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This study investigated Pan-Africanist, Black Nationalist, Communist, liberal, and pacifist anti-fascist internationalist discourses articulated by Black publicists as they expressed solidarity around the Ethiopian cause during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, 1934-1941. The study adopted critical discourse analysis to offer insight into the Black press' role in the Black public's attitudes and insights regarding Ethiopian war and its relationship to the expansion of global fascism. It also relied on Benedict Anderson's notion of an imagined community. Publications and political discourse functioned as a connecting thread that facilitated the creation of an imagined anti-fascist political community leading to the expansion of Black political culture support for the Ethiopian cause. This study concluded that the war resulted in the Black Americans from all strata of society and political affiliation becoming more international-minded as they expressed solidarity around the Ethiopian cause. However, this occurred while diasporic politics evolved from a racially nationalist discourse to a liberal anti-fascist internationalist discourse, uniting broad political coalitions that came to a consensus that the Ethiopian crisis and the expansion of fascism in Europe showed how the international community defined liberal democracy compared to anti-fascists. The Ethiopian War also challenged the Roosevelt administration's commitment to anti-fascism and the extension of democratic rights to Black Americans. Roosevelt used Ethiopia as a chess piece because of its strategic importance in East Africa, which became a major front during World War II in the fight against fascism in Africa.

THE LANGUAGE OF RESISTANCE: THE TRANSNATIONAL BLACK AMERICAN
PRESS, PUBLIC CULTURE, AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE DURING THE SECOND ITALO-
ETHIOPIAN WAR, 1935-1941

by
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Approved by

Dr. Thomas Jackson
Committee Chair

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the people who associate themselves with being the underdog in life. Even when faced with insurmountable odds, have faith in yourself and things will happen!

A special feeling of gratitude to my loving and supportive parents, William and Rosa Cheek whose words of encouragement, continuous prayers, and unconditional love provided me with strength when I was weary. I also thank them for their financial support. They have been excellent examples and have taught me moral lessons on discipline and that I have to always work hard if I want to achieve greatness. I would like to thank my grandfather Clifford Cheek for being my guardian angel. I know that he is looking down and smiling.

My partner in life Gabriel Neal, who would not let me get paralyzed by any obstacles and always pushed me to focus on the finish line and keep my faith in God during the challenges of graduate school and life. I am truly blessed to have you in my life. I also dedicate this dissertation to my colleague who always had a listening ear. Thank you to my extended family who have supported me throughout this journey. I also dedicate this dissertation to my little girl, Sunny, who was a calming presence in my life and always there with unconditional love.

APPROVAL PAGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Significance of the Study.....	20
Historiography.....	23
Methodology.....	29
Chapter Outline.....	30
CHAPTER II: HAIL TO ETHIOPIA!.....	33
Introduction.....	33
Reporting and Representation of Ethiopia from 1919 to 1934.....	33
Responses to Ethiopian Cultural Representation.....	59
War Drums.....	75
Summary.....	79
CHAPTER III: GROUNDWORK.....	81
Introduction.....	81
Reporting and Representation of Ethiopian Volunteerism.....	82
Publicists Reporting on the League of Nations' Commitment to Collective Security.....	93
Reactions to the Ethiopian and Japanese Alliance.....	101
The Black Mainstream Press and Reporting from Ethiopia.....	105
Summary.....	110
CHAPTER IV: WAR!.....	112
Introduction.....	112
Representing the Invasion.....	113
Black Publicists and Representation of the Western International Community's Response to the Invasion.....	114
Reporting on Italian Fascist Violence and its Meaning to Western Civilization.....	116
The National Negro Congress (NNC) and Anti-Fascist Activism.....	121
Mussolini's Abolitionist Rationale for Invasion.....	123
J. A. Rogers and the Expansion of the Pan-African News Network.....	128
The Black Mainstream Press and Reporting on the Course of the War.....	130
The Black Press and Reporting on the Possibility of an Ethiopian Victory.....	133

Summary.....	142
CHAPTER V: THE OCCUPATION.....	143
Introduction.....	143
Press Reporting and Representation of the Occupation.....	144
Black Press’s Reactions to Great Britain Lifting Economic Sanctions.....	145
Continuing Organizing.....	147
Critiques of Roosevelt’s Neutrality Policy.....	148
Critiques German, Italian, and Japanese Alliances.....	150
Critiques of the Meaning of Japanese Recognition of Italian Conquest.....	151
The Representation of Italian Colonization.....	153
Pro-Ethiopian Organizing in the Wake of Fascist Occupation.....	155
Black Newspapers Interrogating Italian-American Fascist Sympathy.....	158
The Black Press and Its Reporting on Mussolini’s Colonization Plan.....	160
The Black Press and Reporting on the Course of the War.....	163
Critiques of American Democratic Politics’ Relationship to Fascism.....	165
Denouncement of Garveyite Black Nationalism.....	167
Critiquing Ethiopian National Unity.....	170
The Continuance of Pro-Ethiopia Organizing.....	172
Critiques of Fascist Violence.....	174
Spain and Ethiopia.....	183
Summary.....	186
CHAPTER VI: THE FLOODGATES OF FASCISM.....	187
Introduction.....	187
Representation of Campaign.....	187
Revisiting Concerns about the Roosevelt Administration’s Recognition of Italian Conquest.....	188
Revisiting the Idea of an Ethiopian and Japanese Alliance.....	190
Continuing Critiques of Roosevelt’s Neutrality Policy.....	191
Shedding Light on American Fascism.....	193
Representation of the Spanish Civil War.....	196
Selassie Appeals to the League of Nations.....	198
Great Britain and France’s Push for Recognition.....	199
Is The Ethiopian Cause Over?.....	202

Selassie Returning as a Puppet Emperor	202
Reporting on Black and Jewish Relations	204
The Black Press on the Future Survival of Democracy.....	209
The debate about Why Impending War in Europe is Relevant to Black People	211
Emperor Selassie’s Vengeance.....	216
The Role of Colonial Soldiers in Ethiopia’s Liberation	220
The Return of Selassie	222
Summary.....	224
CHAPTER VII: THE AFTERMATH	225
Introduction.....	225
Editorial Shift in Reporting the 3 rd Phase of the 2 nd Italo-Ethiopian War	226
Pro-Ethiopian Organizing After Selassie Returns to the Throne.....	227
The British and Ethiopian Mopping Up Campaign	231
Britain’s Hypocrisy and the Atlantic Charter 1941	239
Criticism of the British and their Imperial Intentions in Ethiopia	240
Criticism of British as Being Hypocrites.....	244
Criticism of Continuance of Segregation in the U.S. Military	246
Why War in Europe Matters to Black Americans	254
British Involvement in the Post-Colonial Government	257
Selassie Regaining His Full Sovereignty.....	261
Summary.....	267
CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION.....	268
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	282

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background

On Sunday, March 1, 1896, Emperor Menelik II, along with the 200,000 fierce warriors in his Abyssinian army, who were cloaked in brilliant battle colors and armed with modern rifles, spears, and curved bladed swords, made an energetic attack in "to the light of the rising sun" and defeated heavily armed Italian colonial forces during The Battle of Adowa.¹ The Italian campaign against the Abyssinians occurred when Italy had one colony, Eritrea, in East Africa and a desire to expand its empire in East Africa into Abyssinia.² The battle, which occurred when the majority of Africa fell under European domination, challenged prevailing racist beliefs that European nations were inherently superior to African ones, especially in a contest of military. Thus, the Battle of Adowa represented a major victory of Africa against European colonialism.³

The Black American press celebrated this decisive victory. *The Cleveland Gazette* articulated an early radical Black editorial agenda focused on fighting American institutionalized racism. They provided the most extensive coverage of any Black newspaper framing the battle as an "Italian Waterloo." The newspaper boldly asserted that the battle "changed the course of European politics" as the 30,000 men Italian army suffered defeat by Menelik's Ethiopian army consisting of 200,000 men.⁴ Black Americans expressed their admiration for this victory with

¹ "The Defeat at Adowa. King Menelik's Victory over the Italian Army Complete," *Rising Son*, May 1, 1903.

² Prior to Adowa, Menelik's forces engaged in protracted guerilla warfare against the Italian army of occupation consisting of 300,000 men between 1890 and 1895. The decisive victory at Adowa brought an end to the hostilities between Menelik's forces and Italian troops.

³ "Italy's Terrible Defeat: Three Thousand Men Killen," *The New York Times*, March 4, 1896.

⁴ "Battle of Adowa: It Was In More Than One Sense an Italian Waterloo," *The Cleveland Gazette*, March 28, 1896.

headlines in Black newspapers announcing, “African King Mighty Army,” and “Defeat of Adowa, King Menelik’s Victory over the Italian Army Complete.”⁵ Italy’s humiliating loss to Abyssinian armies had a profound psychological influence on Black Americans. The same year, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court verdict legalized racial segregation. Hence, the 1896 victory functioned as a source of hope and pride in a racially oppressive American society.

Black Americans also attached religious meaning to the Battle of Adowa. They symbolically magnified Ethiopia naming their churches like the Abyssinian Baptist Church, the largest Black American congregation established in Harlem, New York, pastored by the social justice advocate Reverend Adam Clayton, Powell, Sr.⁶ In Black ministers’ sermons, Adowa confirmed the Biblical prophecy of Black liberation in Psalm 68:31: Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God.” These words were balms of inspiration in the context of lynching, disenfranchisement, and economic and political oppression. Black Americans’ understanding of Ethiopia gave the Psalm a new and global perspective- a cosmology that was as formally religious as it was subversively political.⁷ During the twentieth century, Ethiopia overshadowed the independent Black nations of Liberia and Haiti, which once held currency in Black America but were now mired in dysfunction and brutalities due to American

⁵ “African King Mighty Army,” *Cleveland Gazette*, March 21, 1896; “Defeat At Adowa. King Menelik’s Victory over the Italian Army Complete,” *Rising Son*, May 1, 1903.

⁶ The Church was named in honor of Ethiopian seamen from the Ethiopian Empire who helped Black people in Harlem lead a protest against segregated seating.

⁷ Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones on African American Religious History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 37-56.; St. Clair Drake identified four central tenets of Ethiopianist thought. First, Ethiopianism assumed a common ancestry that linked African Americans and the African Diaspora. Second, it implies a cyclical view of history in which cultures suffered periods of decline but also could anticipate eventual redemption. Third, it posits that Africa owned a glorious past. Fourth, Ethiopianism predicts a future in which Africa would be redeemed because of European, Christian civilization and power. Finally, Ethiopianism also predicted the coming of a renewed African race, freedom from exploitation, and paganism. See, St. Clair Drake, *The Redemption of Africa and Black Religion (Chicago: Third World, 1970)*.

economic and political interference that undermined the sovereignty of the two nations. The massacres perpetrated by the U.S. Marines during the Haitian occupation and covered extensively by the Black newspapers and the public political discourse circulated set the template for the latter anti-fascist activism among Black Americans. However, during the Ethiopian war, the activism that emanated reflected the wider political mobilization of different classes, ethnicities, and political groups to safeguard Ethiopian independence.⁸

The end of World War I inspired new growing racial militancy and consciousness among Black American soldiers who were confronted with the bloody violence at home after returning from the battlefields of Europe. Consequently, many Black men questioned how they fought a war to make the world safe for democracy while denied racial justice at home. The West Indian Socialist Hubert Harrison founded the New Negro Movement in 1919 to engender a new racial and political consciousness and inspire racial transformation through positive racial representation that tied culture and politics. He spearheaded the race-conscious journalism that defined the Negro Movement through his newspaper *The Voice*, an early seedbed for grassroots protest in Harlem as he joined labor and civil rights politics. Marcus Garvey's political discourse constituted a major dimension of this movement. It offered a militant alternative to Black Americans, who were disappointed with the lack of racial progress since World War I. Garvey popularized Black Nationalism, advocating for the political self-determination of Black peoples. However, his separatist strain, which was rejected by the Black mainstream press, emphasized the return of skilled Black people to Ethiopia to aid in fortifying its modernist development, creating a Black Empire centered in Africa, and connecting all peoples of African descent in resistance against European imperialism. Garvey envisioned a new Black identity as he referred

⁸ Robinson, *On Racial Capitalism*, 102.

to his followers as the “sons of daughters of Ethiopia.”⁹ Garvey’s movement strengthened the connection of Black Americans to Ethiopia due to its emphasis on emigration. He instructed his followers that now was the time to fulfill the prophecy of Psalm 31: Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God” because it was the New Negro’s duty and obligation to “strike the blow for freedom on the great continent of Africa” and save it from the ravages of European imperialism.”¹⁰ A small number of Harlem’s Ethiopian Jewish community, which adopted new racial and religious identities, answered his call to emigrate since they admired Ethiopia because they believed they possessed a common Jewish heritage. Still, they could not create a successful colony, and many of them returned to the United States.

Thirty-nine years after the Adowa, Ethiopians would be forced to defend their sovereignty and independence as the Italian fascist government sought to extend its control over Ethiopia. Under the banner of Italian fascism, Benito Mussolini imposed his authoritarian one-party rule on Italian society. Fascism emphasized Italian nationalism or the belief in the cultural homogeneity of the Italian nation, which was required to remain disciplined and ready to engage in collective action to fulfill the will of the state. Furthermore, Mussolini articulated that war was inevitable and necessary to project Italian national power and build an overseas empire to reclaim Italian prestige. On October 3, 1935, Mussolini, who believed that strong nations had the natural right to rule and subdue the weak, directed the unprovoked invasion of the sovereign state of Ethiopia in the name of abolishing slavery in the Ethiopian Empire and extending Italian civilization. He was also driven by personal ambition, the desire to expand Italy’s empire in East

⁹ “Brooklyn Division with the Aeroplane Drive,” *The Negro World*, March 12, 1921.

¹⁰ “Provisional President of Africa Moves City of Cincinnati with His Great Eloquence,” *The Negro World*, February 26, 1921.

