W.E.B. Du Bois: From Pioneering Pan-Negroism to revolutionary Pan-Africanism

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Introduction: W.E.B. Du Bois and Pan-Africanism

The African holocaust and African American enslavement; Pan-Africanism and the Peace Movement; Marxism and male-feminism; the African American struggle for human and civil rights; intellectual adoration of, and admiration for Frederick Douglass and Alexander Crummell; disputes with Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey—an enigmatic and eclectic combination of critical ideas and interests unfolds across the landscape of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois’s life and work. For many he represents one of the most critical and contradictory race theorists of the twentieth century. Another group of scholars argues that he is the “father of Pan-Africanism” and played a pivotal role in the decolonization of Africa. For other scholars, such as Cedric Robinson in Black Marxism, Du Bois was one of the most innovative Marxist theorists in American radical political history, although “his work had origins independent of the impulses of Western liberal and radical thought.” Still other scholars, such as Joy James, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, and Nellie McKay contend that Du Bois’s name, along with those of Charles Lenox Remond and Frederick Douglass, belongs on that very short list of men who openly spoke out against women’s domination and advocated for women’s liberation. Du Bois’s work, due no doubt to its highly porous nature, has been critically analyzed and appropriated by scores of academics and political activists who harbor harrowingly different intellectual and ideological agendas.

Although his thought took several crucial intellectual and political twists and turns in his eighty-year publishing career (circa 1883–1963), it is Du Bois’s concepts of race and anti-racism, Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism, critiques of capitalism and critical Marxism and, most recently, his anti-sexism and male-feminism that have come under the greatest scholarly scrutiny and can be said to have ushered in the contemporary Du Bois renaissance. To be sure, Du Bois’s thought has traveled an almost unfathomable tract of intellectual terrain, receiving commentary and criticism from historians, philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, economists, literary theorists, feminists, womanists, and Marxists, to name only a few intellectual and political communities. However, here the focus will be on the origins and evolution of Du Bois’s distinct Pan-Africanism: from his early black bourgeois, Talented
Tenth-led conservative “Pan-Negroism” to his late life black Marxist, democratic socialist “revolutionary Pan-Africanism.” 4

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (pronounced “Due-Boyss”) was born five years after the Emancipation Proclamation on 23 February 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a tiny mill town in the Berkshire Mountains. The few African Americans in the area worked as domestics in homes or servants at summer resorts, while the Irish, German, and Czech Catholics worked in the town’s factories. 5 Du Bois was raised solely by his mother, Mary Silvina Burghardt Du Bois, who he described as “a dark shining bronze, with smooth skin and lovely eyes.” 6 His debonair but delinquent absentee father, Alfred Du Bois, a “Franco-Haitian” “light mulatto” war veteran of “indeterminate color,” went absent before his toddling son turned two years old. 7 Mary Silvina was a domestic and washerwoman, and supported her precocious son through other odd jobs and outright charity from the well-to-do white town residents. Du Bois’s father’s absence greatly affected him, although perhaps not as much as his mother’s paralytic stroke, which his biographer David Levering Lewis reported, “impaired her left leg or arm, or both.” 8

Du Bois’s early life, Lewis lamented, was “a milieu circumscribed by immiseration, dementia, and deformity.” 9 As with so many black children born within the shameful shadow of American slavery, Du Bois grew up very poor and, consequently, developed a consciousness of his lower-class status before he was aware of his race and American racism, even though he was the only black child in his all-white school. It was not long, however, before race and racism unforgivingly crept into his life, and from his first unforgettable and life-altering experience of anti-black racism he defiantly decided to “prove to the world that Negroes were just like other people.” 10

After his mother’s death on 23 March 1885 when he was only sixteen years old, a forlorn Du Bois was determined to make something of himself, solemnly keeping a promise he made to his beloved mother. 11 Hence, after high school an orphaned Du Bois sought every scholarship he could find to fund his studies at Fisk University, Harvard University, and the University of Berlin (where he came into contact with Max Weber) before returning to Harvard to become the first African American to be conferred a Ph.D. from that eminent institution in 1895. Tellingly, his doctoral dissertation, entitled The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870, was the first social scientific engagement of African American enslavement, according to Lewis. 12 Duly recognizing Du Bois’s monumental achievement, Harvard quickly published the dissertation as the first volume of its Harvard Historical Studies series in 1896. Africa and anti-colonialism, obviously, factored into Du Bois’s discourse early in his intellectual and political life, and it is here during the most formative phase of his life and career that we find the real roots of his Pan-Africanism. 13

Du Bois began his teaching career as a professor of classics, teaching Latin, Greek, German, and English, from 1894–1896 at Wilberforce University, an African Methodist Episcopal institution in Ohio. He unsuccessfully attempted to add sociology to the curriculum at Wilberforce in 1894, and left the school in frustration for the University of Pennsylvania in 1896, where he was hired as an “Assistant Instructor” to research and write a study on the African Americans of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Negro. 14 At the University of Pennsylvania, however, Du Bois was still not free from frustration, writing in his autobiography, “I ignored my pitiful stipend” and “it goes without saying that I did no instructing, save once to pilot a pack of idiots through the Negro slums.” 15
In 1897, a year after Harvard published *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, Du Bois presented an important scholarly paper to the American Negro Academy entitled, “The Conservation of Races,” in which he continued his quest to connect the struggles of the “Negroes of Africa and America.” In its “Constitution and By-Laws” the ANA defined itself as “an organization of Authors, Scholars, Artists, and those distinguished in other walks of life, men of African descent, for the promotion of Letters, Science, and Art.” Describing the purpose of the Academy, its “Constitution” stated that the ANA was established: “(a) To promote the publication of scholarly works; (b) To aid youths of genius in the attainment of the higher culture, at home or abroad; (c) To gather into its Archives valuable data, and the works of Negro Authors; (d) To aid, by publication, the dissemination of the truth and the vindication of the Negro race from vicious assaults;” and, lastly, “(e) To publish, if possible, an ‘Annual’ designed to raise the standard of intellectual endeavor among American Negroes.”

At the American Negro Academy’s inaugural meeting on 5 March 1897 Du Bois delivered his “The Conservation of Races” lecture to simultaneously deconstruct and reconstruct “race.” In 1897, when he delivered this address, race was something for which science had no “final word,” and no “definite conclusion[s].” Race science was actually racist science, a bunch of purportedly biologically-determined, “scientific” categories created by white supremacist “scientists” with an eye aimed at maintaining and magnifying white world supremacy or, rather European global imperialism. Du Bois’s deconstruction of race, therefore, was geared toward debunking nineteenth century pseudo-scientific notions of race based on “physical characteristics” and white supremacist anti-black racist conceptions of “Negroes” as the ultimate racial Other.

