetoric explains how the fight against European imperialism in Ethiopia was perceived as a local event by many black Americans. Ethiopia was not the center or origin of black political agency; rather, it was one of many equal fronts in the African Diaspora's struggle against colonialism and racism. The attitude toward black identity expressed in this text influenced black America's political culture at the close of the 1930s.

The anticolonial cause provided common ground for diverse black organizations that were dedicated to international and domestic racial progress as well as to exploring connections between the two. African and Caribbean expatriots living in black America's urban centers formed new political groups, and Western imperialism created exigencies for black American travel throughout the Diaspora, thus facilitating personal connections among individuals of African descent. The "Black Eagle," Hubert Julian, and the "Brown Condor," John Robinson, traveled to Africa and formed new relationships with Africans of diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds. Julian's exploits in Africa were front page news in black American newspapers. While in Africa, Julian formed relationships with Ethiopia's royalty and military, some of which were maintained after his return to the United States.[66]

In 1934, the Ethiopian Research Council formed to disseminate information on Ethiopia's relevance to African America. As tensions with Italy increased, the Council's politics became more aggressive, and eventually the organization became one of the focal points of African American agitation on behalf of Ethiopia. Supported by Haile Selassie, it also solicited economic support for the Ethiopian government. Eventually, it would give birth to a

number of organizations that advocated radical action on behalf of Ethiopia and black America. The International Black League, the Afro-American Producers and Consumers League, the Ethiopian Guild of the Latter Day Garveyites, and Samuel Daniels's Pan African Reconstruction Association (PARA) lobbied for a radical approach to foreign and domestic racial politics that included boycotting Italian American businesses, patronizing black American businesses, and militarizing the struggle for black power.

As the Italian invasion of Ethiopia became an occupation, the conglomerate of organizations once formed for Ethiopia's defense focused their energies on domestic issues. Anticolonialism became an explicit frame for understanding domestic and foreign policy. The Ethiopian World Federation, for example, lobbied for federal antilynching legislation. In addition, many black Americans spoke out against U.S. involvement in World War II and cited lessons learned from European colonialism in the 1930s as evidence of the perfidy of the West. Indeed, as David Aldridge argues, black Americans viewed WWII through "an antiracist, anticolonial and Third World–centered foreign policy sensibility that made them view the Western democracies less benignly than many white Americans."[67] W. E. B. Du Bois, Roy Wilkins, and George Schuyler sympathized with Axis Germany because it had attacked Britain and France, nations with more repugnant colonial résumés. Not until Pearl Harbor did many black Americans publicly denounce Japanese aggression. Up to that point, Japan was considered a model "raced" nation, an anti-Western imperialism super power. Anticolonial discourse was so powerful that 98 black Americans traveled to Spain to intervene in the Spanish Civil War, one of whom wrote in a letter home, "This ain't Ethiopia, but it'll do."[68]

Anticolonialism also invigorated the rhetoric of Black Nationalism. Following August Meir and Elliot Rudwick, rhetorical scholars Celeste Condit and John Lucaites claim that Black Nationalism was largely dormant from the decline of Marcus Garvey's political power in the mid-1920s until its resurgence in the middle to late 1960s.[69] This was not the case. Black Nationalism ebbed and flowed during the twentieth century in response to political and rhetorical exigencies. Although after his decline, many of Garvey's erstwhile followers enlisted in the decidedly antinationalist religious communities of Father Divine and Daddy Grace, many black Americans were drawn to organizations and rhetoric that appealed for distinct, authentic black political space.[70] For example, in August 1937 one of the premier anticolonial groups of the late 1930s, United Aid for Ethiopia, was dissolved because many of its members thought the group had been contaminated by Communists. This reorganization evidenced a commitment among some black Americans to the notion that authentic black interests were best served by organizations devoted exclusively to black politics. The new organization, Ethiopian World

Federation, was all black and devoted to the needs of an Afrodiasporic polity. The organization published the *Voice of Ethiopia,* a Harlem newspaper for the "Vast Universal Black Commonwealth" in 1937. Eventually the paper was also distributed in other black urban areas, and it enlisted locals to serve as correspondents. The paper agitated against colonialism in Ethiopia, but it also devoted quite a few of its pages to contesting the legacy and "racial attachment" of Marcus Garvey. Garvey had changed his stance on the Italian invasion. When Italy prepared to invade Ethiopia, Garvey had praised Haile Selassie and ranted against the "smell" of "the brute" Mussolini.[71] In 1937, however, Garvey castigated Selassie in the *Negro World:*