Africa, revenge for Italy's defeat at Adowa, and create a new Roman Empire. Seeking revenge for Adowa, Mussolini used airplanes, bombs, and eventually poison gas against the Ethiopians. One of the first towns targeted by Italian bombers was Adowa. During the first wave of the invasion, Italian warplanes rained seventy-eight bombs on the town and killed 1,700 persons.¹¹ As the battle raged on, the residents of Addis Ababa, the imperial capital, "were living in hourly dread of an air raid," and the Ethiopian government constructed great gas and bomb-proof shelters near the town.¹² The Harlem journalist and self-taught historian J. A. Rogers, a former affiliate of Marcus Garvey, demonstrated the ethos of the New Negro as provided Black readers with the "inside story" on modern Ethiopia as his dramatic journalistic style stirred racial patriotism or identification with an Ethiopian national identity among the Black public. He reminded them that "Ethiopia was the sole remnant of black greatness" and "Mussolini has planned to let loose rapine, rape, and slaughter upon a peaceful and almost unarmed people."¹³ His actions recalled the events of Adowa sixty years ago, according to the *Cleveland Gazette*, which concluded Mussolini, who "essays the role of Julius Caesar," intended to "restore the grandeur that was Rome" along with "the prestige of the Ancient Roman Empire."¹⁴

Black American sentimentality towards Ethiopia led different sections of Black America to mobilize. It ushered in a confluence of Black political activity that led historian John Hope Franklin to observe how "Almost overnight even the most provincial among the American

¹¹ Derrick M. Nault, *Africa and the Shaping of International Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 67.

¹² "Battle for Adowa Rages into the Night," *The New York Times*, *New York Times*, October 5, 1935.

¹³ Joel A. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Tells Why We Should Help Ethiopia." *The Pittsburgh Courier*. July 20, 1935.

¹⁴ "Benito Mussolini is Seeking Revenge for Italy As Well," *Cleveland Gazette*, October 5, 1935.

Negroes became international-minded.”¹⁵ Immediately, various pro-Ethiopian groups sprouted up across the country to rally against Mussolini and aid Ethiopia in maintaining its independence. Black metropolitan centers such as Harlem, Chicago, and Philadelphia became hubs of pro-Ethiopian activism. Black journalists, publicists, and their discourse played a central role in shaping Black popular consciousness and politics with discourse. On October 5, 1935, *The New York Amsterdam News* published excerpts from The NAACP’s Walter White, who weighed in on the issue asserting, "Italy, brazenly, has set a fire under the powder keg of white arrogance and greed, which seems destined to become an act of suicide for the so-called white world."¹⁶ In reading about Ethiopian victimization by Italy, they saw their own experiences of racial, economic, and political oppression under Jim Crow. The Associated Negro Press (ANP), a pan-African news service founded by entrepreneur Claude A. Barnett to circulate Black progress and achievement, became a dispensable source of news since it provided the news copy for hundreds of Black newspapers. It also supported a Black journalistic anti-fascist network of publicists, who included journalists, publishers, editors, activists, and intellectuals who also articulated anti-imperialism resisting the creation and expansion of empire. Barnett's network also provided real fraternal links to these politics underwrote activism opposing violence and war to subordinate marginalized peoples. The Black networked public sphere connected local, economic, political, and racial injustice to the liberation of Ethiopia and the global struggle against fascism as newspapers highlighted the commonalities of the struggles of Black

¹⁵John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1969), 574.

¹⁶“Leaders Urge Negroes Here to Aid Ethiopia: Heads of Various Pro-Abyssinian Groups Redouble Efforts to Halt Il Duce’s Grab,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, October 5, 1935.

Americans with those of Ethiopia. Publicists critiqued that the continued existence of various American fascisms in the Jim Crow South and the segregated U.S. military demonstrated how American society was not immune to this anti-democratic doctrine. The Second Italo-Ethiopian War was a watershed in developing Black American diasporic consciousness and political thought.

The historian William R. Scott offered a detailed study that helped to understand the emergence of a mass politics that was both militants, international-minded, and oriented towards pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism is a level of solidarity among African diasporic peoples who understand that they share a common history punctuated by European hegemonic exploitation, racial and political oppression, slavery, imperialism, and colonialism. Pan-Africanism is also concerned with connections. It is a collective force emphasizing how the experience of racial and economic oppression, the erasure of cultural identity, political disenfranchisement, victimization, and societal rejection has defined the experience of diasporic Black people.¹⁷ The Black American press informed Black American political discourse during the Ethiopian crisis. It provided the Black public an anti-colonial perspective expressing opposition to the system of political, economic, and racial oppression that contributed to the exploitation of darker peoples in the name of preserving white hegemony. Black publicists conveyed the language and vision of Black internationalism that provided Black Americans means of analyzing world affairs. It focused on "the role of race and racism in world affairs drawing attention to the linkages, interconnections, and interrelationship between racial capitalism and the color line in the world

¹⁷ William R. Scott, *Son of Sheba's Race: African Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

affairs."¹⁸ Black internationalists believed that darker peoples or non-European people were victims of racial capitalism as white people derived social and economic value from Blackness.¹⁹ They stressed that darker peoples were interested in overthrowing white supremacy and creating a new world order based on racial equality. Black newspapers during the 1930s constituted a cultural front central to the formation of anti-fascist protest. As one of the decisive moments in articulating diasporic thought and politics, the war galvanized black communities throughout the Atlantic hemisphere around perceived racial solidarity and anti-imperial activism.²⁰ Black Americans responded to their marginalization in the dominant white press by creating a Black counter-public or safe Black space where they participated in lively debate with each other and wider publics to articulate their ideas about the war in Ethiopia and discuss social movement tactics that could be used to foster pro-Ethiopia activism.²¹ As Ethiopia bled, Black newspapers became an imaginative battleground on which Black Americans debated and reconciled diverse perspectives: pan-Africanism, anti-imperialism, and anti-fascism.

During the war, Black politics were circulated in the Black newspaper, which comprised the Black mainstream and the alternative presses. The mainstream press's news coverage reflected current news impacting its readership, including publicists whose coverage reflected progressive politics. The publishers of these newspapers emphasized profit-margin and

¹⁸ Darryl C. Thomas, "Cedric J. Robinson and Racial Capitalism: Africana Liberation Resistance Structures and Black Internationalism in the Twenty-First Century," *African Identities* (2013): 134.

¹⁹ Nancy Leong, "Racial Capitalism," *Harvard Law Review* 126 (June 2013), [Racial Capitalism - Harvard Law Review](#).

²⁰ Etsuko Taketani, "Colored Empires in the 1930s Black Internationalism, the US Black Press, and George Samuel Schuyler," *American Literature* 82, no. 1 (March 2010), 121; Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 11.

²¹ Catherine R. Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (November 2002), 448.

circulation. They included editorial content oriented towards their readership's thirst for news and debate endorsing radical activist Black politics. Larger newspapers such as *The Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Chicago Defender*, and *The Amsterdam News*, which had a national circulation, were a part of the mainstream press. The alternative press included niche newspapers, including news coverage and radical political debate that fell outside of the political boundaries of the mainstream press and editorial content that catered to a specific radical politics of its readership. The UNIA's official weekly newspaper *The Negro World* and its later journal *The Black Man* were two publications that presented readers with radical politics reflecting a Black Nationalist orientation. The Black-led Communist press also comprised the alternative press. Its news coverage included the radical politics oriented towards The Black Left consisting of Communist and Socialist constituencies. The Black-led Communist newspaper *The Negro Liberator* and *The People's Voice* reflected Black Leftist politics during the war. Cross-pollination occurred between the presses as Black publicists and intellectuals at times wrote for both presses and catered their debates to their audiences. Also, their articles and editorial appeared alongside regular journalists.²²

Black newspapers and their publicists sought to influence popular politics by participating in public debates that foregrounded the interrelationships of racism, fascism, imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, and Jim Crow racism. As Black publicists and intellectuals framed their arguments, they engaged in advocacy journalism that challenged the legitimacy of the white mainstream press's objectivity that attempted to impart racial neutrality in news

²² Fred Carroll, *Race News: Black Journalists and the Fight for Racial Justice* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2017), 11.

coverage of the war.²³ Black publicists and intellectuals pushed a global agenda through their presentation of debates that engaged how the white mainstream press overlooked how the Second Italo-Ethiopian War had larger racial, economic, and political implications for Black Americans and other diasporic darker peoples. Publicists were shaped by the nationalism of Ethiopians and their patriotic sacrifice as they refused to allow the fascist invaders to undermine their nation's independence in the name of white superiority. Black publicists' debates were shaped by how the majority of Black Americans during the war embraced a racial militancy in their debates. However, we are yet to fully understand the extraordinary range of players, voices, geographical sites, and mass dimensions of the political discourse involved in grassroots internationalism during the Ethiopian war. This study borrowed from historian Keisha N. Blain's term "grassroots internationalism," explaining how Black publicists, activists, and intellectuals participated in internationalist politics at the local level challenging global racism, imperialism, and colonialism.²⁴

This study contributes to a deepening understanding of the sense of internationalism cultivated by cosmopolitan journalists and their political discourse representing different political orientations but sympathetic to the Ethiopian cause. This study recognizes that each organization and group of individuals expressed their political purpose and consciousness concerning Ethiopia. At the same time, Black mainstream and alternative publications and the political discourse they circulated constituted a connective tissue between institutional bones and popular muscles of the new international-minded mass politics. During the war, Black publicists,

²³ Michael Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora," *Public Culture* 11 (1999): 247.

²⁴ Keisha N. Blain, "Confraternity Among All Dark Race:" Mittie Maude Lena Gordon and the Practice of Black (Inter)nationalism in Chicago, 1932-1943," *Palimpsest* (2016): 152

activists, and readers debated how colonialism, imperialism, and fascism were threats to human progress, democracy as well as the safety and security of humankind. Black publicists understood Italian fascism to be symptomatic of the larger global problem of white supremacy and Western imperialism. For example, George Padmore writing in the widely circulated journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *The Crisis*, asserted, "Mussolini is not only defending the rights of Italy, but he is upholding the prestige of the white race in Africa."²⁵

Italy's invasion violated international laws to uphold peace and the rights of civilians and combatants during the conflict between nations. However, Italy's emphasis on Italian racial superiority ensured that Ethiopians' rights were violated.²⁶ The Second Italo-Ethiopian war accentuated how self-interests and the desire to preserve the status quo and imperial agendas contributed to the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations. Britain was a major influencer in the League system. British officials drafted rules and directed the process of internationalization driven by the desire to exercise moral leadership in the world and to legitimate its colonial practices.²⁷ The League fell apart after the invasion of Ethiopia because of the self-interested actions of Britain and France, its leading imperial voices, which had decision-making influence over other members of the League. Also, The League compromised its position as an international arbiter of peace, moral leadership, and humanitarian concerns when it ignored how, during the Italian invasion, Italy attacked undefended villages with women and children, bombed Red Cross Hospitals, and used mustard gas in violation of the international standard of war.²⁸

²⁵ George Padmore, "Ethiopia and World Politics," *The Crisis* 42, no. 5 (May 1935): 157.

²⁶ Nault, *Africa and the Shaping*, 68.

²⁷ Susan Pedersen, *The League of Nations and The Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 357.

²⁸ *The League of Nations*, 291.

This silence was telling since when Ethiopia applied for membership to the League in 1923, Britain expressed humanitarian sentiments critiquing how slavery and slave trading still flourished in the East African Empire. When Ethiopia was conditionally admitted to the League, it existed on the fringes as Britain, France, and Italy treated the semi-feudal nation with little to no regard.

By the time of Italy's attack in 1935, Italy's relations with the League were at a nadir because Mussolini saw Britain and France's influence as a hindrance to his building of the Italian Empire in Africa. Italy's attack on Ethiopia without a declaration proved that the League of Nations and the equality of nations did not exist among its members. Black Americans once had hope in the League's commitment to democracy and collective security. However, it became apparent that the League and its most powerful members, Britain and France, were more committed to protecting their colonial and continental interests in Europe. *The Defender's* reporter, Metz T. P. Lochard, concluded that "the curtain shall have fallen upon the stage of the drama, which is unfolding too swiftly in Ancient and friendless Abyssinia." The simple truth, according to Lochard, was that "the League is fencing for" a gradual surrender of Ethiopia's sovereignty."²⁹ During the occupation period, Britain's conservative government attempted to impose a trusteeship in Ethiopia where Britain's imperial government engaged in backroom dealing with Mussolini. In an attempt to create a trusteeship in 1940, Britain expressed interest in helping Ethiopia to regain its sovereignty by expelling the Italian fascists because Mussolini's imperial project and his collaboration with Germany's fascist dictator, Adolf Hitler, threatened Britain's own safety and security. When Ethiopia was finally liberated in 1941, Britain attempted

²⁹ Metz T.P Lochard, "Justification for Mussolini's Onslaught Given in Flimsy Excuse by Davanzati," *The Chicago Defender*, October 12, 1935.

to impose its imperial influence and undermine the nation's sovereignty by taking charge of Ethiopia's postwar reconstruction period plans.