Du Bois did not have any deep love of race as a concept. In fact, Tommy Lott observed, in “The Conservation of Races,” Du Bois “seems to have meant to undermine the whole business of constructing racial categories.” What excited Du Bois about, and attracted him to, the concept of race was the radical political possibilities it offered for black survival and future flourishing. In “The Conservation of Races” he argued that just as other races had utilized race as an “instrument of progress,” likewise continental and diasporan Africans would have to use race to forge what was surely an innovative idea in 1897, “Pan-Negroism.” Du Bois declared, the advance guard of the Negro people—the 8,000,000 people of Negro blood in the United States of America—must soon come to realize that if they are to take their just place in the van of Pan-Negroism, then their destiny is not absorption by the white Americans.

However, Du Bois was well aware that because continental and diasporan Africans’ only exposure to race was the wicked ways in which European colonists used it, as an instrument of oppression and intense exploitation, blacks developed a tendency to “deprecate and minimize race distinctions.” The young Du Bois (he was 29 years old in 1897), perhaps paradoxically, believed that race could be put to anti-racist purposes, and especially in anti-African/anti-black, racially segregated, multi-racial and multicultural societies. He counseled the American Negro Academy to consider the historic abuses and reconsider the possible progressive uses of race, sternly stating:
We are apt to think in our American impatience, that while it may have been true in the past that closed race groups made history, that here in conglomerate America nous avons changer tout cela—we have changed all that, and have no need of this ancient instrument of progress. This assumption of which the Negro people are especially fond, cannot be established by a careful consideration of history.\textsuperscript{24}

According to Du Bois, a reconstructed concept of race could be used by continental and diasporan Africans as an “instrument of progress” and a weapon against racial oppression. Race, like so many European inventions and European-derived devices, can be adopted for, and adapted in the emancipatory interests of Africans, at home and abroad. The hitch was that the young Du Bois naïvely believed that diasporan Africans were better suited to lead Africa to liberation and independence than continental Africans. As explained by Patricia Romero, Du Bois was indeed a pivotal figure in the shift from “Pan-Racialism to Pan-Africanism” because “his life spanned the period of the rise from slavery and quest for identity of his fellow black Americans, to the creation of an institution expressing an idea fundamental to his entire life—Pan-Africanism.”\textsuperscript{25} However, his early Pan-Africanism “was unaware of the different types of administrations that had been imposed on the various colonials” and, when we further critically engage his inchoate Pan-Africanism, “he failed to understand the variety of attitudes present [among] the Africans themselves.” For example, Romero reported, “in attempting to resolve the dilemma of the former German colonies by giving a mandate to the educated elite of Afro-America, he was only shifting from one type of outside interference to another.”\textsuperscript{26}

Moreover, Alexandre Mboukou observed that “[b]etween 1896 and 1907 W.E.B. DuBois sent letters to the Firestone Company and the German and Belgian Consuls in the United States offering the services of talented New World Blacks, mainly U.S. Blacks, to aid in their efforts to develop Black Africa.”\textsuperscript{27} Furthermore, Mboukou continued, Du Bois “particularly felt that the call for self-government was unwarranted during 1900 to 1949 because the black Africans were not yet fully modernized, and thus not capable of manning modern, complex institutions.”\textsuperscript{28} However, Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, James Coleman, Earl Smith and, more recently, Hakim Adi collectively complicated Mboukou’s claims by emphasizing that even though Du Bois did not initially advocate for unmitigated self-government for continental Africans during the early years of his evolving Pan-Africanism, during Du Bois’s more mature, late life black Marxist revolutionary Pan-Africanist period he was a nonpareil campaigner for continental African decolonization, self-determination, and reparation.\textsuperscript{29}

According to Tunde Adeleke in \textit{UnAfrican Americans: Nineteenth Century Black Nationalists and the Civilizing Mission}, Du Bois was instrumental in the disruption and evolution of diasporan African views of Africa and Africans as a “primitive” place filled with “primitive” people. Unlike nineteenth century black nationalists such as Martin Delaney, Alexander Crummell, and Henry McNeal Turner, who embraced elements of the European “civilizing mission” and “contributed to laying the foundation for the colonization of Africa,” Du Bois ultimately became the leader of a “new generation...with a deeper appreciation of the essence and value of Africa.” And it was this Du Bois-led “new generation” who “evolved a truly counter-European nationalist ideology.”\textsuperscript{30} In Adeleke’s summation,
Nyasaland (Malawi), Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, and J. Casely-Hayford and Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast (Ghana) all turned “to the historical tradition of black liberation and became black radicals.” These black diasporans embraced Africa and Africans in a relationship that was truly designed for the defense and advancement of mutual interests. Black nationalism and Pan-Africanism assumed an ideologically combative posture, with a truly anti-imperial program that distinctly avoided the contradictory and self-abnegating character of earlier traditions. By 1920, black Americans had the benefit of an informed practical knowledge and understanding of European imperialism. Their perspective, not surprisingly, became very critical of imperialism in east, central, and southern Africa. They developed a very cynical and negative perception of the “civilizing mission.” In essence, they were able to see through the cloak that had blinded the visions of Delaney, Crummell, and Turner.31

The main point that should be emphasized here is that although Du Bois’s early articulation of “Pan-Negroism” included elements of the “civilizing mission” discourse promulgated by nineteenth century black nationalists such as Delaney, Crummell and Turner, among others, Du Bois’s “Pan-Negroism” eventually evolved into a more mature Pan-Africanism that strongly stressed the right to self-determination for all African people, continental and diasporan. Moreover, Du Bois’s early emphasis on race and racism, and his slightly later emphasis on anti-colonialism and decolonization, was pivotal in moving Pan-Africanist theory and praxis from the moderatism of nineteenth century “Pan-Negroism” to the militantism of twentieth century Pan-Africanism. As Adeleke further observed, “W.E.B. Du Bois influenced the agenda and set the tone for this aggressively anti-colonial and anti-imperial black nationalist and Pan-Africanist movement. In both utterances and policy formulation, black diasporans demonstrated an awareness of the centrality and pertinence of race in the shaping of the relationship between Europeans and the rest of humankind. They concurred with Du Bois’s identification of the ‘color-line’ as the critical problem of the twentieth century.”32 In other words, as Du Bois evolved his “Pan-Negroism” into Pan-Africanism he “influenced the agenda and set the tone” for continental and diasporan black radicalism and black internationalism throughout the twentieth century and, truth be told, his influence continues to the present.


