

James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

The search for Pan-African solidarity within the African diaspora, as a means to resist the established order, remains important. Until recently, however, the story of Pan-Africanism has not been well served by scholarship. Much of the earlier literature wanted above all to celebrate its evolution toward expected (if still incomplete) triumph. Too little of the literature sought to understand the rather peculiar ways in which Pan-African ideas and organizations have endured moments of triumph and of deflation while never really completing their mission. The story that needs telling is about how Pan-African appeals can at certain times command such remarkable power while at others appear largely irrelevant. This is a quest to which, among other things, James Meriwether's fine new study contributes.

His focus is on how black Americans' ideas about and attitudes toward Africa changed over the middle third of the twentieth century, and how this mattered in their search for civil rights and a sense of place in America and the world. The accepted account explains changes in African-American views through domestic conditions, tying, for example, the occasional rise of back to Africa movements to moments of acute racial persecution. Meriwether convinces us that more was at work, particularly political actions by Africans at home. Here lies his contribution to Pan-African history, beyond his contribution to black American historiography: the links between African Americans and Africans in Africa were forged from both sides of the Atlantic, in constantly shifting, complex contexts that cannot easily be prefigured but which also cannot be ignored.

Meriwether picks up the story in the aftermath of World War One when twentieth-century patterns still held. Africa, for black Americans as for white, was a place of primitives. Ancient African glories provided some African Americans with a valued heritage, but contemporary Africa was either ignored or deemed relevant only as a mission field where new world Africans could potentially prove the capacity of their race by uplifting their downtrodden brethren. Starting from this well-known relation, Meriwether concentrates on how events in Africa sometimes push and other times allow black Americans to see Africa differently. Fascist Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, for instance, awakened some black Americans to contemporary Africans' struggles. The chapter on World War Two and the early Cold War traces a more complex moment. African nationalists and black American activists both recognized the promise inherent in the Allied declaration that the war was about democracy and self-determination. African demands for self-government and black American claims to civil rights were natural corollaries of these war aims, and

African nationalists and black Americans forged a vibrant alliance based on both their racial and political subjugation to reinforce this point. This Pan-African front, however, was widely forsworn on the American side under the changed logic of the Cold War. Mainstream African American leaders now aligned themselves as patriotic anti-communist Americans, arguing that Cold War victory required an immediate end to the racial injustices besmirching America's image as the leader of the free world. Only a dwindling left wing continued to identify with African nationalists, unconcerned with the problem of allying with increasingly radical foreign organizations. The rest of the book relates the gradual recovery from this retreat, starting with the South African Defiance Campaign in 1952. Organized by a wide array of non-white groups against the unfolding apartheid regime, it employed mass resistance and civil disobedience to demand basic rights. Although initially only a small group of black American leaders found inspiration in these tactics and aims, the identification with South African blacks would spread and endure as awareness of the parallels between the two struggles developed. The engagement with "Mau Mau" in Kenya at about the same time was rather more troubled. Overwhelmed by the colonial and imperial propaganda which so effectively portrayed the Kenyan resistance movement as atavistic, black Americans had to frame their sense of solidarity carefully. Even so, Meriwether argues that a radical strand within the civil rights movement used events in Kenya to make a case for more radical action at home against the resistance of moderate civil rights leaders. The climax of the story comes in the chapters on Ghanaian independence in 1957 and "the year of Africa" in 1960. The American connections and charismatic popularity of Kwame Nkrumah (whose 1960 march through Harlem graces the cover of the book) were transformative. The much-celebrated arrival of seventeen new independent, ambitiously modernizing states in Africa in 1960 effectively buried the old black American image of Africa. Now, across a wide spectrum of political tendencies, black American leaders proclaimed that "proudly we can be Africans." Martin Luther King Jr. profoundly inspired by the contemporary, democratic accomplishments of black Africa, marched all the more powerfully into the civil rights battles of the 1960s. Further, Meriwether argues, these leaders moved ahead more effectively having used debates over African affairs to shape and sharpen their own strategies.