> He kept his country unprepared for modern civilization, whose policies are strictly aggressive. He resorted sentimentally to prayer and to feasting and to fasting, not consistent with the policy that secures the existence of present day freedom for peoples while other nations and rulers are building up armaments of the most destructive kind as the only means of securing peace.[72]

Garvey's criticism of Selassie was interpreted by many as evidence of an absence of an "authentic" commitment to the future of the race.[73] Garvey's statement and the response it generated demonstrates that moments of Western imperialism like the Italian invasion of Ethiopia were an opportunity to debate the parameters of blackness, the political interests of black people, and role of the "authentic" in each. Equally important, the popular and complex nature of this anticolonial rhetoric provided a space for negotiating black authenticity in which black Americans, West Indians, and Africans of diverse economic backgrounds figured and had voice.

This study of black American anticolonial nationalism contributes to the scholarly narrative of the rhetoric of Black Nationalism. Dexter Gordon's recent book *Black Identity: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Nineteenth-Century Black Nationalism* argues that Black Nationalism is a distinct rhetoric composed in black Americans' dynamic efforts to suture the ideological wounds created by American slavery. Gordon argues that black Americans in the United States suffer rhetorical alienation and that black rhetors in the nineteenth century reconstituted black subjectivity by configuring black public memory. Black anticolonial rhetoric in the Great Depression participated in this tradition. Rhetoric like that of J. A. Rogers sought to create a transnational black consciousness to heal the cultural schisms created by diaspora and to motivate the political agency needed to intervene in the mechanisms that perpetuated colonial power.[74]

However, in some ways, black American anticolonialism in the Great Depression struggled with many of the issues that plagued Black Nationalism

in general. Assertions of Afrodiasporic solidarity were coopted by racial regressives like Senator Theodore Bilbo, who in 1939 proposed a repatriation scheme designed to eliminate black America from United States democracy.[75] Moreover, when the Cold War began Afrodiasporic nationalism became increasingly problematic, demonstrating as it did a critique of Americanism and a commitment to proletarian agency. Rhetorically and politically, black American anticolonialism was actively combated by the United States government, which saddled black Americans with the inaccurate and negative associations of being pro-Soviet and anti-American.[76]

Conclusions

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia inspired the expression of an Afrodiasporic community empowered to respond to colonial racism in Africa and in the United States. J. A. Rogers's *The Real Facts About Ethiopia* critiqued colonialism as the imposition of discrete cultural spaces on complex, fluid experience. It suggested that racial categories and political boundaries were capricious and perpetuated class-based oppression. In contrast, race in its universal sense was truer, more complex, hybrid, and grounded in experience. The sense of Ethiopian solidarity that emerged in response to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia expressed consubstantiality with the African Diaspora that did not require the negation of ontological difference. Through this politicized temporal frame, black Americans could perceive a shared political condition and motivation, indeed a shared sense of political identity, without dislodging Ethiopia or black America's cultural and existential particularity.

J. A. Rogers's *The Real Facts About Ethiopia* demonstrates the maturation of the rhetorical processes through which the African Diaspora became a political concept in the 1930s. European, fascist aggression against an independent African and Christian nation dramatized the political and economic tensions being experienced by African Americans domestically. When Ethiopian sovereignty was endangered, "Afro-Americans put up a most inspired and concerted agitation for African freedom and independence, and raised African consciousness to a point where it became a force in the world."[77] This new consciousness appeared in public protest and argument in diverse regions of the country, presented by individuals and organizations of various backgrounds. Indeed, it also allowed for increased political coordination within the diverse cultures of the African Diaspora. As black Americans protested Italian imperialism, they protested domestic racism with the same voice.