According to Peter Olisanwuche Esedebe in Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776–1991, the Chicago Congress on Africa held in August of 1893 “may be taken as the beginning of Pan-Africanism as a movement.”33 Among the attendees at the congress were Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Henry McNeal Turner, Hallie Quinn Brown, and T. Thomas Fortune. Several prominent black leaders, Edward Wilmot Blyden and Booker T. Washington among them, sent papers to be read by proxy. In total, over one hundred papers were delivered at the Chicago Congress, and most of what we know about it comes from Frederick Perry Noble’s 1894 report entitled The Chicago Congress on Africa: A Statement of the Significant Facts and Salient Features of the Congress.34 Hakim Adi noted that “African Americans were well-represented, continental Africans less so, and the overall orientation of the Congress retained the Eurocentric notion of the African as subject, rather than agent, and the need to bring ‘civilization’ and commerce to Africa from outside.”35
In 1895, two years after the Chicago Congress on Africa, another congress was organized by the Stewart Missionary Foundation for Africa and convened in Atlanta. The Atlanta Congress on Africa featured presentations by Etna Holderness, by some accounts the first continental African woman to speak at a Pan-African symposium, Crummell, Turner and Fortune. Blyden was, again, unable to attend but had his remarks delivered by proxy. According to Adi, taken together “most of the contributions were concerned with missionary activity and ‘saving’ and ‘civilizing’ Africa.” Consequently, it was in the aftermath of the Chicago and Atlanta congresses on Africa that Du Bois initially envisioned “Pan-Negroism” in March of 1897 and the Trinidadian lawyer, Henry Sylvester Williams, established the African Association with other anti-colonial comrades in London in October of 1897. Esedebe noted that “[t]he founders of the African Association were convinced that the time had come when the voice of blacks should be heard in their own affairs and that this could be best achieved by a pressure group.”

The African Association, however, was “not necessarily opposed to colonial rule, nor the ‘civilizing’ mission” and, in a sense, continued the kind of moderate “Pan-Negroism” that colored and characterized most of what has been identified as inchoate, nineteenth century Pan-Africanism.

By all accounts, it was Henry Sylvester Williams who spearheaded and was the leading light of what Esedebe, overlooking the Atlanta Congress on Africa in 1895, called the “second Pan-African congregation,” which took place in London on July 23–25, 1900. Featuring presentations on slavery, colonialism, racism, and other forms of oppression Africans endured, conference participants were preoccupied with finding solutions to Africa and Africans’ most pressing problems. As a result, there was considerable discussion concerning reparations for Africa and Africans, both continental and diasporan. The inclusion of these kinds of passionate and practical discussions clearly distinguished the London conference from the previous Chicago and Atlanta congresses. Absent from the previous Chicago and Atlanta congresses and seeking to evolve his “Pan-Negroism” idea and turn it into a movement, it was at the Pan-African Conference of 1900 that a 32 year-old Du Bois brought the conference to a climactic conclusion when he delivered “To the Nations of the World,” which read in part:

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, the question as to how far differences of race are going to be made, hereafter, the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization. To be sure, the darker races are today the least advanced in culture according to European standards. This has not, however, always been the case in the past, and certainly the world’s history, both ancient and modern, has given many instances of no despicable ability and capacity among the blackest races of men. In any case, the modern world must remember that in this age the millions of black men in Africa, America, and the Islands of the Sea, not to speak of the brown and yellow myriads elsewhere, are bound to have a great influence upon the world in the future, by reason of sheer numbers and physical contact…if, by reason of carelessness, prejudice, greed and injustice, the black world is to be exploited and ravished and degraded, the results must be deplorable, if not fatal, not simply to them, but to the high ideals of justice, freedom and culture which a thousand years of Christian civilization have held before Europe.

Obviously, “To the Nations of the World” served as a sort of preamble to Du Bois’s most well-known work, The Souls of Black Folk. Indeed, it was in “To the Nations of the World.”
World” that Du Bois first fused his distinct eloquence with prescience, prophetically and famously intoning: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.” However, in 1900 Du Bois’s thinking along Pan-Africanist lines was still caught within the confines of the modernism that characterized much of what passed for Pan-Africanism at the turn of the twentieth century. Note his tongue-in-cheek critique of “European standards” when he asserted that the “darker races are today the least advanced in culture according to European standards,” and that the “darker races” were undoubtedly and intentionally underdeveloped because of Europe’s racial colonialism, its “carelessness, prejudice, greed and injustice,” as Du Bois plainly put it.

We witness here that even in his inchoate Pan-Africanist period Du Bois rejected the longstanding tendency to judge Africans and other “darker races,” the “brown and yellow myriads elsewhere,” by “European standards”—the very standards he had been inculcated with at Fisk University, Harvard University, and the University of Berlin (circa 1885–1895). In a sense, Du Bois’s early Pan-Africanism can be viewed as a rupture with and, ultimately, a rebellion against the Eurocentric and often outright anti-black racist curriculum he had been exposed to during his university years. Noting the intense intellectual isolation and cultural alienation he experienced “as a Negro” when he was a student at Harvard, in “A Negro Student at Harvard at the End of the Nineteenth Century,” Du Bois revealingly wrote, “I was in Harvard, but not of it.” He continued, “it must be remembered that I went to Harvard as a Negro, not simply by birth, but recognizing myself as a member of a segregated caste.” Nevertheless, he defiantly declared, “I was determined to work from within that caste to find my way out.” It seems as though Du Bois spent the remainder of his life attempting to “find [his] way out” of the anti-black racist colonial capitalist world he and his beloved black folk were caught within.

“To the Nations of the World” did not advocate for immediate African self-determination and decolonization, that would come later as Du Bois and his comrades continued to evolve their Pan-Africanism. In “To the Nations of the World,” however, he did audaciously assert that Europe should “give, as soon as practicable, the rights of responsible government to the black colonies of Africa and the West Indies.” Admittedly, it was not the kind of earthshaking radical decolonial demand that Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Patrice Lumumba, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Modibo Keïta, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, or Amilcar Cabral, among others, would make more than half a century later (circa 1957–1975). Nonetheless, “To the Nations of the World” should, at the very least, register as a demand and an assertion of continental and diasporan Africans eventual right to self-determination. In other words, in 1900 Du Bois put into play a moderate, gradualist Pan-Africanism that would continue to critically evolve over the next six decades of his storied life.