U.S. President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, recognized that war existed between Italy and Ethiopia but promoted American neutrality. This stance generated an editorial backlash in the Black American press. Black Americans interpreted Roosevelt's failure to intervene in the Ethiopian War as a blow to Ethiopian independence. Many of whom voted for Roosevelt, Black Americans criticized Roosevelt for his aloof policy, which resulted in a ban on arms and ammunition being sent to Ethiopia to aid in its defense. *The Washington Tribune* evoking religious imagery, criticized the Roosevelt administration for its neutrality policy, comparing the United States to "Pontius Pilate, pretending to wash its hands clean with neutrality laws, protesting the innocence of the victim while Roman legions again are on the move to enact another crucifixion."³⁰

During the 1930s Great Britain's foreign policy was driven by its desire to preserve its own national security and empire in Africa. From 1937 to 1939 the country's Conservative government led by Prime Minister Arthur Neville Chamberlain and his political allies continued their long-standing debate over the responsibilities and privileges of empire. It emphasized Britain's moral responsibility to bring "backwards peoples towards greater abundance and freedom" guided how Britain dealt with Ethiopia. Chamberlain was the architect of Britain's appeasement policy towards Nazi Germany. He recognized Ethiopia as a colony on Italy in 1936. During the occupation in 1937, his government continued the policy of appeasement and supported the return of Emperor Haile Selassie, who sought refuge in Britain after the annexation of Ethiopia in May 1936. Chamberlain and his supporters continued the policy of appeasement

³⁰ "D.C. Pastor Flays Pope Pius," *The Washington Tribune*, December 24, 1935.

by participating in backroom dealing with Mussolini's government. He and his supporters urged Selassie to take a political bargain that placed Ethiopia under Italian trusteeship with Selassie as the nominal head of the Ethiopian government. Selassie rejected this offer on the principle that he would only return to Ethiopia under the condition that he would have sovereignty over the nation. Black American internationalists participated in public debate about how the Chamberlain government continued Britain's legacy of betraying Ethiopia in the name of preserving the racial status quo, Britain's imperial privileges in its own colonies, and safeguarding Britain against German fascism's expansion in Europe. By 1940, Conservative Prime Minister Winston Churchill's government underwrote Haile Selassie's return to Ethiopia by contributing white South African and West African troops from Ghana and Nigeria to aid in expelling the Italian fascists. Black internationalists recognized that Britain's use of colonial troops had larger implications for the future of anti-colonial resistance to British imperial rule.³¹ They also recognized that anti-colonialism invoked the claim that struggles for national independence, were independent. This awareness led to their rejection of Britain's justification of colonialism in terms of the civilizing mission which was predicated on racist notions.³² Black

³¹ Yaw Twusami, "Press Freedom and Nationalism Under Colonial Rule in the Gold Coast (Ghana)," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 3 (December 1974): 499-520; Harri Englund, "Anti Anti-Colonialism: Vernacular Press and Emergent Possibilities in Colonial Zambia," *Comparative Studies* 57, vol 1 (January 2015): 221-247; Stephanie Newell, "Articulating Empire: Newspaper Readerships in Colonial West Africa," *New Formulations* 73, no. 1 (November 2011); Bodlil Folke Frederiksen, "Print, Newspapers and Audiences in Colonial Kenya: African and Indian Improvement, Protest and Colonial Connections," *Africa* 81, Issue 1 (January 21, 2011): 155-172; Fred I.A. Omu, "The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa: The West African Example," *Journal of African History* IX, no. 2(1968): 279-298; Leena Gadallah, "Ordinary Resistance: Nonviolent Anti-Colonialism in Africa," *The Undergraduate Research Journal* 6, article 4 (2018); B.F. Fredericksen, "Censorship as Negotiation: The State and Non-European Newspapers in Kenya, 1930-1954," *Itinerario* 44, Special Issue 2: Colonial Public Spheres and Words of Print (August 2020); 291-411.

³² Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 2.

publicists also pointed out Britain's hypocrisy while questioning its commitment to Ethiopian independence since it used African colonial soldiers in its campaign. The campaign resulted in Britain assuming control over the postwar Ethiopian reconstruction from 1941 to 1942. Black publicists interpreted that Ethiopia was occupied rather than liberated after Britain proposed the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement, which undermined Ethiopia's sovereignty. Hence, they remained doubtful of British intentions in Ethiopia, which contradicted its commitment to fighting against fascism and preserving democracy.

William R. Scott has framed how pan-Africanism underwrote Black militancy during the war as Black Americans linked their struggle against Jim Crow, lynching, and economic equity with the struggle of Ethiopians against Italian imperialism.³³ During the war, Garveyite pan-Africanism emphasized racial solidarity with Ethiopia and anti-fascist organizations along racial lines. The Trinidadian labor activist George Padmore's Pan-African Socialism emphasized the connection between Blackness and class struggle as he acknowledged the role of race coupled with class in the continued extreme exploitation and degradation of Black workers under the influence of international capitalism. He understood that Black people constituted some of "the most oppressed Earth."³⁴ According to him, the war offered an opportunity to advocate for the Black working-class revolution against the Italian capitalist imperialists asserting that "in acquiescing in the exploitation of colored peoples, the working classes of Europe are allowing a rod to be prepared for their own back."³⁵ Padmore also emphasized struggle as he argued that "In

³³ Pan-Africanism began in 1900 when the Trinidadian lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams suggested the convening of the First Pan-African Congress in London, which marked the genesis of the pan-African movement. Though this is not the genesis of the absolute African struggle against European exploitation.

³⁴ George Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa* (London: Wishart, 1936), 396.

³⁵ George Padmore, "Padmore Warns European Workers of 'Black Menace:' *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 9, 1937.

this hour of danger, it [was the duty] of every black man and woman to render the maximum and moral material support to the Ethiopian people in their single-handed struggle against Italian fascism.³⁶ Padmore believed that the fear of competition and self-preservation, which included the policy of ensuring the higher paying jobs were reserved for white workers, hindered the ability of white workers to complete unite with Black workers in the class struggle.³⁷

Considering this, he did not believe that any other political force should subsume the struggle for Black emancipation. He envisioned that Black worker should establish autonomous organizations that were free to operate as they saw fit. At the same time, he warned against the dangers of Garveyism, which he equated as subordinating the interests of the Black working class to the interests of the bourgeoisie or middle-class capitalists.³⁸ Black communists publicly discredited him in the United States for being a renegade and having sided with the enemies of the Black working class.³⁹

Before the Ethiopian war, the NAACP engaged in activism on the international stage. It advocated for Black freedom in Haiti by articulating a Black liberal internationalism that expressed faith in democratic intervention. It relied on lobbying the federal government to preserve Black freedom and citizenship. In 1915 the United States intervened in Haiti after the death of the island's President, which allegedly resulted in a period of internal turmoil. U.S Marines intervened in the name of restoring order and peace on the island. By 1920, James Weldon Johnson traveled to the island on behalf of the NAACP to investigate the brutalities

³⁶ "Ethiopia and World Politics."

³⁷ George Padmore, "White Workers and Black," *Controversy* 2, no. 20 (May 1938), [White Workers and Black by George Padmore 1938 \(marxists.org\)](http://marxists.org).

³⁸ George Padmore, *The Life and Times of Negro Toilers* (London: Red International Labour Unions, 1931), 82, 125 and 126.

³⁹ Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1983), 108-109.

committed by U.S. Marines against Haitians during the occupation. After returning home, Johnson exposed how American intervention occurred under the guise of a humanitarian action but was an attempt to submit the island to American control because Haitians were fit to rule themselves.⁴⁰ From 1915 to 1934, when U.S. Marines left the island, Black newspapers editorialized the occupation and debated how this issue was important to Black Americans. The organization evaded radical politics and any affiliation with Communists to protect its domestic civil rights agenda and access to the President. Instead, Secretary Walter White, an anti-Communist, embraced liberal internationalism emphasizing anti-imperialism and anti-fascism by aggressively lobbying the federal government and the League of Nations. For example, *The Philadelphia Tribune* printed a resolution by the organization urging the U.S. Department of State to “unequivocally condemn Italian aggression in Ethiopia” and that they “urge the United States government to put itself squarely on record against encroachment.”⁴¹ Though Black Americans recognized the NAACP as the premier civil rights organization, the Black working class did not solely depend on the organization for leadership during the war.

The political ascendance of the American Communist Party (CPUSA) in the 1930s contributed to the development of a united global anti-fascist coalition devoted to the defense of democratic institutions.⁴² Although many Black people did not become official members of the CPUSA, Black Americans had a special relationship with the Party because of its radical politics emphasizing anti-racism and Black liberation. By 1934, the Comintern adopted the policy of the

⁴⁰ James Weldon Johnson, “The Truth about Haiti,” *The Crisis* 20, no. 5 (September 1920): 221.

⁴¹ “N.A.A.C.P. Resolutions: Where the State of Nation Is Reviewed.” *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 11, 1935.

⁴² The Soviet Union joined the League of Nations in 1934, and this influenced the adoption of the Popular Front policy as it sought to seek allies among capitalist countries.

Popular Front, advocating coalition-building among liberals, Socialists, Communists, and moderates. The turning point for the Communist thrust was the Italo-Ethiopian crisis in 1935 when the Comintern remained inactive and paved the way for Black internationalism and political pan-Africanism.⁴³ A major connecting thread between Communism and Black internationalism is that both ideologies emphasized universal democratic freedom. In the United States, the CPUSA attacked Italian fascism and other fascisms because of role violence, economic exploitation, and racial hierarchy in sustaining this system. The CPUSA spearheaded a Popular Front reflecting a multiracial coalition of liberals, Communists, Black Nationalists, Socialists, educators, ministers, labor organizers, students, professors, and others who united to combat the influence of fascism and imperialism. Popular Front politics energized anti-fascist activism during the war since it reflected a militancy speaking to the radical politics of the New Negro.

During the war, it sponsored mass parades, which were publicized in the Communist and the Black mainstream press. They mobilized Black nationalists, liberals, Communists, Socialists, clergy, and educators against fascism oppression. The Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia (PCDE) in Harlem directed a Popular Front activism that championed pacifist internationalism or massive peace activism that critiqued anti-fascism and saw war as unjustifiable as it embraced petitions and moral appeals for international justice. The Reverend William Lloyd Imes, the pastor of the St. James Presbyterian Church, during a parade in Harlem, called that "peace-loving and anti-fascist Italians march with us" and "we only join with justice loving groups in denouncing the fascist tyranny that seeks to impose its will upon the weak and

⁴³ Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance: Africa and Britain* (London and New York, 1999); Joseph Fronczak, "Local People's Global Politics: A Transnational History of the Hands-off Ethiopia Movement of 1935", *Diplomatic History*, 39:2.

disadvantaged."⁴⁴ Christian internationalists such as Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church, embraced peace activism that combined liberal and Christian beliefs that Jesus Christ as an avenue for confronting fascism, imperialism, and militarism. Many eschewed the Popular Front's direct actions activism in favor of the collective petitioning of Christian churches and ministers and the observance of days of prayers. This discourse remained on the periphery of Black popular politics since the Black public desired confrontational activism.

The Black Communist intellectual James W. Ford, directed organizing in Harlem as the head of the Harlem section of the Communist Party. He became a prominent member of the Black Popular Front, which established political unity of action focused on the economic and political needs of Black people in the struggle against discrimination by the establishment of the National Negro Congress (NNC). Ford worked with Socialist A. Philip Randolph, who embraced socialist internationalism advocating for the reform of the capitalist system, removal of all barriers to Black economic emancipation, and interracial working-class organizing. Ford and Randolph also rejected race-first Black internationalism in favor of a class-first internationalism to build a larger anti-fascist network.⁴⁵ He asserted, "the rulers of Italy fear most a rebellion of the workers and peasants" and "All Negroes against all whites is to play into the hands of the race-hatred campaign of Mussolini."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ "Will March Today Protesting War in Ethiopia."

⁴⁵ Holger Weiss, "Framing Black Communist Labor Union Organizing in the Atlantic World," *International Review of Social History* 64 (August 2019): 259.

⁴⁶ "Will March Today Protesting War in Ethiopia: Expect 50,000 in Big Parade," *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 5, 1935.

Significance of the Study

The Ethiopian war impacted Black public political discourse as Black newspapers and Black publicists articulated strong feelings of racial patriotism that influenced Black Americans' growing racial consciousness and their strengthening diasporic connection to Ethiopia. Black publicists and readers produced a written political discourse articulating Black internationalist anti-fascism, which revealed how Black Americans linked the invasion of Ethiopia with their domestic experience of racial injustice and the larger global struggle against white supremacy, imperialism, and economic exploitation. This study recognizes that Black internationalism reinforced American civic nationalism where they were loyal to the United States but refused to remain silent about the contradictory nature of American democracy. As Black Americans participated in journalistic activism to protect Ethiopian independence, they critiqued their relationship to the American nation, which was under siege by American fascisms such as Jim Crow, lynching, economic discrimination, unequal wages, and disenfranchisement. This study recognizes that all Black people who supported Ethiopian independence had different relationships with Ethiopia but a similar experience of racial, economic, and political oppression. Though they had a similar historical experience, they did not see themselves as part of the same imagined political community because of a common interest in Ethiopian independence. Some Black Americans used the Ethiopian War to create a new identity and detach themselves from the United States. Others used the war to reaffirm their American identity by addressing the racial and class exploitation or domestic fascisms that threatened the American democratic experiment.

Though studies have acknowledged Black newspapers were integral in galvanizing the Black public to support Ethiopia in its struggle to maintain its independence, the intellectual

contributions of Black publicists to Black political anti-fascist discourse have been neglected. Black publicists' political engagement and expression of their anti-fascist perspective impacted the content of Black political discourse in newspapers. Examining the content of the discourse aids in constructing and understanding the intellectual development and trajectory of Black anti-fascist discourse and argumentation during the war. Their discourse revealed new meaning and context to the nature of the language of anti-fascist activism during the Ethiopian war and the important transnational political connections and anti-fascist networks that were vital to pro-Ethiopian activism. Examining discourse in Black publications helps to understand the meaning of the preservation of Ethiopian independence to Black Americans, and how Black publicists, editors, and activists were integral to stimulating the Black public to act as they printed excerpts from speeches of activists in their coverage, wrote editorials, conducted interviews with notable activists and diplomatic representatives of Ethiopia, and printed letters that called for the Black public to engage in the anti-fascist organization or why they should support a particular political orientation in the anti-fascist struggle. At the same time, these newspapers also revealed that Black readers were not simply passive recipients of political discourse. Still, they also produced discourse in the press by contributing letters to the editor and editorials critiquing American foreign policy, Mussolini's fascist policy, the connection between domestic racism and fascism, and also weighing in on publicists and activists who expressed opinions they perceive as being counterproductive to the struggle against Italian fascism.

To understand the impact of political ideas and how Black publicists, readers, editors, and activists constructed a framework for interpreting the invasion of Ethiopia, this study examined twenty weekly published Black mainstream publications, which were circulated nationally and locally. They included *The Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Philadelphia Tribune* and *The Cleveland*

Gazette, and *The Cleveland Call and Post*, which expressed Black Nationalist and radical Socialist and Communist perspectives. The *Amsterdam News* voiced a politics-oriented towards the Left and the Popular Front. Besides, *The Negro Liberator*, *The Los Angeles Sentinel*, and *The People's Voice* were also Popular Front-affiliated newspapers, and they were examined to glean the Black Leftist perspective. *The Washington Tribune*, *The New York Age*, aligned with the NAACP, espoused liberal politics. Though *The Chicago Defender* publicized Popular Front rallies and parades, it adopted a more muted liberal politics. Some of the publications were used more than others due to the availability of editions within the timeframe of the study and the quality of the news coverage.

Examining these newspapers helped to understand the different political perspectives that Black publicists expressed as they reported on the Ethiopian war. This study also included white mainstream newspapers such as *The New York Times*, which expressed middle-of-the-road politics but tended to express support for Mussolini. *The New York Herald Tribune* was also included because it employed journalists who expressed Mussolini's support. *The Christian Science Monitor* was also included because it offered a sympathetic and white pacifist and Christian internationalist perspective. *The Daily Worker* was also used to provide a white and Black leftist perspective since available editions of *The Liberator* were only available to October 1935. *The Jewish Exponent*, *The Jewish Advocate*, and *The New Israelite* were included to understand the Jewish perspective regarding the war. *The New Times and Ethiopia News*, founded by the British feminist, anti-fascist, and founder of the British Communist Party, Sylvia Pankhurst, was associated with the European Popular Front and included articles denouncing Italian fascism. It was a key part of the Popular Front's network of white anti-fascist resistance.