NOTES

1. Since the late eighteenth century, Ethiopia has figured prominently in black American rhetoric. Black Americans invoked Ethiopia in sermons and speeches that prophesized or argued for the end of slavery. In the nineteenth century, black Americans in the Northeast incorporated "Ethiopia" into their personal and political identifications, and "Ethiopian" became a universal term for anyone of African descent. This quotidian use of "Ethiopia" provided a form of political solidarity that imagined a cohesive black identity. Scholars name this tradition "Ethiopianism." St. Clair Drake identifies four central tenets of Ethiopianism: First, Ethiopianism assumes a common ancestry that links African Americans and the African Diaspora. Second, it suggests a cyclical view of history in which cultures suffer periods of decline and enjoy an eventual redemption. Third, it posits that Africa owns a glorious past. And lastly, Ethiopianism predicts a future in which Africa is redeemed to European, Christian civilization and power. In this final, prophetic dimension, Ethiopianism forecasts the coming of an African race redeemed from both exploitation and paganism. The rhetoric of Marcus Garvey represents the clearest and most influential expression of Ethiopianism in the twentieth century. See St. Clair Drake, *The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion* (Chicago: Third World, 1970).

2. Though a minority voice, several black Americans solicited volunteers to go to Ethiopia and fight on its behalf. From 1935 to early 1936, Sufi Abdul Hamid (the "Black Hitler of Harlem" who would later appear, fictionalized, in Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*) and Samuel Daniels of the Pan-African Reconstruction Association organized volunteers to fight in Ethiopia until the U.S. State department declared that fighting for a foreign government would jeopardize one's U.S. citizenship (despite future mayor Fiorello La Guardia's tenure in the Italian army 15 years earlier). See Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); William R. Scott, *The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935–1941* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

3. Roi Ottley, "*New World a-Coming": Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 104.

4. John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 385.

5. See Firku Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia: A Comparative Assessment of Caribbean and African-American Anti-Fascist Protests, 1935–1941," *Northeast African Studies* 2, no. 1 (1995): 145–73; Joseph E. Harris, *African-American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936–1941* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994); Dennis C. Hickey, "Positive Perspectives on Independent Africa: Ethiopia, Liberia, and the American Popular Press, 1920–1935," *Africana Journal* 17 (1998): 257–70; Bernard Magubane, *The Ties That Bind: African-American Consciousness of Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1987); Scott, *The Sons of Sheba's Race;* William A. Shack, "Ethiopia and Afro-Americans: Some Historical Notes, 1920–1970," *Phylon* 35 (1974): 142–55; Robert G. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans, and the Afro-American* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973).

6. Although regrettably little scholarship studies Joel A. Rogers specifically, he was an extremely influential voice in black America during the 1930s. His reporting from and about Africa struck a chord in black America. Indeed, Robert A. Hill argues that Rogers's reports from Africa and his regular column of African diasporic history, serialized in the *Pittsburgh Courier,* can be credited for that newspaper's increased circulation in the 1930s.

See Robert A. Hill and R. Kent Rasmussen, "Afterward," *Black Empire* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 259–325.

7. See I. K. Sundiata, *Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980).

8. Donald N. Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

9. Henderson Braddick, "A New Look at American Policy During the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1935–36," *The Journal of Modern History* 34 (1962): 64–73.

10. Antonio Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935–1941* (Trenton, NJ and Eritrea: Red Sea Press, Inc., 1997).

11. Cedric J. Robinson, "Fascism and the Intersections of Capitalism, Racialism, and Historical Consciousness," *Humanities in Society* 6 (1983): 325–49.

12. Cited in Harris, *African-American Reactions,* 39.

13. Cited in Rodney Anson Ross, "Black Americans and Haiti, Liberia, the Virgin Islands, and Ethiopia, 1929–1936," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1975), 329.

14. William Watts Chaplin, *Blood and Ink: An Italo-Ethiopian War Diary* (New York: Telegraph Press, 1936); Mortimer Durand, *Crazy Campaign: A Personal Narrative of the Italo-Abyssinian War* (London: G. Routledge, 1936).

15. Gordon MacCreagh, *The Last of Free Africa* (New York: The Century Co., 1928), 315.

16. Cited in Harris, *African-American Reactions,* 2.

17. Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship.*

18. Carleton S. Coon, *Measuring Ethiopia and Flight into Arabia* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1935), 148.

19. Scott, *Sons of Sheba's Race,* 192.

20. See Carlton S. Coon, "A Realist Looks at Ethiopia," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1935, 310-15; Robert Gale Woolbert, "The Peoples of Ethiopia," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1936, 340-44.