Du Bois, among many others, kept the Pan-African impulse alive over the next several decades. In fact, in The Ties That Bind: African American Consciousness of Africa, Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane went so far to say, “Du Bois was, until his death, the moving spirit and the guiding light of the Pan-African Movement, and an integrated history of the movement cannot be adequately written without touching upon his activities.” With regard to the key “activities” that influenced the evolution of Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism: Between 1900 and 1903 he continued to massage the manuscript that would ultimately become his most famous book, The Souls of Black Folk. In 1903, the same year he published The Souls of Black Folk, he also published one of his most famous and controversial essays, “The Talented Tenth,” where he flatly stated: “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with
the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.”\textsuperscript{47} In his haste to offset Booker T. Washington’s accommodationism, Du Bois in many senses over-emphasized African Americans’ need for a college-educated leadership cadre and, however unintentionally, set into motion African American intellectual elitism and its corollary black bourgeoisism.\textsuperscript{48}

In 1905 Du Bois helped to establish the Niagara Movement (circa 1905–1910), which was a kind of precursor to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).\textsuperscript{49} In \textit{W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat}, Manning Marable noted that “[a]t the 1906 Niagara Movement conference, a permanent standing committee on Pan-Africanism was initiated.”\textsuperscript{50} Founded in 1909, the NAACP provided Du Bois with an intellectual and political base to continue to evolve his Pan-Africanism, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, male-feminism, and black Marxism between 1910 and 1934 as editor of \textit{The Crisis}, the NAACP’s official magazine. Marable contended that the “central political theme of Du Bois’s editorials in the \textit{Crisis} from 1910 to 1934 was the relationship between racism and American democracy.” However, “[d]espite Du Bois’s intense involvement in domestic civil rights activities,” Marable continued, “he never relinquished his interest in Pan-Africanism.”\textsuperscript{51} In fact, Marable shared, “Du Bois’s Pan-African Congresses were an international ‘version’ of the Niagara Movement—small, reform-minded black elites who sought to extend the principles of democracy and self-determination to colonial Africa and the Caribbean.”\textsuperscript{52}

Prior to establishing and editing the \textit{Crisis}, Du Bois edited two short-lived magazines: the \textit{Moon} (circa 1905–1906) and the \textit{Horizon} (circa 1907–1910).\textsuperscript{53} “The \textit{Horizon} seldom failed to carry at least one note on African issues in its pages,” Marable reported.\textsuperscript{54} This practice was clearly carried over to the \textit{Crisis} and Du Bois’s other publications and political work, and it was during his middle and late life years that Du Bois took as one of his major tasks “to re-establish the cultural and political heritage of African people.”\textsuperscript{55} With this mandate in mind, in 1909 Du Bois proposed the \textit{Encyclopedia Africana}, which would “cover[…] the chief points in the history and condition of the Negro race.”\textsuperscript{56} In 1911 he participated in the Universal Races Congress in London, where he was elected the co-secretary of the American delegation and delivered three papers to an international audience of anti-racist social scientists and activists.\textsuperscript{57}

In 1915 Du Bois published \textit{The Negro}, which according to Lewis was the “first general history yet written in English on the subject”—the “subject” being combined continental and diasporan African history, which is also to say \textit{The Negro} was one of the first works of \textit{Africana} history.\textsuperscript{58} In fact, Lewis seemed to almost gleefully note, “\textit{The Negro} was a large building block in an Afrocentric historiography that has achieved credibility through the writings of scholars such as Basil Davidson, Martin Bernal, and Cheikh Anta Diop.” The “pages of \textit{The Negro} were littered with the fallacious concepts exploded by Du Bois”—a practice he would return to in future books such as \textit{Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil} in 1920, \textit{The Gift of Black Folk: The Negroes in the Making of America} in 1924, \textit{Africa, Its Geography, People and Products} in 1930, \textit{Africa—Its Place in Modern History} in 1930, \textit{Black Reconstruction} in America, 1860–1880 in 1935, \textit{Black Folk, Then and Now} in 1939, \textit{Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept} in 1940, \textit{Color and Democracy: Colonies and Peace} in 1945, and \textit{The World and Africa} in 1947.\textsuperscript{59} Indeed, \textit{The Negro} was pivotal among Du Bois’s major publications because it was the first to popularize his “prediction of Pan-African unity and the global solidarity of darker peoples.” This prophecy, Lewis correctly contended, “would have a deep impact upon non-white elites” and anti-colonial activists in Africa and
throughout the African diaspora. With regard to Du Bois’s “prediction of Pan-African unity and the global solidarity of darker peoples,” perhaps the most important passage from the concluding chapter of The Negro reads:

The Pan-African Movement when it comes will not, however, be merely a narrow racial propaganda. Already the more far-seeing Negroes sense the coming unities: a unity of the working-classes everywhere, a unity of the colored races, a new unity of men. The proposed economic solution of the Negro problem in Africa and America has turned the thoughts of Negroes toward a realization of the fact that the modern white laborer of Europe and America has the key to the serfdom of black folk, in his support of militarism and colonial expansion. He is beginning to say to these workingmen that, so long as black laborers are slaves, white laborers cannot be free. Already there are signs in South Africa and the United States of the beginning of understanding between the two classes.

Du Bois continued in an even more prophetic and rhapsodic tone:

In a conscious sense of unity among colored races there is today only a growing interest. There is slowly arising not only a curiously strong brotherhood of Negro blood throughout the world, but the common cause of the darker races against the intolerable assumptions and insults of Europeans has already found expression. Most men in this world are colored. A belief in humanity means a belief in colored men. The future world will, in all reasonable probability, be what colored men make it. In order for this colored world to come into its heritage, must the earth again be drenched in the blood of fighting, snarling human beasts, or will Reason and Good Will prevail? That such may be true, the character of the Negro race is the best and greatest hope; for in its normal condition it is at once the strongest and gentlest of the races of men: “Semper novi quid ex Africa!”