The Amsterdam News and *The Courier* reprinted articles and editorials from the paper because they offer a detailed analysis of the battleground conditions in Ethiopia.

Historiography

William R. Scott laid the foundation for examining how Black Americans galvanized around Ethiopia during the Ethiopian crisis in a demonstration of pan-African support as they linked their domestic struggles to that of Ethiopia's struggle for independence. This study provided a deeper examination of Black American meanings of freedom. It examined the paradox of Ethiopian domestic slavery, and Black continued belief that Ethiopia represented Black freedom and self-determination. This dissertation recognized that Black Nationalist sentiment influenced some Black Americans to come to the aid of Ethiopia during the early war years. However, it recognized that debates in Black newspapers underwent an ideological transition as Black publicists embraced an American civic nationalism as they participated in deeper debates about the relationship of the League's inaction regarding Ethiopia to the survival of liberal democracy and the self-determination of Black people. Black internationalism saw the war and the international community's response as a litmus test for the League of Nations, its professed liberal-democratic idealism, the durability of democratic institutions against imperialist and fascist influence, which undermined the civil, political, and economic rights of Black people.

William Scott neglected to consider how the Black American press interrogated connections between Britain's imperial system and Italian fascism. This study corrected this oversight and examined the discourse of Black publicists and readers concerning Britain and its commitment to Ethiopian independence. It traced Black publicists' discourse critiquing Britain's failure to come to the defense of Ethiopia earlier during the war. It also traced Black publicists' discourse critiquing the hypocrisy of Britain in aiding to liberate Ethiopia using African colonials

while continuing to oppress them. This study also considered Black publicists' debates regarding Britain's motives for providing military and financial aid to Selassie to reclaim his country during the occupation and establish his government during the post-war period. Also, this study examined the Black press's argument concerning the relationship of Italian fascism and the persistence of Jim Crow in the United States military and British colonialism.

The emergence of Black American anti-fascist activism and the global response of Black American mainstream newspapers such as *The Defender* and *The Courier*, which followed events closely during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, had been established in informative studies by Brenda Gayle Plummer, James Hunter Meriweather, Michael Clemmons, and Cedric J. Robinson.⁴⁷ Scott, Penny Von Eschen, and John Munro demonstrated that the Black American press constituted a major site of resistance since it delineated the radical politics of the African diaspora during the Ethiopian war.⁴⁸ In her award-winning study of Black public life in Harlem during the interwar years, Clare Corbould remarked how “once the invasion took place, Black

⁴⁷ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); James Hunter Meriweather, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Michael L. Clemons, *African Americans in Global Affairs: Contemporary Perspectives* (Boston Northeastern University Press: University of New England, 2010); *Cedric J. Robinson: On Racial Capitalism, Black Internationalism, and Cultures of Resistance*, edited by H. L.T. Quan (Pluto Press, 2019).

⁴⁸ Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 15.; William R. Scott, *Sons of Sheba's Race: African Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993); William R. Scott, “Black Nationalism and the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict, 1934-1936,” *Journal of Negro History* 63 (April 1978); Cedric J. Robinson, “Fascism and the Intersection of Capitalism, Racialism, and Historical Consciousness,” *Humanities in Society* 6 (Fall 1983); 344; Joseph E. Harris, *African-American Reactions to the War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994).; John Munro, “Ethiopia Stretched Forth Across the Atlantic: African American Anticolonialism during the Interwar period,” *Left History* 13, no.2 (Spring/Summer 2009): 41.

newspapers devoted almost every page to covering the war.”⁴⁹ However, these studies have yet to drill down into the Black Nationalist, Communist, Socialist, liberal, and pacifist discourses during the war articulated by Black publicists and readers. This study expanded on the scholarly discourse on Black internationalism during the war. It examined the role of Black publicists, journalists, editors, publishers, and activists in producing a public written anti-fascist discourse that animated pro-Ethiopia activism during the war.

There is a large literature on Garveyism in the 1920s and 1930s. Scholars such as Rupert Lewis, Tony Martin, Edmund David Cronon, Judith Stein, Robert A. Hill, Wilson Jeremiah Moses, and Mary G. Rolinson have traced the local, national, and transnational ideological reach of Garveyism and the roots of his political discourse and his anti-colonial politics.⁵⁰ Scholarship has fixated on how his organizational structure reflected fascistic elements. The historians, Paul Gilroy and Mark Christian Thompson contributed to studies that examined Garvey’s controversial relationship and praise of European fascist dictators’ militaristic and centralized

⁴⁹ Clare Corbould, *Becoming African Americans: Black Public Life in Harlem, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 196.

⁵⁰ Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism: Garvey Black Arts and the Harlem Renaissance* (Dover: Majority Press, 1983); Robert A. Hill, ed., *Marcus Garvey, Life, and Lessons: A Centennial Companion to the Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.,; Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1988); Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1986); Liz Mackie, *The Great Marcus Garvey* (London: Hansib Publications, 2008); Peggy Caravantes, *Marcus Garvey Black Nationalist* (Greensboro: Morgan Reynolds Publishers, 2004); Mary Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (Oxford University Press, 2008); Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey* (New York University Press), 1996.

organizational leadership during the 1930s.⁵¹ Despite critiques of Garveyism as admiring of fascist dictators, Garveyite political discourse, rooted in anti-colonialism and Western imperialism after the invasion of Ethiopia, critiqued fascist actions in Ethiopia. This study examined his discourse in his organizational journal *The Black Man*, an underutilized resource, after the invasion. It also examined the nature of Garvey's political critiques of the occupation of Ethiopia and the Black public and other Black publicists' critiques of his nationalistic pan-Africanist discourse.

J. A. Rogers has been a subject of recent studies focused on his contribution to creating a racially nationalist print culture during the war. In his earlier study of *The Courier's* publisher Robert Vann, Alexander Bruni mentioned that Roger's race-focused journalism provided the newspaper with dramatic reporting intended to generate feelings of pride in Black readers.⁵² Aric Putnam acknowledged the amateur journalists' 1936 pamphlet "Real Facts about Ethiopia contributed to discussions regarding race and power under colonialism."⁵³ However, studies have not examined the development of Rogers' pan-African discourse during the war's entirety. This study examined the messaging of J. A. Rogers' pan-African discourse during Ethiopia's invasion, annexation, occupation, and pacification. This study also examined his discourse regarding Ethiopia in the post-war reconstruction period of Ethiopia.

Scholarly discourse has presented a clear narrative about the development and implementation of President Roosevelt's foreign policy and diplomacy during the Second Italo-

⁵¹ Paul Gilroy, "Black Fascism," *Transition* 9, no. 1 (2000): 70; Mark Christian Thompson, *Black Fascisms: African American Literature and Culture during the Wars* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

⁵² Robert Bruni, *Robert Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier, Politics and Black Journalism* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974).

⁵³ Aric Putnam, "Ethiopia Is Now: J.A. Rogers and the Rhetoric of Black Anti-Colonialism during the Great Depression," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2008): 419-444.

Ethiopian War and its impact on American citizens.⁵⁴ However, this historiography has not included Black publicists' and readers' internationalist political discourses in the Black press critiquing the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy response to the Ethiopian crisis. This study corrected this historiographical silence of the Black American voice demanding that Ethiopia be prioritized in Roosevelt's foreign policy. It examined how Black publicists, activists, and readers felt about the American foreign policy engaging Ethiopia during the invasion, the occupation, pacification, and returning Haile Selassie to his throne. This study also considered how Black Americans' political thought regarding Roosevelt's response links between U.S. foreign policy, domestic racial policy, and fascism.

Brenda Gayle Plummer, James Hunter Meriweather, and Michael Clemmons contributed informative studies on the participation of African Americans in foreign affairs.⁵⁵ Also, several studies have been compiled on the League of Nations and its failure to ensure collective security and prevent the outbreak of wars. However, these scholars did not focus on Black Americans' discursive engagement in Black publications with the geopolitics of the League of Nations during the Ethiopian war. This study examined the written resistance discourse of Black

⁵⁴ Robert Dalley, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Harry Elmer Barnes, *Perpetual War Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath* (San Francisco: Hauraki Publishing, 2016); Howard Jablon, *Crossroads of Decision: The State Department and Foreign Policy, 1933-1937* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983); Charles Callan Tansill, *Back Door To War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952); Michael G. Carew, *The Impact of the First World War on U.S. Policy Makers: American Strategic and Foreign Policy Formulation* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

⁵⁵ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); James Hunter Meriweather, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961*; Michael L. Clemons, *African Americans in Global Affairs: Contemporary Perspectives* (Boston: Northeastern University Press: University Press of New England, 2010).

American publicists and readers voicing that the League of Nations was committed to upholding the racial status quo and European imperialism rather than preserving peace, justice, and collective security after the invasion of Ethiopia. This study also examined the varied oppositional political discourses in the Black mainstream and alternative press in response to the League's inaction to halt Italian fascists' martial aggression. This study traced these discourses during the invasion, the occupation, and Emperor Selassie's return to the throne.

Gerald Horne contributed a very informative study of the origins and the demise of the Associated Negro Press (ANP) and its founder Claude A. Barnett. Horne argued that Barnett transformed the ANP into a “network of informants who sought to reach a larger African American and Pan-African audience by passing on news items to the ANP.”⁵⁶ Horne recognized that the ANP was an example of pan-Africanism in practice but did not pay attention to Claude Barnett's role in fostering real links between Black America and the Ethiopian Empire. This study examined Barnett's African diasporic politics and how he used his news network as an informal diplomatic channel to create and sustain links to the Ethiopian government to bolster Black American racial consciousness and solidarity with Ethiopia during the war.

Reginald Kearney, Bill Mullen, Gerald Horne, Marc Gallicchio, Yunishiro Onishi, and Keisha Blain explored the history of trans-Pacific solidarity of Black radical activists and Japanese nationalists during the interwar years and World War II.⁵⁷ J. Clavitt Clarke, on the other

⁵⁶ Gerald Horne, *The Rise, and Fall of the Associated Negro Press: Claude Barnett's Pan-African News and Jim Crow Paradox* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 55.

⁵⁷ Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter With Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Yuichiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in Twentieth-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Gerald Horne, *Facing the Rising Sun: African Americans, Japan and the Rise of Afro-Asian Solidarity* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

hand, contributed an excellent diplomatic history examining Japanese and Ethiopian commercial relations from the early twentieth century to that early period of Italian aggression against Ethiopia. These studies did not examine the political discourse in the Black mainstream and alternative press concerning a Japanese alliance during the Ethiopian war. This study examined the varied perspectives of Black publicists and readers regarding the possibility of an Ethiopian and Japanese alliance after the invasion, occupation, and pacification of Ethiopia. It also examined how the politics of World War II impacted Black America's argumentation and representation of Japan concerning Ethiopia in the Black press.

Methodology

Studying discourse production during the war leads to a better understanding of how Black publications functioned as a counter-hegemonic discourse providing an alternative discursive context for understanding the war. Articles from *The Cleveland Gazette*, *The Negro Liberator*, and *The New York Age* were gathered from *The African American Newspapers 1827-1998* electronic database. The ProQuest Historical Newspapers electronic newspaper database was an invaluable resource providing access to editions of the *Chicago Defender*, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Philadelphia Tribune*, *The New York Amsterdam News*, *The New York Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times Historical Database*. Also, this study accessed archival editions of *The Crisis* from the online resource Google Books. This study also used the ProQuest History Vault to examine The Claude A. Barnett Papers and The NAACP Papers. The archival copies of *The Black Man* were accessed at The Amy Memorial Collection on Marcus Garvey, 1776-1971 in the Special Collections & Archives at Fisk University. This study also used secondary resources such as monographs and articles focused on the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, Black internationalism, and print culture in the 1930s.

This study adopted Stuart Hall's discourse theory, emphasizing how language can be used to contest power and dominance. This study adopted critical discourse analysis to examine the connections and sources of discourses circulated in the Black press during the war, why they changed, and how new discourses were translated into intellectual debates. This study examined how ideas about race, democratic liberalism, and definitions of civilization and modernity were constructed and expressed perspectives. It is also influenced by the theoretical concept of an imagined transnational community, an outgrowth of Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined political communities" where "members may not know and cannot know each other, but they feel bound together by common interests."⁵⁸ In this case, Black newspapers and publications aided in creating and sustaining a transnational community of activists. These activists were part of the Black networked public sphere connecting local economic, political, and racial injustice to the liberation of Ethiopia and the globalized struggle against fascism. As newspapers highlighted the commonalities of the struggles of Black Americans with those of Ethiopia, they functioned as a platform contributing to the production and circulation of political discourses for imagining Black America's relationship to Ethiopia.

Chapter Outline

Chapter I "Introduction" explored the background context and issues preceding the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. It discussed the significance of the study, historiography, and methodology.

Chapter II, "Hail to Ethiopia!" examined Black Americans' perceptions from 1919 to 1934. The chapter offered context for the emergence of pro-Ethiopia and anti-colonial public

⁵⁸ Benedict R O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006).

discourses in Black mainstream and alternative newspapers before the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Furthermore, it examined how Black newspapers were central to disseminating a Black popular culture and imagery of Ethiopia that repositioned Ethiopia in the imagination of Black Americans.

Chapter III, "Groundwork," focused on anti-fascist and pro-Ethiopia organizing before the invasion from March 1935 to September 1935. It explored how Black activists viewed themselves about the American and the Ethiopian nations. It also examined how Black Nationalist, Communist, Christian Pacifist, Socialist, and liberal internationalism was articulated by Black publicists to galvanize the Black public to action.

Chapter IV, "War!" focused on Black American pro-Ethiopia mobilization from October 1935 to May 1936. The chapter explored the competing narratives, and contentious politics among Black Nationalists, liberals, Communists, pacifists, and Socialists disseminated in the Black press. It set the stage for how these discourses influenced the opinions and development of a pro-Ethiopian Black internationalist movement.

Chapter V is titled "The Occupation." This chapter focused on representing Ethiopia's Italian fascist military occupation and the pacification campaign in the Black press from June 1936 to December 1937. It explored Ethiopia's occupation, Italy's brutal pacification campaign, and the ideological transition in pro-Ethiopia discourse.