21. Carter G. Woodson and Arthur Schomburg, for example, created black history that was intended to combat prominent theories of black America's lack of history and to provide a framework for the development of a black American nationality. The Negro History Movement confronted a racial edifice in which black America's absence from the historical record ostensibly evidenced an absence of agency in the present. Woodson, Schomburg, and others explored the potential of scholarly discourse to facilitate social change. J. A. Rogers's work evolved in concert with developments in the academic study of black history and life. Academic historians affiliated with the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History explored the progressive efficacy of motivated historical scholarship and appreciations of Africa free from the assumptions of white supremacy. See Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Morrow, 1967); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Afrotopia: The Roots of African-American Popular History* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

22. George Wells Parker, *Children of the Sun* (1918; rpt., Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1981); Hubert Harrison, *When Africa Awakes* (1919; rpt., Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1996).

23. Myrtle Pollard, "Harlem as Is . . ." (PhD diss., College of the City of New York, 1937), 33.

24. Roi Ottley argues that Rogers's pamphlets were the "Bible" of street speakers. See Ottley, *New World a-Coming,* 104.

25. Joel Augustus Rogers, *The Real Facts About Ethiopia* (1936; rpt., Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1982), 3, 5.

26. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 5.

27. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 5.

28. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 29.

29. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 7.

30. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 7.

31. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View," in *Writings by W. E. B. Du Bois in Periodicals Edited by Others, Volume 3, 1935–1944* (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Limited, 1982).

32. Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications," 15.

33. Kirt H. Wilson, "Towards a Discursive Theory of Racial Identity: *The Souls of Black Folk* as a Response to Nineteenth Century Biological Determinism," *Western Journal of Communication* 63 (1999): 193–215.

34. Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications," 16.

35. Early in his public career, Du Bois understood the social categories of race as being a function of relationships created and lived by human beings. However, as his thought matured, he became increasingly concerned with economic conditions, the distribution of resources, and how political economy influenced the relationships that create categories of people. Du Bois articulates this shift most clearly in his analysis of the causes of a 1917 race riot in St. Louis. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of Work and Wealth," in *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Dover, 1999), 47–59.

36. Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications," 18.

37. Matthew Pratt Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

38. Lothrop Theodore Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1920); Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History* (1920; rpt., Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2006).

39. Cited in William R. Scott, "Black Nationalism and the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict of 1934-36," *Journal of Negro History* 63 (1978): 121.

40. Cited in Scott, "Black Nationalism," 123.

41. Mark Lawrence McPhail, "From Complicity to Coherence: Rereading the Rhetoric of Afrocentricity," *Western Journal of Communication* 62 (1998): 115.

42. See David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993).

43. Victoria Gallagher makes a similar argument about Stokely Carmichael's "Black Power" speech. Gallagher argues that Carmichael's speech views American racial politics through the lens of black America's experience and thus inverts the racist logic operating in the rhetoric of white supremacy and that of well-intentioned white liberals. See Victoria J. Gallagher, "Black Power in Berkeley: Postmodern Constructions in the Rhetoric of Stokely Carmichael," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 144–58.

44. Kirt H. Wilson, "Is There Interest in Reconciliation?" *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 370.

45. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 8.

46. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 19.

47. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 21.

48. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 22.

49. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 22.

50. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 8.

51. As Mary Louise Pratt documents in her study of nineteenth-century travel literature about Africa, European authors have represented Africa through a variety of "othering" strategies. Pratt's analysis of John Borrow's 1801 *Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the years 1797 and 1798* illustrates a tendency in this rhetoric to exoticize an African "other" by reducing human action in Africa to a mere reflection of the foreign environment. Pratt argues the drama of Borrow's work "is produced not by the adventures of the travelers but by the changing 'face of the country.' Signs of human presence, when they occur, are also expressed as marks upon this face; the human agents responsible for those signs are themselves rarely seen." Mary Louise Pratt, "Scratches on the Face of the Country; or, what Mr. Barrow Saw in the Lands of the Bushmen," in *"Race," Writing, and Difference,* ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 138–62.

52. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 14.

53. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 24.

54. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 28–29.