Marable bluntly stated that The Negro is arguably “Du Bois’s most underrated work.” In fact, from Marable’s point of view, The Negro’s “theoretical departure was Pan-Africanist.” He elaborated, in essence Du Bois demonstrated that “no study of African history and culture could ignore both the impact of the transatlantic slave trade, and the extensive links between the continent and the peoples of African descent in the Caribbean and the Americas.” With regard to African Americans in specific, Marable observed, “Du Bois was also one of the first American scholars to advance the argument that slavery did not destroy all aspects of traditional African culture.” Throughout The Negro hints of Du Bois’s emerging democratic socialist orientation began to appear. Note in the aforementioned passages Du Bois’s references to the “unity of the working-classes everywhere,” the “unity of the colored races,” and the “new unity of men,” as well as the “strong brotherhood of Negro blood throughout the world” and the “common cause of the darker races.” Du Bois was obviously articulating a fundamental dictum of democratic socialism, as well as what would be later dubbed “black Marxism” by Cedric Robinson, when he, Du Bois, wrote: “The proposed economic solution of the Negro problem in Africa and America has turned the thoughts of Negroes toward a realization of the fact that the modern white laborer of Europe and America has the key to the serfdom of black folk, in his support of militarism and colonial expansion. He is beginning to say to these workingmen that, so long as black laborers are slaves, white laborers cannot be free.” Du Bois’s ongoing synthesis of Pan-Africanism and anti-colonialism with
anti-racism and black Marxism reached a crescendo in 1919 when he convened the first Pan-African Congress in Paris.65

Culminating with the end of World War I, Du Bois “imagined the immediate creation of a far more effective Pan-African Movement.”66 Nineteen years after the Pan-African Conference of 1900, and a decade after he helped to establish the NAACP in 1909, Du Bois sought to use whatever resources at his disposal to popularize the Pan-African idea and movement in the twentieth century. More than occasional Pan-African conferences, Du Bois ambitiously envisioned a “congress” of Pan-African delegates who would have a series of formal meetings concerning the decolonization, re-Africanization and, ultimately, liberation of Africa and the African diaspora. Fifty-seven delegates from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States participated in the first Pan-African Congress and, just as he had done at the Pan-African Conference in London in 1900, it was primarily Du Bois who penned the congress’ resolution, which read in part: “The Negroes of the world in Pan-African Congress assembled in Paris, February 19, 20, 21, 1919, demand, in the interest of justice and humanity and for strengthening the forces of civilization, that immediate steps be taken to develop the 200,000,000 of Negroes and Negroids.”67 In specific, Du Bois and the other congress members advocated for reparations and self-determination for Africa and Africans, specifically with regard to government, land, labor, capital, culture, politics, social organization, religion, education, and medicine. Consequently, Du Bois and his colleagues roughly articulated the Pan-African agenda and decolonial demands for the remainder of the twentieth century.68

The second Pan-African Congress assembled in August and September of 1921 and was held simultaneously at three separate sites in London, Paris, and Brussels. Undoubtedly doubling the number of attendees of the previous congress in 1919, approximately 120 delegates came from all over the world to attend the meetings: roughly fifty from Africa; over twenty-five from various European nations; ten from the Caribbean; and the remainder from the United States and elsewhere. Adi observed that the second congress “had many of the features of the first” and, this point should be emphasized, “[i]t was almost entirely the creation of Du Bois.” Adi went further to emphasize that the second congress clearly built on the foundation laid by the first congress. In fact, if nothing else the first Pan-African Congress “re-established[ed] a formal Pan-African Movement, even if this was one assisted by Europeans, as had also been the case in 1900.”69

Presiding over the second Pan-African Congress Du Bois was obviously in his element, and staunchly believed that “[f]or the first time in history, conditions were propitious for the construction of a global movement to advance the common cultural and political objectives of people of color,” David Levering Lewis noted in W.E.B. Du Bois, 1919–1963: The Fight for Equality and the American Century. “Pan-Africanists had nothing to fear but fear of their own audacity…and racial parochialism,” Du Bois might have declared.70 Prophecy and audacity, gradualism and radicalism, anti-racism and anti-colonialism, by the second decade of the twentieth century Du Bois was boldly building on the foundational Pan-Africanism of Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Alexander Crummell, Edward Blyden and Henry Sylvester Williams, while also liberally borrowing from Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa Movement. Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association’s radicalizing influence on Du Bois can be detected in the fact that the manifesto of the Pan-African Congress of 1921 advocated outright for an independent and decolonized Africa. A prime passage from the manifesto reads:
The world must face two eventualities: either the complete assimilation of Africa with two or three of the great world states, with political, civil, and social power and privileges absolutely equal for its black and white citizens, or the rise of a great black African State, founded in Peace and Good Will, based on popular education, natural art and industry and freedom of trade, autonomous and sovereign in its internal policy, but from its beginning a part of a great society of peoples in which it takes its place with others as co-rulers of the world.\textsuperscript{71}

According to Adi, the manifesto of the 1921 congress was “rather ambivalent,” but “seemed to bear all the hallmarks of Du Bois’s thinking and contained both moderate and more radical aspirations and demands.”\textsuperscript{72} For instance, Du Bois’s advocacy for an independent and decolonized Africa clearly represented a radical shift from the moderatism of the Pan-African Conference of 1900 and the first Pan-African Congress of 1919. Indeed, it was this shift in Du Bois’s conception and articulation of Pan-Africanism that led some of the more moderate attendees of the 1921 congress to charge him with “promoting ‘radicalism’ and ‘separatism,’” among “other dangerous ideas.”\textsuperscript{73} Garveyism, in fact, influenced and pushed Du Bois in a more militant direction, and as he had done with elements of Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells, William Monroe Trotter, and Anna Julia Cooper’s thought, Du Bois incorporated aspects of Garveyism into his evolving Pan-Africanism.\textsuperscript{74} In other words, Du Bois had, once again, “adopted a significant aspect of the program of an intellectual rival and used it as the basis for the next step in his own intellectual and philosophical evolution.”\textsuperscript{75} No matter what Du Bois borrowed from others, and indeed he did adopt and adapt a great deal from others, Lewis went to great lengths to emphasize:

In Du Bois the Pan-African idea found an intellectual temperament and organizational audacity enabling it to advance beyond the evangelical and literary to become an embryonic movement whose cultural, political, and economic potential would assume, in the long term, worldwide significance. No other person of color then living, with the significant and calamitous exception of Marcus Garvey, was more capable of articulating the idea and mobilizing others in its service...Du Bois would brook no compromise of the principles of absolute racial equality and eventual rule of Africa by Africans (and not Africa ruled \textit{with} the consent of Africans, as the 1919 Congress demanded).\textsuperscript{76}

In the immediate aftermath of the Pan-African Congress of 1921 Du Bois and the Pan-African emissaries worked diligently to legitimate the Pan-African Congresses. They specifically wanted the various colonial powers and the newly-formed League of Nations to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Pan-African Congresses. To that end, Du Bois and his colleagues established what they envisioned to be a permanent Pan-African Association and petitioned the League of Nations directly on 7 September 1921. Their petition read in part:

The second Pan-African Congress desires most earnestly and emphatically to ask the good offices and careful attention of the League of Nations to the condition of civilized persons of Negro descent throughout the world. Consciously and subconsciously there is in the world today a widespread and growing feeling that it is permissible to treat civilized men as uncivilized if they are colored and more especially of Negro descent. The result of this attitude and many consequent laws, customs, and conventions, is that a bitter feeling of resentment, personal insult, and despair, is widespread in the world among those very persons whose rise is the hope of the Negro race.
We are fully aware that the League of Nations has little, if any, direct power to adjust these matters, but it has the vast moral power of public world opinion and of a body conceived to promote Peace and Justice among men. For this reason we ask and urge that the League of Nations take a firm stand on the absolute equality of races and that it suggest to the Colonial Powers connected with the League of Nations to form an International Institute for the Study of the Negro Problem, and for the evolution and protection of the Negro race.  