The book concludes by foreshadowing the next phase of the story, which began soon enough with the Congo crisis in 1960. In keeping with the new sense of solidarity with African nationalism, the black American press sustained the heroic image of popular Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba despite the trend in US government circles to shun him as a communist. But as secession, civil war, and sectional politics continued following Lumumba's murder, black Americans were not inclined to sort it all out. Here first, and in Africa more generally by the later 1960s, black Americans could not find obvious

inspiration in the swirl of African news about domestic political scrambles, corruption, and coups. Instead, they increasingly limited their attention to the remaining liberation struggles with conspicuous parallels to their own ongoing battles against white American domination.

Meriwether builds his story on an impressive research base, providing succinct but effective contexts for each episode from relevant secondary literature on African history, American high politics, and the civil rights movement. The breadth of primary material, culled from autobiographical writing, personal and organizational archives, and a wise selection of black American newspapers, uses letters from individual black Americans to the press and leadership figures insightfully. Throughout Meriwether pays careful attention to the play of debate and dissent, developing his thesis that Africa's significance to black America is not to be reduced to a single simple narrative.

Some episodes of black Atlantic politics become clearer as a result of this work. Historians of West African Pan-Africanists, for example, can now better explain why West Africans' keen desire for connections with black America shifted so abruptly at the end of the 1940s to favour wider contacts with America in general. The dynamic was mutual: as black Americans forswore black Atlantic racial solidarity to exploit the logic of Cold War domestic politics, West Africans were obliged to seek other allies. But at the same time, it is disappointing that Meriwether does not advance our assessment of West Africans in the United States who in the 1940s and 1950s were preoccupied with raising American awareness of contemporary Africa. The very archives he uses reveal the extended interactions of, for example, the African Academy of Arts and Research and numerous student unions with black American leaders and public opinion. The African sojourners' apparently significant impact needs to be assessed within the framework of black American history.

While making his case for how African affairs shaped black American ideas, and thus shaped the American career of Pan-African dreams, Meriwether falls into one unfortunate trap. Although aware of the limited nature of black Americans' new understanding of Africa – for example highlighting how they attended especially to episodes which could be understood in light of their own situation while overlooking less legible events – his grand narrative is of a move from ignorance to knowledge, from misunderstanding to understanding. A better reading would be to see this instead as a move from one interested and partial image to another. This would have obliged Meriwether to treat more carefully what, exactly, black Americans were proud of concerning Africa by the 1960s. He mentions, for example, how black Americans had to wrestle with denigratory propaganda about Kenyan freedom fighters, but does not pick up the hints in his own evidence about how the colonists' "savage" became the black Americans' "fanatic." How else did the old African imagery get transformed in this new phase? Similarly, while tracing Nkrumah's positive impact,

Meriwether avoids mention of how news about Nkrumah's growing domestic opposition in the later 1950s was absorbed in America. When local complexities could not be ignored, how were they rendered irrelevant in the newly imagined Africa? Meriwether's own epilogue highlights the value of such questions. The end of the last classic anti-colonial liberation struggle in South Africa in 1994 finally dissolved the context in which black Americans could identify with Africans as noble nationalists. As conditions call for a new image of Africa it would be useful to understand more about the image that reigned in the late twentieth century, as well as how the previous image dissipated.

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David Cunningham, *There's Something Happening Here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the rise of VENONA, the emphasis in historical writing about intelligence has been on what "they" (foreign intelligence services and Communists) were doing to "us" (the state) not what "we" (the state) did to "ourselves" (ordinary citizens). The response of the state, be it in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom to the attacks of September 11, however, has reiterated the importance of the domestic security environment, particularly with respect to civil liberties. David Cunningham's book, *There's Something Happening Here*, is a timely reminder of why.

In examining domestic security operations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the 1960s, *There's Something Happening Here* represents a new stage in the historical writing on the topic. Previous work consisted of a mixture of memoirs, histories written by activists, and more complex studies by historians writing with greater detachment, yet who had still lived through at least part of J. Edgar Hoover's redolent reign.

Cunningham's study, on the other hand, is part of a welcomed stage whereby academics without any connection to the events they are writing about bring a more thorough and less emotional perspective to the subject matter. Equally significant is his sociological/historical approach to the topic which allows him to avoid simply telling us what the FBI did, as others before him have already done. Instead in a comparative fashion he focuses on what the FBI was, how it went about its work, what that work was, and the impact that it had.

In this case that work was the Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELPRO for short, which served as a weapon of destruction for a police force