Chapter VI, "The Flood Gates of Fascism," focused on representing Italy's occupation of Ethiopia and the pacification campaign in the Black press from January 1938 to Ethiopia's liberation in May 1941. This chapter examined how Black newspapers' anti-fascist and Pan-African discourses linked Black America's experience with Jim Crow to the expansion of global fascism. The chapter further examined the argumentation contained in Black newspapers

criticizing the League of Nations' support of imperialism and how its failure to intervene in Mussolini's rape of Ethiopia threatened the survival of global democracy.

Chapter VII, titled "The Aftermath," focused on May 1941 to December 1942, including the return of Emperor Selassie and the British military campaign to quell pockets of fascist resistance. It centered on World War II on pro-Ethiopia discourse in Black newspapers.

Chapter VIII "Conclusion" summarised the project inferences as discussed in previous chapters.

CHAPTER II: HAIL TO ETHIOPIA!

Introduction

From August 1919 to December 1934, Black Americans' perceptions of Ethiopia underwent a slow but dramatic ideological shift. Black American newspapers presented Ethiopian imagery that created an imagined world and repositioned the country within the hearts and minds of the Black public. The Black American press played a major role in the Black public's adoption of Black solidarity and an embryonic Black internationalism influenced by a Black nationalistic narrative of liberation. Black print public sphere is where public intellectuals, journalists, and readers participated in argumentation, production, circulation of a proto-Black internationalist print culture recovering and representing the multiple meanings of Ethiopia to the Black community. This cultural representation had the potential to shape Black public opinion, self-perception, and self-esteem and it also built an imagined community bound by the bonds of Black solidarity. With this said, The Garvey Movement and the Harlem Renaissance influenced the production of discourses aiding in shaping Black America's conception of Ethiopia while also providing the groundwork for Pan-Africanist and Black internationalist discourse during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War.

Reporting and Representation of Ethiopia from 1919 to 1934

Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia occupied a special place in Black America's cultural memory because they were sites of the two independent Black countries during the early twentieth century. Although Liberia and Haiti were politically independent, they were economically dependent on the United States. Haiti remained indebted to American companies and Liberia was dominated by the Firestone Rubber Company. Consequently, Ethiopia was the only country that effectively resisted European economic, political, and cultural domination.

Thus, Ethiopia retained a special place in Black America's cultural memory and a rallying point or resistance against white domination because Emperor Menelik II's March 1896 victory at the Battle of Adowa was a protest against colonial domination. Also, Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands toward God" was interpreted by Black Americans as a liberatory promise for freedom, justice, political, and economic empowerment.

In August 1919, Prince Dajazmatch Nadou, Ato Belanghetta Herouy, Wolde Selassie, and Kanthiha Gabrou arrived in Washington, D.C. Many Black Americans possibly interpreted the arrival of the four-man Ethiopian goodwill delegation in Washington, D.C. as a fulfillment of Psalm 68:31: "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands." Though Ethiopia did not join the war on either side, Ethiopians visited the United States in celebration of the Allies' victory over Germany. Also, Ethiopia hoped to forge an amicable commercial exchange with American businessmen to transition Ethiopia's feudal agricultural economy to a modern economy. In light of this fact, possibly the Ethiopian envoys represented strength, power, prestige, and character to Black Americans who hoped the delegation would stretch out their hand. However, this was not the case since Empress Wauditu, daughter of Menelik II, and the Ethiopian ruling class were contemptuous of Black foreigners and refused to fraternize with them as brother and sister Africans. The Wilson administration expressed disdain for Black Americans by implementing federal segregation in Washington, D.C. Though the Ethiopians were Black, them wearing turbans and other foreign dress enabled them to transcend the restrictive color line that the Wilson administration enacted in Washington, D.C. They navigated D.C.'s racial terrain easily because the administration did not want to upset the negotiation of beneficial trade agreements with Ethiopia. *The St. Paul Appeal* (Minnesota), described the pomp and circumstance and how the delegation "wore robes heavy with gold and

silver trimmings and large silk turbans embroidered with pearls.”⁵⁹ President Woodrow Wilson, according to the newspaper, met with the delegation which presented him with “elephant tusks seven feet long mounted in solid gold, spears, and javelins and native garments of the richest and beautifulest materials, embroidered in jewels, two gold cups, and a gold lined box.”⁶⁰

The Ethiopian mission’s visit to the United States coincided with the bloody conflagrations of racial violence across the United States known as the Red Summer that occurred within a climate of fear and expanding white supremacism. This violence occurred because of the demobilization of Black soldiers, mass migrations of Blacks out of the South to the Midwest and North, labor competition, and the increased population of urban centers. Black editors denounced how the violence of war intersected with domestic racial violence and criticized how white publications blamed the violence on Black men and women. Prince Nadou, a senior member of the delegation and nephew of the Empress, agreed to an interview with a reporter from *The Defender*, published by the moderate civil rights crusader Robert S. Abbot applied modern journalism techniques of metropolitan dailies to his weekly newspaper covered lynching in the South extensively.⁶¹ The newspaper attracted a large Black readership because it advocated a militant response to lynching while stopping short of calling for armed insurrection.⁶² When the reporter asked Nadou, “What he thought about lynching in the U.S?” He replied that Ethiopians “dislike brutality, burning at the stake, the lynching of any nature, and

⁵⁹ “Abyssinia Sends Greetings to Us,” *The Appeal*, July 19, 1919.

⁶⁰ “Abyssinia Sends Greetings.”

⁶¹ Fred Carroll, *Race News: Black Journalists and the Fight for Racial Justice in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 20.

⁶² Ethan Michaeli, *The Defender: How The Legendary Black Newspaper Changed America: From the Age of the Pullman Porters to the Age of Obama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2016), 50.

other outrages heaped upon your people.”⁶³ The newspaper was not soft on white racial violence against Black people. Widely considered the “most militant” Black newspaper during the World War I period.⁶⁴ The reporter followed up and Nadou related that he and members of the delegation considered themselves members of the darker races but “not like American Black men.”⁶⁵ On another occasion, a Brooklyn correspondent for *The Defender* briefly interacted with the head of the Ethiopian mission and asked him about race relations in the United States and he responded that “he hoped these conditions would soon pass.”⁶⁶ *The Defender’s* correspondent probably posed this question because one month earlier experienced one of the most severe outbreaks of racial violence where 23 Black and white Chicagoans died and more than 500 were wounded during the Chicago Race Massacre.⁶⁷ The Ethiopian representative's response evidenced how the delegation did not display any pan-African feelings since they failed to establish a formal relationship with the Black American community during this trip.

During the mission trip, members of the Ethiopian mission trip’s racial exceptionality were challenged as they were marginalized because of their Blackness. The delegates experienced racial discrimination when they attempted to dine at the segregated National Democratic Club in New York City. *The Times*, one of the more moderate white newspapers, *publicized* the incident with the headline “Club Bars Heir to Abyssinian Throne” asserting the

⁶³ “Abyssinian Mission Arrives In U.S.” Representatives of Foreign Government on Way to White House,” *The Chicago Defender*, July 12, 1919.

⁶⁴ Frank S. Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 104.

⁶⁵ “Abyssinian Mission Arrives.”

⁶⁶ “Welcome Abyssinian Mission.”

⁶⁷ “Ghastly Deeds of Race Rioters Told”: The Chicago Defender Reports the Chicago Race Riot, 1919,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 1, 1919.

Club “after learning the guests [were] black” canceled their reservation.⁶⁸ Members of the Ethiopian delegation chose to not speak publicly about their discrimination because they did not want to challenge the Empress’s order that they should not discuss race issues. However, *The Defender* sarcastically weighed in on the delegation’s slight asserting that “an official of the club looked out and beheld the dark faces of the Abyssinian notables” and “the dinner reservations were canceled.”⁶⁹ *The Defender* interpreted that this act was intended in “placing them in the same category as the American Race-Man.”⁷⁰ Although the delegation did not identify with Black Americans, Black Americans identified the mass dimensions of racism underlying their treatment.

Ethiopia’s sending of its first diplomatic mission in August 1919 to the United States occurred when Black Americans were institutionalizing their ideas about pan-Africanism and creating organizations to negotiate their relationship with Africa. This early diplomatic mission coincided with the forming of the news agency the Associated Negro Press (ANP) by Claude A. Barnett in Chicago, Illinois, which was modeled after the white Associated Press. Its formation was in reaction to how in “every city along the way, he encountered editors complaining about obtaining news.”⁷¹ However, the ANP did not evolve into a pan-African news network obtaining news about Ethiopia until 1930. The ANP embodied the ethos of the New Negro since it supported a cadre of journalists that wrote from a Black perspective and catered to white audiences as they stoked Black consciousness by advocating for protest against oppressive

⁶⁸ “Club Bars Heir to Abyssinian Throne,” *New York Times*, August 4, 1919.

⁶⁹ “Deny Abyssinians Dinner at Club: Color of Skins Caused New York Club to Draw Line,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 9, 1919.

⁷⁰ “Black Faces Bar Abyssinians from National Democratic Club,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 9, 1919.

⁷¹ Horne, *The Rise and Fall of the Associated Negro Press*, 26.

systems. The N.A.A.C. P's journal, *The Crisis*, edited by the Socialist W.E.B. Du Bois articulated the politics of the New Negro. Du Bois wrote for an interracial audience and covered international issues while adopting a pan-African perspective emphasizing the unity and liberation of all peoples of African descent. He espoused an elite pan-Africanism leading the organization of the First Pan-African Conference in Paris in 1919 during the postwar deliberations outlining the new world order. Du Bois did not mention Ethiopia nor the Ethiopian delegation's visit but he did assert "The natives of Africa must have a right to participate in the Government as fast as their development permits."⁷² At the 1921 Pan-African Conference, Du Bois did reference Ethiopia's hope for maintaining its independence asserting, "The independence of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti" is "absolutely necessary to any sustained belief of the black folk in the sincerity of the white."⁷³

The Jamaican Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association and Communities League (U.N.I.A) founded in 1918 and based in Harlem, New York, appealed to a wider audience. Garvey rejected Du Bois's reformist Pan-African program as he called for the complete independence of colonial nations. He also gained wider support from Black Americans frustrated by the elite pan-Africanist politics of the N.A.A.C.P. Garvey's movement centered the New Negro as he emphasized Black identity construction proclaiming, "the Negro has burst the shackles and has come forth triumphantly," and that "the old Negro is not here, he is risen;" look around and see the New Negro."⁷⁴

⁷² "It's better to be Right than White," *The Crisis* 21, no 3 (January 1921): 101.

⁷³ Herbert Aptheker, ed. *Pamphlets and Leaflets by W.E.B. Du Bois* (White Plains: Kraus-Thomson, 1986), 198.

⁷⁴ Marcus Garvey Greeted By Delegation As He Passes Through Cuba," *Negro World*," April 2, 1921.

During the 1920s, Garveyism evolved into one of the largest pan-African grassroots movements with 1,700 divisions in 40 countries with 4 million members.⁷⁵ Garvey's pan-Africanism emphasized that all Black people should be proud of their Blackness and that they were part of an African diasporic con-fraternity and that Africa was the "motherland of all Negroes" since they were taken from here and enslaved. Nonetheless, Garvey did not believe that Black people should only have one nation but work towards the construction of a racial empire composed of independent Black nations that were a source of economic and political power.⁷⁶ This large political entity of a racial empire, in turn, enabled Black people to fight against white colonial rule and the exploitation of the natural resources of the continent by Western capitalist imperialist governments. For example, on February 19, 1921, Garvey explained that diasporic Black people should be prepared to "meet the great boom in African activities" and "organize to take hold of the higher development of Africa" and they should "join hands and hearts with their African brothers for the redemption of the great Motherland." Garvey believed that the reclamation of Africa from white colonial domination was a duty because Black people should not "tolerate other men and other races going into their country to rob and take away from them which is their natural right."⁷⁷

Marcus Garvey's political discourse and journalism aided in reinforcing some Black Americans' bonds with an Ethiopian past. The UNIA's official newspaper was *The Negro World*, first edited by the Socialist W.A. Domingo and then by Harlem intellectual Hubert

⁷⁵ Dominik Fruhwirth, "Ethiopia Thou Land of Our Fathers!" From Ethiopianism to Pan-Africanism," *Vienna Journal of African Studies* 20, no. 38 (2020): 34.

⁷⁶ Marcus Garvey, Robert A. Hill, Barbara Blair, *Marcus Garvey Life and Lessons: A Centennial Companion of the Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 208.

⁷⁷ Marcus Garvey, "Africa the Land of Hope and Promise For Negroes of the World: Will Negroes Allow the Whites to Take Africa?" *Negro World*, February 19, 1921.

Harrison as well as several other notable editors. Published from 1918 to 1933, it became a major vehicle popularizing Garveyism and increased African diasporic communication regarding issues related to Black people.⁷⁸ *The World* had from 60,000 to 200,000 subscribers in the United States, the Caribbean, and London during its most prosperous years. The paper's popularity stemmed from the Black public's turning to the alternative Black press because it offered a radical message. Garvey learned the power of journalism and the newspaper to build Black global solidarity and anti-colonial sentiment during his early years in Britain when he worked at the *African Times and Orient Review*, an early advocate of Pan-Africanism.⁷⁹ The *World* editors reprinted Garvey's speeches, poetry, articles from Garveyite journalists, and information about UNIA events to secularize and popularize Ethiopianism. This ideology celebrated the ancient history of Ethiopia, Ethiopian identity, and the fulfillment of Black destiny in Ethiopia. Garvey routinely used "Ethiopia" and "Ethiopian" to refer to Africa and people of African descent, not the East African nation, which he referred to as Abyssinia. It also carried Garvey's speeches exhorting his followers as "young sons and daughters of Ethiopia."⁸⁰ Additionally, it was commonplace for the newspaper to publicize UNIA meetings and celebrations to close with the singing of the organization's National Anthem "Ethiopia Thou Land of Our Fathers" written by Josiah Ford. Garveyites concluded their meetings by singing the anthem including the lyrics that became an enduring symbol of Garveyite pan-Africanism. The lyrics include,

Ethiopia, thou land of our fathers,
Thou land where the gods loved to be

⁷⁸ Garvey learned the power of journalism to galvanize the Black public when he worked at the Pan-African monthly journal *The New Times and Orient Review* that was published by the Egyptian nationalist Duse Mohammed Ali.