Building on the momentum of the Pan-African Congress of 1921, the Pan-African Congress of 1923 was convened concurrently in London and Lisbon. Years later in *The World and Africa* Du Bois admitted that the 1923 congress was hastily called “without proper notice or preparation” and, as a consequence, it was poorly attended. He also noted that even though the Pan-African Association “functioned for a couple of years,” ultimately it “was not successful.” The 1923 congress was primarily organized by Du Bois, Ida Gibbs Hunt, and Rayford Logan. Hunt played a particularly pivotal role in the 1923 congress, “personally donating funds to finance the congress.” In addition, Hunt and her colleagues in the National Association of Colored Women paid all of Du Bois’s travel expenses to London and Lisbon. The resolutions of the Pan-African Congress of 1923 were similar to those of the previous congresses, and strongly stressed that continental and diasporan Africans demanded: the “abolition of the slave trade;” a “voice in their own government;” “right of access to the land and its resources;” “trial by juries of their peers;” free education for all; “[w]orld disarmament and the abolition of war;” the “development of Africa for the benefit of Africans, and not merely for the profit of Europeans;” and, finally and reflecting Du Bois’s developing democratic socialism, the “organization of commerce and industry so as to make the main objects of capital and labor the welfare of the many rather than the enriching of the few.”  

Although Du Bois had planned a Pan-African Congress to be held in the Caribbean in 1925, “[w]ith the object of moving the center of this agitation nearer African centers of population,” he emphasized, ultimately the “colonial powers spiked this plan.” Consequently, the fourth Pan-African Congress was not convened until 1927 in New York City and was largely spearheaded by the National Association of Colored Women and the Women’s International Circle for Peace and Foreign Relations, and Annie Dingle and Addie Waits Hunton in particular leading the charge. Having grown weary of “colonial censors and subservient Francophones,” who he believed were “conservative and reactionary and afraid of American Negro radicalism,” Du Bois was not as involved in the planning and programming of the 1927 congress. Even still, the congress was a success and certainly better attended than the third Pan-African Congress. According to Lewis, by the time the final session closed at Abyssinian Baptist Church...the [1927] congress would have drawn some five thousand participants, among whom 280 were paid delegates representing twenty-two states and the District of Columbia, as well as Haiti, the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, and Barbados; the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Liberia; Germany; and India. The resolutions of the 1927 congress resembled those of the previous congresses, and offered further evidence of Du Bois’s developing democratic socialism by, once again, emphasizing the “reorganization of commerce and industry so as to make the main object of capital and labor the welfare of the many rather than the enriching of the few.”  

Reinvigorated, Du Bois immediately began planning the next Pan-African Congress for 1929 and, pulling no punches, he audaciously intended it to be on the African continent. He and the congress planning committee “selected Tunis because of its accessibility,” and
“elaborate preparations were begun” but, much like his plan to convene a Pan-African Congress in the Caribbean, colonial politics and economics curtailed the 1929 congress on the African continent. He regretfully wrote, “two insuperable difficulties intervened.” The first difficulty was that the French government “very politely but firmly informed us that the congress could take place at Marseilles or any French city, but not in Africa.” The second difficulty was that the Great Depression made it impossible for the consistently poorly funded congress to go forward. Alas, Du Bois bemoaned, at this point the “Pan-African idea was still American rather than African, but it was growing and it expressed a real demand for examination of the African situation and a plan of treatment, from the native African point of view.” Sadly, Du Bois concluded, the “Pan-African idea died apparently until twenty years afterward, in the midst of World War II, when it leaped to life again in an astonishing manner.”

**Revolutionary Pan-Africanism: Du Bois’s anti-racist, anti-colonialist, black Marxist and democratic socialist final phase of Pan-Africanism**

According to Walter Rucker, the Pan-African Congress of 1945 was the “most significant” because several of the participants, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Hastings Kamuzu Banda and Norman Manley, “would later lead their respective nations to independence.” The Trinidadian Communist George Padmore (born Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse), initiated the fifth congress, initially unbeknownst to Du Bois. At the outset Du Bois was rankled that Padmore had not included him from the start, but the two quickly settled whatever misgivings there may have been and collaboratively coordinated the congress to great success. Reflecting on Du Bois’s key role in coordinating and presiding over the fifth Pan-African Congress, which was held in Manchester, England, on October 15–21, 1945, in his classic *Pan-Africanism or Communism?: The Coming Struggle for Africa*, Padmore shared:

> These discussions were conducted under the direction of Dr. Du Bois, who at the age of seventy-three, had flown across the Atlantic from New York to preside over the coming of age of his political child. The “Grand Old Man,” politically ahead of many much younger in years, was given an enthusiastic welcome by the delegates. For he had done more than any other to inspire and influence by his writings and political philosophy all the young men who had foregathered from far distant corners of the earth. Even among older delegations, there were many who were meeting the “Father of Pan-Africanism” in the flesh for the first time. Dr. Du Bois was by no means a silent spectator at the fifth Pan-African Congress. He entered into all the discussions and brought to the deliberations a freshness of outlook that greatly influenced the final decisions; the implementation of which are already shaping the future of the African continent.