55. In the first 30 years of the nineteenth century, archaeological study in Egypt brought into question popular assumptions about Africa and Enlightenment theories about the nature of historical progress. The first traveling exhibit of unearthed Egyptian artifacts toured the United States in 1826, and it provided evidence of an African past in sharp contrast to popular beliefs about its present. Commentators on the exhibit argued that the sophistication of the artifacts demonstrated how the African continent had devolved from a former glory. Moreover, this glorious African past implied that cultures did not develop in a linear fashion, always progressing to greater civilization. Rather, this information about Africa's past gave rise to a counter-narrative for world historical progress in which global power ebbed and flowed, and nations experienced periods of growth and decline. The connection between the exhibit of Egyptian artifacts and a new understanding of history is made explicitly in the inaugural issue of the first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal.* This new sense of history and of Africa affected how African Americans imagined black America and was filtered through the discourse of Christian Fundamentalism. David Walker and Maria Stewart, for example, interpreted these developments as evidence of black America's religious and political redemption. They indexed evidence of Africa's former glory to the prophecy of Psalm 68, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God," and understood black America's ancient African heritage as a constitutive element of an empowered vision of black identity. Ethiopia, the first Christian nation, was the omphallos of this perspective, the center of black community and spirituality. Anonymous, "The Mutability of Human Affairs," *Freedom's Journal,* April 6, 1827.

56. Moses, *Afrotopia.*

57. Rogers, *The Real Facts,* 2.

58. Walter White, editorial, *New York Amsterdam News,* October 5, 1935, 15.

59. As Bonnie Barthold argues, belief in cyclical time creates tremendous responsibility for a community to maintain this temporal cycle, but it also implies the agency with which to do so. In a premodern sense of cyclical time, communities must act in accordance with the

requirements of the cycle. For example, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* Okonkwo's violation of the Week of Peace jeopardizes the community's purchase on the present and disrupts the faith that the cycle will maintain. Thus, as Basil Davidson argues in *The African Genius,* a cyclical sense of time "taught the supremacy of man in controlling or influencing his own present or future. Far from imposing a grim subjection to the 'blind forces' of nature, it held to a shrewd realism. . . . it is mankind that matters—meaning, in this context, that any man can always be responsible for himself." See Bonnie Barthold, *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Basil Davidson, *The African Genius* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 146–47.

60. A number of rhetorical scholars have explored how public discourse creates and contests public memory. See M. Lane Bruner, *Strategies of Remembrance: Rhetorical Dimensions of National Identity Construction* (Colombia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002); Roseann M. Mandziuk, "Commemorating Sojourner Truth: Negotiating the Politics of Race and Gender in the Spaces of Public Memory," *Western Journal of Communication* 67 (2003): 271–91; Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, "Collective Memory, Political Nostalgia, and the Rhetorical Presidency: Bill Clinton's Commemoration of the March on Washington, August 28, 1998," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86 (2000): 417–37; Kendall R. Phillips, "Introduction," in *Framing Public Memory,* ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 1–14; Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (1995): 214–39.

61. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux De Mémoire*," in *History and Memory in African American Culture,* ed. Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 286. Nora's work has not been widely cited in rhetorical studies. Notable exceptions include Marouf Hasian Jr., "Authenticity, Public Memories, and the Problematics of Post-Holocaust Remembrances: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Wilkomirski Affair," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005) 231–63; Elizabethda A. Wright, "Rhetorical Spaces in Memorial Places: The Cemetery as Rhetorical Memory Place/Space," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35 (2005): 51–81.

62. Nora, "Between Memory and History," 286.

63. Geneviève Fabre, "African-American Commemorative Celebrations in the Nineteenth Century," in *History and Memory in African-American Culture,* ed. Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 73.

64. See Fabre and O'Meally, eds., *History and Memory in African-American Culture.*

65. Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, "Images of Hayti: The Construction of an Afro-American *Lieu De Mémoire*," *Callaloo* 15 (1992): 827–41.

66. "Julian: Black Eagle Preens Self for Flight to Aden, Abyssinia," *Newsweek,* September 30, 1933: 32, 34; Morris Markey, "The Black Eagle I," *New Yorker,* July 11, 1931, 22–25; Henry Lee Moon, *The Black Eagle Flops,* Editorial digest and manuscript file 35, 1936, Arthur A. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City Public Library; P. L. Prattis, "Ethiopia's Brown Condor," *Amsterdam News*, October 26, 1935, magazine sec, 1-2, 5; Janet Waterford, "The Real Story of Colonel John Robinson. Or How a Gulfport Mississippi Boy Grew to Be the No. 1 Flyer of His Race," *Chicago Defender*, April 4, 1936, 1–2.

67. Daniel Aldridge, "A War for the Colored Races: Anti-Interventionism and the African American Intelligentsia, 1939–1941," *Diplomatic History* 28 (2004): 328.

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