⁷⁹ *The African Times and Orient Review* was published in London from 1913 to 1918. The journal was banned in England when World War I broke out and it resumed publication in 1920.

⁸⁰ "Untitled Article" *Negro World*, July 2, 1921.

The chorus of the anthem instructed Garveyites of their role in the liberation of Ethiopia as it encouraged them to unify in response to the white colonial threat and wave the flag symbolizing the unity of the African diaspora as they,

Advance, advance to victory
Let Africa be free
Advance to meet the foe
With the might of the red, black and green.⁸¹

Garvey admired the genius and high culture of Ethiopians during antiquity. The newspaper celebrated pomp and pageantry glorifying ancient Ethiopia. An article published on September 3, 1921, compared the pageantry during the Second International Conference of the UNIA to a “revival of the ancient glory pomp and splendor of Ethiopia in the days of Queen of Sheba, centuries-long ago, of her greatness and world supremacy.”⁸² By incorporating elaborate colorful regalia that imitated the monarchical robes of ancient Ethiopia into various parts of the organization, Garveyism counteracted how the white world tried to discredit Blacks as lacking a history and culture. Additionally, he fathomed that Ethiopian history aided in demonstrating to white people that Black people deserved to be respected and admired with respect and esteem.⁸³

Garveyism was influenced by how after the war the League of Nations, the new international body tasked with safeguarding the new peace, oversaw the creation of the mandate and protectorate system that strengthened European imperialism in Africa. Garvey believed that the New Negro had a special role to play in the redemption of the African continent from colonial domination. He reminded readers that “Abyssinia was in sympathy with the struggle for

⁸¹ “Ancient Ethiopian Ceremony, Scenes of Unusual Pomp,” *Negro World*, September 2, 1921.

⁸² “Ancient Ethiopian Ceremony, Scenes of Unusual Pomp.”

⁸³ Marcus Garvey, “Who and What Is A Negro?” January 19, 1923 in *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey or Africa for the Africans*, ed, Amy Jacques Garvey (Frank Cass & Company, Ltd., 1967. London), 19.

racial emancipation” and her “arms are being extended to Negroes of the West” who are “prepared and equipped to enlist in the struggle for national independence.”⁸⁴ Garvey wanted to establish a relationship with Abyssinian which he saw as a nation as a “result of forceful and accomplished leadership.”⁸⁵ He and his followers admired Ras Tafari Makonnen, Prince regent of Ethiopia who traced his lineage to the biblical figures King Solomon of Israel and the Queen of Sheba. He reigned as co-regent with Empress Zauditu, who was co-regent and daughter of Menelik II. Garvey and his followers revered Ras Tafari as a pan-African symbol that sought unity of people of African descent. On June 17, 1922, Greenleaf Johnson, a publicist for *The World*, relayed that Ras Tafari was a man who expressed “sympathies with the American Negroes struggles and sufferings” and that “her natural resources would be ample to sustain 15,000,000 American Negroes.” Johnson also presented that Abyssinia could “be a forward step in the reclamation of the motherland Africa” from the European powers’ “rape of the African continent.”⁸⁶ Garvey pleaded with Black people throughout the world to “come together in one solid body and lend their support” to “those who have courage enough, in order that Abyssinia may help African redeem herself.”⁸⁷

The NAACP’s Field Secretary William Pickens in an editorial in *The World*, questioned establishing a relationship with Abyssinia asserting “the Abyssinians claim they are not Negroes but Semites” and that the emigration “movement should start among the Negroes in the freer

⁸⁴ “Montreal Notes, Distinguished Abyssinian Divine Lectures on Future of the Negro Race,” *The Negro World*, July 2, 1921.

⁸⁵ Christian A. Harrigan, “Is Dr. Du Bois Mised or Is He Misluding?” *Negro World*, July 16, 1921.

⁸⁶ Greenleaf S. Johnson, “Abyssinia Extends Colonization Offer to American Negroes,” *Negro World*, June 17, 1922.

⁸⁷ “UNIA Has Accomplished Wonders,” *Negro World*, June 24, 1922.

Western Republic of Liberia.”⁸⁸ Pickens won out and Garveyites focused their emigration discourse on Liberia for the rest of the 1920s. Garvey saw the Black people could have a place in Liberia as he asserted, “you and I are called to see the vision of a free Ethiopia that we and our forefathers have dreamt of. We are living at the very moment. The very time when Ethiopia is stretching forth her hands unto God.”⁸⁹ Garvey attached an anti-colonial meaning to the Psalm due to his intention of establishing a UNIA settlement in the Republic of Liberia to counter Western imperialism and white capitalism. Garvey appointed himself the “Provisional Leader of Africa” expressing his vision of bringing 400,000 Black people under “one great government in Ethiopia.” Liberia or Ethiopia, accordingly, was the site of a large Black polity that would be the “biggest republic in the world, the Republic of Africa.”⁹⁰ He envisioned this “New Jerusalem” destined to be a site of Black economic opportunity and a beacon of Black self-determination and justice.

Garvey’s focus on strong nation-building and Black political autonomy took intellectual inspiration from Indian nationalism and European revolutionary movements that emerged after World War I. *The World* informed readers of these developments by representing how these movements provided a model for Black Americans to achieve self-determination. On February 26, 1921, during an impassioned speech Garvey delivered in Cincinnati, Ohio, he acknowledged the political flux during the post-war period and how since other ethnic groups were asserting their independence, Black people needed to see the “right of Africa for the Africans.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ William Pickens, “Africa for Africans: Field Secretary of the NAACP Analyzes Garvey Movement,” *The Negro World*, December 17, 1921.

⁸⁹ “Provisional President of Africa Moves City of Cincinnati with Great Eloquence,” *Negro World*, February 26, 1921.

⁹⁰ Garvey, “Provisional President of Africa.”

⁹¹ “Provisional President of Africa Moves City of Cincinnati with Great Eloquence,” *Negro World*, February 26, 1921.

According to the leader “the World War has created such a disturbance of the world” and “During this slow readjustment, it falls to the Negro to find his place in the sun.”⁹² Garveyites endorsed his vision by producing poetry praising Garvey’s role in the redemption of Ethiopia. From 1920 to 1921, poetry was very prominent in the newspaper and featured in the section “Poetry for the People.” Rena S. Powell’s poem, “The Battle Hymn of Ethiopia,” was set to the tune of the Battle Hymn of the Republic and conveyed to Black readers that better days were coming, as she wrote:

When the scattered son of Ethiopia shall be anchored away
Upon the shores of Africa their own native land
God’s word is being fulfilled.

In later verses, Powell conveyed to readers that part of the Biblical prophecy of Psalm 68:13 had been fulfilled as she wrote:

Princes out of Ethiopia have already come

While she implored Black Americans to stretch forth their own hands and that Black people need to be proactive because, as she wrote:

The time has really come
For your return home⁹³

Garveyites canonized Marcus Garvey as the Black messiah who prophesied the redemption of the Black race or Ethiopians. Anna E. Shields of Cambridge Massachusetts expressed her confidence in Garvey’s Ethiopian dream in A Prophecy to Ethiopia, in *The World* on June 21, 1921:

Oh say do you know that the day shall arrive
As sure as the sun shines in yonder’s clear sky
Ethiopia shall reign supreme, free from disdain?
Her leader and guide through the conflict shall be

⁹² Marcus Garvey, “Provisional President of Africa Moves City of Cincinnati with His Great Eloquence,” *Negro World*, February 26, 1921.

⁹³ Rena S. Powell, “The Battle Hymn of Ethiopia,” *Negro World*, September 10, 1921.

Jehovah! Who died that all men should be free.

Shields, like many Black Americans, sought to escape white terrorist violence as she described in verse how Black men were routinely victimized as they were:

Oft hung from the trees while the pale moon shines,
Oft burned at the stake for another man's crime,
But, her blood is avenged, for every one ten time ten⁹⁴

Garvey's pan-Africanist program relied on a political discourse illuminating how the building of a Black empire in Ethiopia constituted a project to put a stop to Western imperialism, which hindered the development of African and its peoples. This aspect of his political platform reflects how Garveyism was both a radical movement with a Western-oriented ideology despite the fact *The World* routinely condemned the evils of Western colonialism and imperialism.

On January 12, 1924, Garvey writing in *The World* expressed that his program was necessary because if the "race... [did] not concentrate upon the redemption of Africa and the exploitation of its vast resources, it [would] simply mean that the continent in another twenty-five years [would] become a new country for the European races."⁹⁵

Du Bois and other Black elite leaders embraced integration and opposed Garvey's grassroots pan-Africanism. In an editorial in the NAACP's *The Crisis*, Du Bois declared, "M. Garvey talks of Conquest..." and of himself as becoming a black Napoleon!⁹⁶ Garvey's idea of constructing a Black Empire conflicted with Du Bois's vision of African self-determination. On February 22, 1922, Du Bois wrote that he "distinctly believed that Africa should be administered

⁹⁴ Anna E. Shields, "A Prophecy To Ethiopia," *Negro World*, June 25, 1921.

⁹⁵ Marcus Garvey, "The Dawn of Africa's New Day," *Negro World*, January 12, 1924.

⁹⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Marcus Garvey," *The Crisis* 21, (January 21): 114; Garvey's emphasis on Liberian emigration and the creation of commercial links with Africa was part of the Black nationalist intellectual tradition of emigrationist discourse advocated by early Black leaders such as Martin Delaney and Bishop Henry McNeal Turner who advocated a return to Africa.

by Africans as soon as may be, by Africans. He does not mean that Africa should be administered by West Indians or American Negroes.”⁹⁷ By 1923, federal authorities charged Garvey with fraud and imprisoned him in 1924. Du Bois repudiated Garvey and his separatist UNIA asserting, “The Bubble of Garveyism has burst in the United States.”⁹⁸ This is far from the truth. Garvey’s importance is that his political discourse linked Black Americans to Africa and instilled an Ethiopian identity. By 1927, the Black American press’s discourse on Liberia shifted because of the Liberia Labor Scandal involving the forced labor of indigenous African by Americo- Liberians, who were descendants of slaves. Moreover, the Black American press remained an advocate for Haitian independence as it ceased to be a center of Black freedom since the U.S. Marines' occupation of Haiti that resulted in extensive brutalities and the usurpation of Haiti’s sovereignty. Consequently, Ethiopia became a symbol of Black independence and sovereignty.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the professionalism of Black journalism contributed to newspapers promoting the New Negro and Black radicalism by highlighting cultural achievement influenced by an Ethiopian artistic aesthetic. Though Du Bois’s Pan-African politics did not recognize modern-day Ethiopia, he embraced Ethiopian pageantry as an oppositional political discourse that drew on an Ethiopian past to counteract the popular American art form of Black face minstrelsy. Black newspapers expressed their admiration and embraced new points of view by covering Ethiopia pageants in the Black community. Black Americans demonstrated their pride in an ancient Ethiopian past and explored their identity

⁹⁷ “Garvey Men Driven Out By Liberia,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 9, 1924.

⁹⁸ “The Colored People in the United States Repudiate “Back to African Movement” Says Professor William,” *Broad Ax*, January 27, 1923.

through the staging of Ethiopian pageants during the 1920s and 1930s including the name Ethiopia in their title to represent Black American history with dignity and virtue.⁹⁹ “Ethiopia at the Bar of Justice,” written by Mrs. Lillian White-McCoo, was also widely performed by churches, civic, welfare, fraternal, and dramatic organizations. Using the imagery of the bar of justice, the pageant was set in a courtroom where the case of Black Americans was put on trial and witnesses appeared before the court and “witness after witness appears before the bar of Justice and gives evidence of the trials and tribulations of the Negro race.” During the trial, the “story of Ethiopia, Liberia, and Haiti are heard” and the witnesses, “Legislation, History, and Public Opinion, Christianity, Truth, Fair play, Womanhood, and Business” are called upon by Justice to testify.¹⁰⁰ On September 11, 1926, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, published by the entrepreneur and Republican operative Robert Vann, advertised this “Spectacular Musical Drama on Ethiopia” instructing Black churches, community, civic, welfare, fraternal, musical, and dramatic organizations to send their respective representatives to participate in the staging of the pageant, which conveyed the “positive dramatic and poetic power and the deep patriotic fervor which pervades the whole.”¹⁰¹

Ethiopia remained a Christian feudal absolutist state that was under constant threat from European imperial powers that sought to undermine the East African nation’s independence. Ras Tafari embraced the modernization of Ethiopia and its emergence from political isolation due to the influence of the xenophobic Empress Zauditu, daughter of Menelik I, and Ethiopian nobles. On August 1, 1923, Ras Tafari spearheaded his modernization of Ethiopia by pushing forward

⁹⁹ Katherine Capshaw Smith. “Constructing A Shared History,” *Black Pageantry For Children During the Harlem Renaissance* 22, *Children’s Literature* (1999): 40-63.

¹⁰⁰ Miss Burroughs Presents Pageant, “*The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 9, 1929.

¹⁰¹ “Drama on Ethiopian Feature of Sesqui,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 11, 1926.

with a formal application for membership in the League of Nations assembly to project the image of modernity in the Western world and also to end Ethiopia's isolation and protect it from encroachment from the British, French, and Italians. After Abyssinia gained membership in the League, it changed its name to Ethiopia, who maintained colonies in East Africa. The ANP's *The Cleveland Gazette*, a voice of Black progressivism, expressed skepticism about the League's commitment to upholding its principles by running the headline "Joined the League of 'Notions'! Ethiopia."¹⁰² The newspaper was correct to be suspicious of the League. One year earlier, Benito Mussolini after his March on Rome resulting in the rise of his authoritarian and imperialist-minded fascist Party, hinted that "Fascist Italy must expand or suffocate." Mussolini, who resented how Italy did not receive African colonies after the end of World War I conspired to realize his dream by entering into the Anglo-Italian agreement with Britain resulting in backroom dealing against Ethiopia to "carve out spheres of economic interest in the Ethiopian Empire" in observance of the diplomatic policy of "peaceful penetration."¹⁰³ Ethiopia refused to be a silent member of the League and have its national independence undermined and with the "astonishment of Italy" protested how these negotiations were made without Abyssinian participation.¹⁰⁴

During the 1920s, the matter of the continuance of slavery in certain countries and efforts towards its abolition became an international diplomatic and human rights concern that Great Britain took up. Great Britain, a country with a long abolitionist tradition, initially opposed Ethiopia's membership in the League on grounds that Ethiopia was not fully westernized

¹⁰² "Joined The League of 'Notions!' Ethiopia (Abyssinia Now A Member—Slavery Abolished in the Great," *Cleveland Gazette*, October 6, 1923.