Even Du Bois himself believed that the Pan-African Congress of 1945 was particularly noteworthy. “Its significance,” he wrote, “lay in the fact that it took a step toward a broader movement and a real effort of the peoples of Africa and the descendants of Africa the world over to start a great march toward democracy for black folk.” By 1945, Du Bois’s vision of “democracy for black folk” included not only critiques of racism and colonialism, but also corollary critiques of capitalism and imperialism. Undoubtedly, one of the most distinctive features of the Manchester Congress was that the majority of the 200 participants “were
elected leaders of various mass-constituency organizations or had direct contacts with nascent independence movements.” Consequently, Manning Marable noted, the Manchester participants’ programs had an “immediacy and a comprehensive character that drew strength from actual worker’s struggles.”\(^{89}\) However, it is important to observe that Du Bois’s emphasis on “worker’s struggles” neither began nor ended at the fifth Pan-African Congress in 1945. Approximately one decade after he first admonished the American Negro Academy to take their place “in the van of Pan-Negroism” in “The Conservation of Races” in 1897, Du Bois began in earnest to synthesize his evolving anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and Pan-Africanism with democratic socialism in 1907.\(^{90}\) It could be said that between his participation in the Pan-African Conference of 1900 and his leadership of five Pan-African Congresses from 1919 to 1945, ideologically and politically Du Bois gradually advanced from conservatism to radicalism, moderatism to militantism, literally, from Pan-Negroism to unapologetic Pan-African Marxism or, rather, Pan-African socialism and black Marxism.\(^{91}\)

The 1920s were a particularly transformative and productive decade for Du Bois, not simply because he was one of the impresarios of the Harlem Renaissance, but also because he published Darkwater and established and edited The Brownie’s Book monthly magazine for children in 1920; campaigned for the passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill in 1922; visited Africa for the first time in 1923; published The Gift of Black Folk in 1924; published “The Negro Mind Reaches Out” in Alain Locke’s The New Negro: An Interpretation, undoubtedly one of the most influential works of the Harlem Renaissance, in 1925; created the Krigwa Players and visited Russia (the Soviet Union) and studied Russian communism for two months in 1926; and published his second novel, Dark Princess, in 1928.\(^{92}\) All of this is to say, along with convening three Pan-African Congresses in 1921, 1923, and 1927, it was during the 1920s that Du Bois also devoted himself to developing what has been variously called “black Marxism,” “Pan-African Marxism,” or “Pan-African socialism.”\(^{93}\) Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood emphasized that during the period between the first and fifth Pan-African Congresses, circa 1919–1945, Du Bois “increasingly … became more interested in Marxism and more radical solutions to the social, economic and political problems facing African Americans, Africa and the diaspora.” Adi and Sherwood continued, Du Bois “became increasingly radical in his writings and speeches.” Indeed, “even in old age Du Bois continued his political activity.”\(^{94}\)

According to Rucker, “[m]any have made the egregious error of criticizing Du Bois over the early phase of his career and not paying due attention to the radical changes that he would undergo for the rest of his life.”\(^{95}\) Hence, it is important for us to challenge the tendency to freeze-frame Du Bois as the author of The Souls of Black Folk and “The Talented Tenth,” both of which were published in 1903 when he was 35 years old, and then essentially discursively dismiss the next six decades of his eventful life from late 1903 through to his death in 1963 at the age of 95. Du Bois’s ever-evolving post-1903 thought was incredibly complex and contradictory, and those who start and stop with The Souls of Black Folk and “The Talented Tenth” do themselves and, most especially, W.E.B. Du Bois a great disservice.\(^{96}\) Sadly, many of Du Bois’s staunchest critics and detractors frequently marvel at the evolving nature of Marx, Foucault or Habermas’s thought but, for whatever reason, either dismiss or disparage the ways in which Du Bois doggedly continued to develop his thought, especially during the last 60 years of his life. With that in mind, Rucker importantly reminds us,

DuBois, however, was a man of many careers and ideological stances and should not be essentialized or limited to narrow ideological parameters. Perhaps the most accurate way
of viewing his immense contributions to the liberation struggles of Africans worldwide would be to perform a longitudinal or diachronic study which encompasses several decades of Du Bois’s life. In doing so, it becomes quite clear that surrounding him with static categories does more harm than good in creating an effective and accurate lens through which his ideological transformations and the fluidity of his thought can be best viewed and understood.97

When Du Bois’s ideological evolution is taken into serious consideration it can be acknowledged that he, in fact, went through various stages of black conservatism, black liberalism and, ultimately, black radicalism. Undoubtedly, Du Bois’s critical engagement of Marxism and subsequent embrace of democratic socialism, which occurred during the last six decades of his life (circa 1903–1963), altered his conception and articulation of Pan-Africanism. Conversely, however, as Patrick Anderson importantly pointed out in “Pan-Africanism and Economic Nationalism: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Black Reconstruction and the Failings of the ‘Black Marxism’ Thesis,” Du Bois’s evolution, popularization, and radicalization of Pan-Africanism indubitably influenced his critical engagement of Marxism, development of democratic socialism and, ultimately, his inauguration of black economic nationalism.98 Indeed, Du Bois scholars harboring diverse intellectual agendas and political persuasions have long hailed Du Bois as the “father of Pan-Africanism.” David Levering Lewis noted that Nkrumah and other continental African leaders, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and Jomo Kenyatta, saw Du Bois as a “Pan-African Moses” whose long labor in anti-imperialist efforts paved the way for their own Pan-African theories and praxes.99 Segun Gbadegesin asserted that “it cannot be doubted that W.E.B. Du Bois remains the most famous intellectual defender of the Pan-African idea and movement.”100 Moreover, Manning Marable and Arnold Rampersad relate that Du Bois’s The Negro, not only provided the “Bible of Pan-Africanism,” but also “established a tradition of black socialist historiography that would be enriched in subsequent decades by other Pan-African scholars such as C.L.R. James and Walter Rodney.”101

Taking all of the foregoing into critical consideration we might conclude by asking precisely what is Pan-Africanism according to the “father of Pan-Africanism?” In answer to this question, in a 1933 Crisis article entitled “Pan-Africa and New Racial Philosophy,” Du Bois asserted that “Pan-Africa[ism] means intellectual understanding and cooperation among all groups of Negro descent in order to bring about at the earliest possible time the industrial and spiritual emancipation of Negro peoples.”102 Hence, Pan-Africanism is a movement with a threefold spiritual, intellectual, and political thrust. First, there are the moral claims of the Pan-African Movement, which are deeply rooted in continental and diasporan African history, culture, and struggles. From the Pan-African point of view, the African holocaust, enslavement, colonization, and segregation are morally repugnant and reprehensible, and anyone or any group that perpetrates such horrors and affronts against humanity deserve censure and sanction. Each person in Pan-African cosmology and theology has an inherent worth, dignity, and divinity, and all human beings are equal before God. Therefore, atrocious acts such a holocaust, enslavement, colonization and segregation represent and register as crimes not only against African people, but crimes against the Creator and all creation as well.103