¹⁰³ John Carter, "Abyssinia Fears 'Peaceful Penetration,'" *The New York Times*, August 8, 1926.

¹⁰⁴ "Abyssinia Asserts League Membership," *Plaindealer*, August 13, 1926.

because it remained a politically feudal state where domestic slavery remained an important part of the country's economy. According to *The Defender*, the East African kingdom's admission came at "the eleventh hour but the fifty-ninth minute" because of its continuance of domestic slavery.¹⁰⁵ The League, which was bound by its Covenant and Charter to suppress slavery, agreed to conditionally admit Ethiopia as long as it pledged to abolish slavery, end the slave trade, and agree to the oversight of a League sub-committee to investigate the issue.¹⁰⁶ The League, which relied on the European standard for civilization, judged that the continued existence of slavery in Ethiopia meant that it was not "civilized" but "semi-civilized."¹⁰⁷ According to *The Times*, a moderate newspaper, France and Britain agreed to admit Ethiopia to the League as part of their civilizing mission to "confer upon Africa the greatest blessing which has yet visited the -Dark Continent... effective assistance in evolving a self-governing African State, from the institution of slavery."¹⁰⁸

Though Black newspapers idealized Ethiopia as a symbol of Black independence, they publicized how the Black nation continued with the practice of domestic slavery. During the 1920s and 1930s, Black newspapers editorialized the paradox of the continued existence of

¹⁰⁵ "Abyssinia Now "Ethiopia" Is League's Label," *The Chicago Defender*, November 10, 1923.

¹⁰⁶ F. Cunliffe-Owens, C.B.E., "Slavery Problem Confronts League," *The New York Times*, August 26, 1923.

¹⁰⁷ Civilization as a concept is fundamental to the changing international order. The concept distinguished that that State should have to: 1) ensure basic rights: life, property, freedom to travel, commerce, religion; 2) have an organized political structure and the ability to act in self-defense; 3) accept the norms of international law; and 4) have the ability to carry on diplomatic relations with other States. 4) Accept the norms of international law; 5) a 'civilized' state conforms to the accepted norms and practices of the 'civilized' international society, eg. Polygamy and slavery were considered 'uncivilized.' Ethiopia met the first four tenets. See, Jean Allain, "Slavery and the League of Nations: Ethiopia as a Civilized Nation," *Journal of the History of International Law* 8 (2006): 216.

¹⁰⁸ "League Plans War on Slavery," *New York Times*, October 7, 1923.

slavery in the feudal kingdom that was the only independent African state that had been colonized. *The Savannah Tribune* asserted, “Abyssinia the Negro Kingdom is the last home of open slavery in the capital.”¹⁰⁹ *The World* did not provide that much commentary about slavery in Abyssinia but did run an article “Abyssinia and the Question of Slavery” asserting that “The League on Nations would not accept the application of Abyssinia to be a member last year unless it should covenant to abolish the system of slavery.”¹¹⁰ However, *The Defender*, which was not a member of the ANP, remained at the forefront of this news story asserting, “Abyssinia is the only remaining free and independent state in Africa, it is also the home of open slavery.”¹¹¹ By the 1920s, the newspaper led in both circulation with 130,000 copies circulated in Black America.¹¹² This number attests to the newspaper's influence in Black America.

After Abyssinia’s admission to the League, *The Defender* led to way in a response with a consistent editorial campaign from 1923 to 1933 to expose the persistence of slavery in Abyssinia. On September 23, 1923, *The Defender* reprinted an editorial from the white mainstream newspaper *The Boston Herald* relating how “the independent native empire of from 800,000 to 10,000,000 people nominally Christian” held “1,000,000 persons as property” and

¹⁰⁹ “Many Slaves In Abyssinia: Startling Disclosures by Correspondents,” *The Savannah Tribune*, January 26, 1922.

¹¹⁰ “Abyssinia and the Question of Slavery,” *Negro World*, November 19, 1927.

¹¹¹ “Abyssinia’s Capital Has More Slaves Than It Has Free Men,” *The Chicago Defender*, April 29, 1922.; This institution was a well-established tradition in Abyssinia and codified in the medieval Abyssinian legal code call the *Fetha Nagast* or Law of kings that was used by monarchs to govern the country. Slavery was important to Abyssinian economy.[#] Slavery was so important to the economy of Ethiopia and the text devoted considerable attention to the institutions moral and legal justification for slavery. In Ethiopian society, the nobility were the major slave-owners, along with low-ranking officials. Though the enslaved were treated as property that could be sold or rented much like chattel, their humanity was recognized, and slave owners were obligated to allow slaves to worship; they were not allowed to separate women slaves from their children, sell siblings to two different buyers, or separate family units.[#]

¹¹² Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 111.

permitted “the passage of slave caravans to Red Sea ports.”¹¹³ The newspaper reprinted excerpts from a traveler in Addis Ababa, capital of the empire, attesting to how “many of the people of the outlying districts [were] captured, chained together and taken in drove into the great slave market at Jimma” and how “traders are beginning...to make raids into the neighboring Kenya colony.”¹¹⁴

Black newspapers reconciled the continued existence of slavery in Ethiopia as a vestige of the country’s feudal history and the continued influence of Ethiopia’s conservative noble class on imperial policymaking. Ras Tafari intended to uphold his promises to the League but his abolitionist efforts were undermined by Ethiopian nobles who benefitted from the practice. In March 1924, he passed a law to gradually abolish slavery because of his awareness that the institution remained an important part of the socio-economic infrastructure of Ethiopia. In addition to prohibiting slave traffic, he also took steps to free enslaved people who were possessed by private owners and he opened up a school in his imperial capital of Addis Ababa to educate ex-slaves.¹¹⁵ He also established a slavery department and sent handpicked men to the borders, where they carried out his orders to prevent slaves from being seized in intertribal fights.¹¹⁶ The Black press praised Selassie’s intentions although they did not always bear fruit. On October 29, 1927, *The World* reprinted an extensive article on the continued existence of slavery in Ethiopia and how Ras Tafari was “personally opposed to the deep-seated slavery.”¹¹⁷ The regent denounced the practice by issuing a decree outlining “if anyone may be found

¹¹³ “Other Papers Say: Will Slavery Be Ended Now?” *The Chicago Defender*, September 22, 1923.

¹¹⁴ “Abyssinia, Once A Flourishing State, Now Wild,” *The Chicago Defender*, May 29, 1924.

¹¹⁵ “Abyssinian Emperor Acts to End Slavery,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1931.

¹¹⁶ “Abyssinia Opens Real War on Slavery,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1933.

¹¹⁷ “Slavery Still Raises International Issues,” *Negro World*, October 29, 1927.

enslaving free men he will be condemned to die.”¹¹⁸ *The Defender* on August 20, 1927, related that the emperor’s decree failed because wealthy slave owners were concerned about the question of compensation because “if all the slaves were freed without any payments to the owners, the governing and the wealthy classes would find themselves in serious financial condition.”¹¹⁹

Selassie desired to embrace abolition to aid him in gradually transitioning Ethiopia from a feudal society to a modern social and economic system. On August 30, 1930, *The World* publicized how Selassie’s push towards modernization came under the microscope of humanitarian groups such as the British Anti-Slavery Society and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, and the League of Nations. The issue of the continued existence of slavery was a concern for the United States since the American company J.G. White entered a contract with the Ethiopian government to engage in construction work in the kingdom. Since the United States was a signatory of the anti-slavery convention, it wanted American companies to only use free labor. Ras Tafari advocated for modernization in Ethiopia to aid the country in counteracting European imperialist threats. *The Tribune’s* columnist S. Haynes criticized Liberia as a “revolting tragedy” since Liberia’s independence was undermined by “agents of imperialism” who “wreck[ed] Liberian sovereignty” in an attempt to “thwart the nationalistic aspirations of black men” and deprive them of a national homeland. He voiced that Abyssinia was next since “Liberia was safely in the hands of imperialist surgeons” and that “the stage was set for the grand march on Abyssinia, the nemesis of the imperialists.”¹²⁰ Ras Tafari built on his

¹¹⁸ “Abyssinia Still Keeps Up Slavery,” *The Chicago Defender*, February 27, 1926.

¹¹⁹ “Slavery Found To Exist in Twenty Countries,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 20, 1927.

¹²⁰ S. Haynes, Aspirations of Black Men Are Thwarted,” S. Haynes, *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 6, 1932.

ancestor's legacy by founding a national bank in Addis Ababa, launching a building program to construct a 20,000,000 dam across the Blue Nile where it merges with Lake Tsana, constructing a group of public buildings, and introducing the automobile.¹²¹ Modernization came slowly to Ethiopia because power was divided between Tafari and the ultra-conservative Empress Zauditu.¹²² In contrast, Ras Tafari, who had been the recipient of a Western education due to the influence of French missionaries, recognized that as an independent nation and member of the League, the country needed to embrace new ideas.

As Ras Tafari pushed forward with his drive to interject modernity into Ethiopia, he realized that his goal could be achieved by cultivating a formal relationship with Black Americans. This represented a major shift in Ethiopia's foreign policy. Tafari's actions reflected his Pan-African conviction that people "with at least dark skins" were bound to Ethiopia's future and that dark-skinned advisers and teachers were less arrogant and were willing to opt for Ethiopian nationality."¹²³ The discourse in Black newspapers now represented how the destiny of Ethiopia was intertwined with that of Black Americans. Selassie embraced the immigration of trained Black medical professionals to foster Ethiopian medical advancement but to also ensure that Ethiopia did not fall prey to white subjugation. Although western medical practices were introduced into parts of Ethiopia by Swedish medical missionaries in the early twentieth century, Ras Tafari Selassie desired to establish an Ethiopian public health system that did not rely on

¹²¹ "Abyssinia in the League," *The New York Times*, May 26, 1924; "Building Program in Progress in Abyssinia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 4, 1930. "Ethiopians Begin to Use Modern Transportation," *The Chicago Defender*, November 17, 1928.

¹²² The two monarchs clashed due to Ras Tafari's progressive tendencies. Empress Zauditu was a xenophobe and deeply religious, and "had been strongly inclined to favor the ecclesiastic champions of the "closed-door policy" pushed back against modernization. She did not believe that Ethiopia's internal affairs should be of any concern to the outside world.

¹²³ Clarke, *Alliance of the Colored Peoples*, 13.

European medical professionals to prevent Ethiopia from being victimized by white duplicity. Though *The Defender*'s publisher Robert Abbott eschewed Black emigration to Africa, the newspaper offered positive coverage of the possibility of Ethiopia employing Black American doctors to aid it in modernizing its medical facilities.

On July 5, 1930, *The Defender* described how Ethiopia had 20,000,000 inhabitants but no Black doctors who were in charge of engaging in medical work.¹²⁴ Ras Tafari's cousin, Maleku Bayen, enrolled in medical school at Howard University, introduced Dr. John West, a professor at Howard University's Medical College to the regent and also cultivated racial bonds between the Ethiopian monarchy and Black Americans.¹²⁵ Tafari selected the West to serve in the prestigious position of physician and prime minister of health. Tafari wanted to establish a modern medical college in Ethiopia that embraced Western medical practices and he put West in charge of recruiting Black doctors and nurses. West organized a Black medical staff of 50 physicians and sanitation engineers to displace European physicians to minor roles.¹²⁶ West also supervised the building of sanitation systems and public health facilities in Ethiopia. This medical mission helped establish long-lasting bonds between Ethiopia and Black American professionals. Black readers and other Black intellectuals and professionals probably interpreted this appointment with nationalistic pride and evidence of the Ethiopian government's recognition of the value of Black American intellectual acumen. Also, West's appointment may have inspired Black men, who were devalued in American society and made to feel like "wards of white nations" due to the powerful reality of their second-class citizenship.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ "Dr. John West Sails to Aid Abyssinia," *The Chicago Defender*, July 5, 1930.

¹²⁵ "Dr. John West Gets Post in Abyssinia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 12, 1930.

¹²⁶ "Dr. John West Sails to Aid Abyssinia."

¹²⁷ "Aspirations of Black Men."

The coronation of Ras Tafari on November 2, 1930, as His Majesty Haile Selassie was one of the most important international events covered in Black newspapers that embraced an imaginative idealization of the Ethiopian monarch. The Jamaican American amateur historian and ANP international correspondent Joel Augustus Rogers was the only Black American correspondent present at the coronation. He was another public figure that influenced Black Americans' identification with Ethiopia. Though Rogers acknowledged the contributions of Ethiopia to human civilization, he did not overlook the continued existence of slavery in the name of racial pride and the idealization of the nation. Writing in *The Amsterdam News* he explained that its existence reflected the "great struggle between the great reforms and the backward peoples" or nobles who threatened revolt if the regent introduced more reforms that outlawed the practice.¹²⁸ He devoted his energy to researching the history and accomplishments of African diasporic peoples. He used his scholarship to combat racist propaganda by promoting the history and contributions of global people of African descent to world civilizations.

Rogers revealed his historical findings through his newspaper columns which generated excitement among his readers. His colorful commentary overshadowed discussion of slavery as he transported Black audiences while also acquainting them with Ethiopian culture and traditions and creating a counter-narrative representing Ethiopia as the personification of self-determination and power. On December 13, 1930, he vividly described how "for several days before the ceremony the chief from the interior were pouring into the city on horseback or mules." The attendees traveled with large entourages including "strings of retainers don-trotting after them, guns on their shoulders" with "their white shamans or wrappers flying in the

¹²⁸ J. A. Rogers, "Rambling Ruminations," *The New York Amsterdam News*, June 25, 1930.

wind.”¹²⁹ He also described how the “emperor and empress entered the cathedral” and both were wearing “a flowing robe that seems to be made of finely knitted gold lace.” During the ceremony “the emperor was invested with a royal mantle, after which a golden sword, studded with diamonds was handed to him.”¹³⁰ This was a historical moment because Ethiopia was “no state in which a John Bull or James Crow, an Uncle Sam or Uncle Sham has a say so.” Also, the continued U.S. occupation of Haiti resulted in its loss of political autonomy since Haitian officials could “only conduct their affairs by the grace of Uncle Sam.” Also, Liberia was no better with “its selfish politicians and an indolent visionless statesmanship.”¹³¹ As the nation assumed its place on the international stage, the coronation signaled a major shift in Black Americans' perception of Ethiopia. The ANP's newspaper, *The Afro-American*, reminded Black readers how the splendor of his coronation rivaled that of his ancestors, King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.¹³² The coronation cost 3 million dollars and a quarter of a million people including representatives of nearly every nation on earth attended the event.¹³³ Marcus Garvey, who had been deported to Jamaica, recognized the crowing of the “Negus” of Ethiopia as a “historical occasion to inspire racial pride and self-respect among all Negroes across the world” and that “every Negro was present as the bells, horns, and drums proclaim[ed] this great event.”¹³⁴

¹²⁹ J. A. Rogers, “Writes on the Coronation of a King,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 13, 1930.