Second, as Africans on the continent and in the diaspora became conscious of their common experience of domination and discrimination at the hands of imperialist powers, they formed a united front to fight for their freedom.104 This gave the Pan-African Movement a definite political dimension that built on the moral base discussed here. Third, combining the moral claims and political programs of the movement, continental and diasporan
Africans quickly became conscious of the concept of race and the reality of racism. Instead of “incessant [racial] self-questioning and the hesitation that arises from it,” the radical Pan-Africanists argued that Africans should invert racism and use it as fuel to fire “race action,” “race responsibility,” and “race enterprises.” According to Du Bois’s discourse, it is not race and race consciousness that cause racism and other racial injustices, but notions of racial superiority and inferiority, as well as racial domination and discrimination. Du Bois contended that race and race consciousness can be utilized in efforts aimed at radically altering the white supremacist social world in which race was/is conceived of and constructed in constraining and conflictual ways. Consequently, race, albeit a radically reconstructed revolutionary humanist concept of race, may be the very vehicle that the racially colonized need to use to rescue and reclaim their humanity and achieve decolonization and liberation. As Du Bois declared in *Dusk of Dawn*:

I urged Pan-African solidarity for the accomplishment of universal democracy….So long as we [are] fighting a color-line, we must strive by color organization. We have no choice. If in time, the fight for Negro equality degenerates into organized murder for the suppression of whites, then our last case is no better than our first; but this need not be, if we are level-headed and clear-sighted, and work for the emancipation of all men from caste through the organization and determination of the present victims of caste.

From the foregoing, we can clearly see that for Du Bois and his anti-colonial colleagues Pan-Africanism was much more than mere “racial romanticism.” It was a multidimensional and multi-issue movement based on the premise that continental and diasporan Africans deserve and must demand mutual respect, moral recognition, decolonization and re-Africanization. Furthermore, for Du Bois Pan-Africanism was not so much about “race” as it was about rallying continental and diasporan Africans to fight against racism, racial colonialism, and racial capitalism. This means that Du Bois’s entire approach to race—from “The Conservation of Races” through to *Color and Democracy* and *The World and Africa*—was more instrumental than anything else. Time and time again he told his readers that although race is a social construction with no real scientific basis, we must not fall into the trap of thinking that racism, racial terrorism, racial colonialism, and racial capitalism are not real. From his Pan-African perspective, the history of the modern world told tale after tale of the reality of racism, racial terrorism, racial colonialism, and racial capitalism.

One of the most distinctive features of Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism is that it was ultimately simultaneously anti-racist, anti-colonialist, and anti-capitalist. For instance, Robinson, Horne, Marable, and Mullen collectively argued that Du Bois’s distinctive mix of Pan-Africanism and black Marxism evolved even more intensely after the fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945 when he began to travel abroad more frequently and develop comparative analyses of the conditions of continental and diasporan Africans, among other racially colonized and economically exploited people. Additionally, in *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Quest for the Abolition of the Color-Line*, Zhang Juguo observed that it was Du Bois’s four visits to the Soviet Union in 1926, 1936, 1949, and 1958, as well as his visits to other socialist countries, such as Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and China that quickened, broadened, and “deepened his understanding of socialism.” After his initial 1926 visit to the Soviet Union, Du Bois clearly took a greater interest in the more radical aspects of socialism, although he repeatedly asserted that the Russian Revolution was not the rule. However, he was convinced that Russia “had chosen the only way open to her at the time.” He realized early on that
there was no blueprint for bringing democratic socialism into being, and that what might work in one country may not work in another.\textsuperscript{114}

Partly as a result of the economic depression of the 1930s, and to some degree owing to African Americans’ incessant political disenfranchisement and economic exploitation, Du Bois began to seriously engage socialism on his own terms during the last three decades of his career. Consequently, he developed one of the first race-based and racism-conscious critiques of capitalism employing a Pan-Africanist/black economic nationalist-informed Marxist methodological orientation.\textsuperscript{115} In his burgeoning anti-bourgeois and anti-racist view, capitalism was not simply (as many Eurocentric Marxists would have it) a system of economic exploitation, but also a “racial polity,” which is to say, a system of racial domination and economic exploitation.\textsuperscript{116} Race and class struggle combined to create the phenomenological dimensions characteristic of black existence in simultaneously white supremacist, colonialist, and capitalist societies. Moreover, because he found Marxism inadequate for the tasks of theorizing race and racism in both capitalist and colonialist societies, Du Bois created his own—and some of the first—race/class concepts and race/class categories of critical analysis that were often based on Pan-Africanism and black economic nationalism more than Marxism in any orthodox or doctrinaire sense.\textsuperscript{117}

“Despite the apparent shortcomings of [initially] focusing solely on elite people of African descent and seeking redress directly from colonial governments,” Anthony Ratcliff insightfully remarked, Du Bois “nevertheless established Pan-Africanism as a legitimate [radical] political framework in which to address problems besieging blacks worldwide.”\textsuperscript{118} From the 1930s through to the 1960s, when many other continental and diasporan African intellectuals were muting and muzzling their criticisms of European imperialism and American capitalism, Du Bois undeniably increased his insurgent intellectualism and radical political activism. After his death in 1963 and, literally, for the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, Du Bois’s evolving and, ultimately, revolutionary Pan-Africanism has provided the foundation upon which countless black radicals and Pan-African revolutionaries have built their insurgent intellectualism and political radicalism: from C.L.R. James and Walter Rodney, to Kwame Nkrumah and Amilcar Cabral, to the Black Panther Party and Angela Davis, to Manning Marable and Cornel West. Needless to say, Pan-Africanism will remain relevant as long as we continue to be plagued by racism and the ways in which it incessantly overlaps with colonialism and capitalism to create racial colonialism and racial capitalism. This also means that Du Bois’s discourse, particularly his radical Pan-Africanism, will remain relevant until we actually achieve a post-racist, post-colonialist, and post-capitalist world—in other words, a post-imperialist world.

Notes


22 Du Bois, Du Bois: Writings, 815.

23 Ibid., 817.


25 Ibid., 323.


W.E.B. Du Bois


32 Ibid., 137.


36 Ibid., 19.


51 Ibid., 76, 91.
55 Ibid., 92.

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62 Ibid., 146.
64 Ibid., 93.

73 Ibid., 53.

75 Rucker, “‘A Negro Nation Within the Nation’,” 43.
79 Adi, Pan-Africanism, 55.
83 Ibid., 209.
86 Rucker, “‘A Negro Nation Within the Nation’,” 44. For further discussion of the Pan-African Congress of 1945, see Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress
Reiland Rabaka


88 Du Bois, The World and Africa, 244.


95 Rucker, “A Negro Nation Within the Nation,” 38.

Rucker, “‘A Negro Nation Within the Nation’,” 38–39.


Du Bois, Du Bois: Writings, 821.


215