¹³⁰ Rogers, “Menelik, the Ethiopian King.”

¹³¹ Andronicus Jacob, “Plucky Abyssinia,” *Negro World*, November 29, 1930.

¹³² “Tafari’s Coronation to Rival the Splendors of Solomon and Sheba,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, November 1, 1930. “

¹³³ “Tafari Crowned Emperor Haile Selassie I: Cost of Festivities Placed Over Three Million Dollars,” *The Amsterdam News*, November 5, 1930

¹³⁴ Marcus Garvey, “Long Live Ethiopia!” *Negro World*, November 1, 1930.

While the Black press reveled in all of the pageantry, they also reprinted white reports or imperial designs and schemes. The coronation marked the beginning of a new era for Ethiopia. Now, Emperor Haile Selassie assumed the position as a Black Messiah and the defender of the Black world.¹³⁵ The coronation occurred at a time when the Western world despised Black people because of their “color and lack of power” and now Selassie, a Black man, was being paid deference to by European dignitaries such as Britain’s Duke of Gloucester, who bowed to him.¹³⁶ On November 8, an unsigned editorial in *The Courier*, “Beware of Greeks Bearing Gifts,” warned Selassie that he should remain vigilant asserting that “Ethiopia is of dark skin and he presides over a dark people” and “the white races of the globe vied with each other in sending pretty presents and saying nice things” but in “a few years from now, the king of kings unless he is wiser than the royal, will be having trouble with these same white people.”¹³⁷ On November 29, *The Defender* reprinted a prophetic editorial from *The Boston Herald*, a white mainstream newspaper, explaining how representatives from white nations attended the coronation because they recognized that Ethiopia was “a buffer among the African Empires of Italy, France, and England” and they were “anxious to extend their influence in Abyssinia.”¹³⁸

The coronation coupled with the New Negro label coalesced with Black newspapers publicizing Ethiopia-centered cultural and dramatic production representing the cultural and psychological changes in Black America. The press and the Black public gravitated towards this type of dramatic cultural production because it offered radical alternatives to stereotypical

¹³⁵ Giulia Bonacci, “The Irresistible Ascent of Ras Tafari in the Black Imagination,” *Annales d’Ethiophe* (2013): 395.

¹³⁶ “Long Live Ethiopia!” *Negro World*.

¹³⁷ “Beware of Greeks Bearing Gifts,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 8, 1930.

¹³⁸ “Other Papers Say: Why Ethiopia Counts,” *The Chicago Defender*, November 29, 1930.

portrayals of Black people in the American mass media. The opera singer Caterina Jarboro, originally from Wilmington, North Carolina, captivated Black and white audiences as the first Black woman to sing in the leading role in Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Aida" that presented dignified imagery of Ethiopia. On July 23, 1933, Roi Otley of *The Amsterdam News* in his column, "Hectic Harlem," reviewed the performance of the famed Black opera singer who starred in the leading role of Aida in Verdi's opera, "Aida" which was at the New York Hippodrome. Aida, was the story of the Ethiopian princess Aida, who was held captive in Egypt and fell in love with an Egyptian general who was chosen to lead a military campaign against Ethiopia. Otley pointed to the opera's dignified Black racial imagery as he alerted readers it is for "you and me" since Jarboro was playing Aida, the daughter of Amonasro, the "Big Dog of Ethiopia."¹³⁹ *The Defender's* theater critic Geraldine Thornton reviewing the Harlem performance of the opera hailed the performance as "unlike all other singers of "Aida" because Jarboro "needed no grease paint to make her face brown." The performance was not simply entertainment to Harlemites, but engendered "pride for the race" and "set the beginning of a new day."¹⁴⁰ On July 29, 1933, the ANP reporter A.E. White of *The Journal and Guide* also hailed the performance, declaring the opera "dealt a terrific blow to the usual Uncle Tom presentations of colored artists" in American popular culture that were reinforcing white prejudice and doing incalculable damage to the psyche of Black Americans.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Roi Otley, "Hectic Harlem," *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 26, 1933.

¹⁴⁰ Geraldine Thornton, Gotham Thunders of Mme Jarboro," *The Chicago Defender*, July 29, 1933.

¹⁴¹ A. E. White, "Miss Jarboro Scores in 'Aida'," *The Norfolk Journal and Guide*, July 29, 1933.

Responses to Ethiopian Cultural Representation

Black America's fascination with Ethiopia at times led the Black publicists and readers to embrace individuals who purported themselves as having a direct link to Ethiopia's history and culture. The Ethiopian lyric soprano and prima donna Heshla Tamanya, who represented herself as the first cousin of Emperor Haile Selassie, was affectionately received by Black America because she was the physical manifestation of Ethiopia. Black American audiences perceived the songstress as Ethiopia's unofficial cultural ambassador to America since she was allegedly born in the small town of Wallago, Abyssinia. Tamanya captivated her audiences, who were amazed by the singer that offered a visual image of an actual Ethiopian who allegedly claimed to be a direct descendent of King Solomon.¹⁴² *The Defender* expressed pride in her singing skills and her mastery of European languages. On December 23, 1933, *The Defender* and *The New York Amsterdam News* praised her as "Africa's greatest soprano" and a "vocal technician of no small degree" when she performed Spanish, French, Hebrew, Italian, and English songs at the Y.M.C.A's Little Theater in Harlem. Her performance generated "hearty and vociferous applause from an audience that insisted for more and more."¹⁴³ Eustace "Chappy" Gardner, who promoted the singer asserted that she "stopped a show cold" at the New York Armory as she wore "her native dress resplendent in color and beauty" as she sang "Ele Ele" in what Gardner and many Black Americans believed was "her native tongue Hebrew."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Chappy Gardner, "Abyssinian Soprano is Descendent of King Solomon," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, December 16, 1933.

¹⁴³ Francis Moss Mann, "Music News: African Soprano Delights Audience," *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 27, 1933.

¹⁴⁴ Chappy Gardner, "Singing of Heshla Tamanya: African Girl, Stops Show," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 30, 1933.

As the Black public consumed new stories celebrating Ethiopia's greatness and viewed cultural productions centering Ethiopia, they entertained dreams of immigrating to Ethiopia to escape racism in the United States and to also improve their economic conditions. J.A. Rogers' discourse expressed pride in Ethiopia while also expressing a paternalistic attitude that it needed Black American expertise to aid in its development. In an article appearing in *The Afro-American* on January 10, 1931, he expressed a condescension and culturally superior attitude as he informed readers that the physical conditions in Ethiopia reflected a "primitive" country that has "just a touch of civilization" since the majority of the population is illiterate. He used his editorial platform to relay to the Black public that Selassie Ethiopia was ripe for Black American cultivation. Rogers, who called himself a "child of civilization" viewed Ethiopia through a western lens despite him being a Pan-Africanist.¹⁴⁵ The fortification of Ethiopia's infrastructure was emphasized by the Black press, which acknowledged the country's survival was threatened since it was "hemmed in by hostile Powers" and "living in the Middle Ages." Furthermore, the small nation could not hope to preserve its independence "unless it modernizes" since many European powers had "bombing planes, poison gas; long-range artillery, international finance, and concession hunters" that were "intent on territorial and trade expansion."¹⁴⁶ He galvanized emigrants by describing that that country was rich in natural resources such as "gold, oil, coffee, cattle, skins, honey, and other products."¹⁴⁷

Rogers' discourse points to the enduring influence of Garvey's Black Nationalist ideology centering Black Americans vanguard as critical to the economic development of Ethiopia.

¹⁴⁵ "Abyssinia Is Country for Pioneers to Settle In," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, February 26, 1931.

¹⁴⁶ "A Black Prince Arrives."

¹⁴⁷ J. A. Rogers, "Abyssinia Has Free Lands for U.S. Pioneers," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, May 9, 1931.

Rogers communicated that “Abyssinia needs engineers, roadbuilders, chemists, electricians, and skilled mechanics as well as teachers” to help underwrite its economic development. Though Ethiopia had large amounts of natural resources, according to Rogers, it lacked the capital to develop them. Thus, he recommended that Ethiopia presented a solution for millions of underemployed and unemployed skilled Black people because they “could be carefree with no handicap of race” as Ethiopia offered an industrious “young Aframerican who finds his education and training discounted in America because of his race a place to carve out a promising future.”¹⁴⁸

Rogers’ discourse likely had a big impact on the emigrationist impulse of Black Americans. The U.S. State Department and Addison Southard, America’s resident diplomatic representative in Ethiopia, counteracted emigrationist discourse by attempting to prevent an exodus of Black Americans to Ethiopia. On February 6, 1932, *The Courier* printed a statement by Southard where he warned Black people that “several Americans have arrived in recent months seeking employment with the Ethiopian government, but there is not employment that can be offered to them.”¹⁴⁹ Jerrold Robbins, a columnist for *The Afro-American*, corroborated this report that the “150 settlers settled in northern Ethiopia around Lake Tsana, had little to no resources, and were unable to find employment. Consequently, they had sunk into a state of destitution.”¹⁵⁰ Southard also relayed that these settlers were not encouraged to come to Ethiopia by the Ethiopian government. The settlers that were there were not able to seek financial aid from the American Legation in Ethiopia because it did not have any available funds to defray the

¹⁴⁸ “Abyssinia Has Free Lands for U.S. Pioneers.”; “Abyssinia Is Country for Pioneers.”

¹⁴⁹ American Citizens are Warned to Stay Out of Ethiopia,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 6, 1932.

¹⁵⁰ Jerrold Robbins, “Americans Still Going to Abyssinia Despite U.S. Ban,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, May 13, 1933.

expense of the settlers.¹⁵¹ On February 20, 1932, *The World* warned that these were reports of poor economic conditions and were “reverse propaganda” intended to “retard the immigration of patriotic Negroes from the United States who may wish to take the fight of African redemption.”¹⁵²

Some Black Americans sought to establish bonds with Ethiopia through the expression of common Jewish heritage and framing of Ethiopia as Black Zion. During the 1930s, some Black Americans embraced a theological counter-narrative that defined that Black people had African Jewish heritage. Ford represented those UNIA Black Jewish members who were part of that small West Indian Black Jewish community that existed in Harlem in the 1930s. Ford joined Harlem’s Black Jewish congregation Beth B’Nai Abraham, which had a large West Indian leadership, and he eventually became the Rabbi of the synagogue. Ford, like many Black Jews, believed that Black people had a dual identity as a Jew and Black because of their direct lineal descent from Abraham’s son Jacob, who was Black. Moreover, Jacob’s descendant Solomon mated with the Queen of Sheba who returned to Abyssinia and is known as Menelik I in Biblical history. From Menelik sprang the Solomonic line of kings who ruled Ethiopia during an unbroken line of succession that stretched to Ras Tafari.¹⁵³

This idea was not unique to the Black Jewish community but was a manifestation of Ethiopianism that symbolized Ethiopia as a symbol of Black independence and dignity. Ford, a former musical director of the UNIA, orchestrated the UNIA’s Ethiopian-inspired pageantry that reflected his vision of the celebration of a glorious ancient past before slavery as it emphasized

¹⁵¹ “American Citizens are Warned.”

¹⁵² “Adverse Propaganda,” *Negro World*, February 20, 1932.

¹⁵³ Roberta S. Gold, “The Black Jews of Harlem: Representation, Identity, and Race, 1920-1939,” *American Quarterly* (June 2003): 186.

an Ethiopian heritage. Furthermore, Ford, like many Black Jews, constructed the term “Negro,” which they saw as an insulting and artificial designation that had been imposed upon Black people by their white oppressors to demoralize them. Instead, he and his congregation recognized an “Ethiopian” identity intended to function as a linkage to their Judaic heritage, which they alleged was deprived of them because of the institution of slavery. Ford expressed his Black nationalistic feelings through song and he wrote the UNIA’s organizational anthem and published the *Universal Ethiopian National Hymnal* where he expressed his belief through song. The hymnal included organizational songs such as “Africa” that included lyrics focusing on the theme of African diaspora and Black unity as he wrote,

Ethiopia’s sons and daughters
At thy throne, Lord God unite
Keep us ever close together
One with heart and aim to fight¹⁵⁴

Harlem’s Black Jews remained in the editorial periphery of the Black mainstream press, which treated them as a curiosity. However, on August 2, 1929, *The Defender* reported how the “Ethiopian Choir” from the Beth B’Nai Abraham congregation performed during a radio broadcast on station WABC. The article also described how Ford and his congregation ate kosher food, purchased their meat in a kosher butcher shop, and purchased meat at kosher shops owned by white Jews.¹⁵⁵

Ford also embraced emigration to Ethiopia as a means of reconnecting with his Judaic heritage and also reclaiming his Ethiopian birthright. He established an emigration club, the Auriemoth Club (Angel of Light Club, which collected membership fees devoted to financing

¹⁵⁴ Arnold J. Ford, “The Universal Ethiopian Hymnal,” (New York: Beth B’Nai Publishing Company, 1922) Beineike Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/10256858>.

¹⁵⁵ “Synagogues of Black Jews in New York,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 3, 1929.

migration to Ethiopia. He and his congregation set their sights on Ethiopia as they organized a Back to Ethiopia movement to create a self-sufficient Black Jewish colony. Ford may have been inspired by the emperor's coronation or his reading in *The Defender* how "there were 50,000 Colored Jews in Abyssinia that are true Negroes."¹⁵⁶ On December 2, 1931, *The Amsterdam News* publicized how Tamraat Emmanuel, principal of the only Jewish school in Addis Ababa and member of the Falasha Tribe of Black Jews extended greetings to white Jewish school children in Astoria, New York.¹⁵⁷ It is a possibility that Ford knew of Emmanuel's visit but it is not known if he reached out to him to establish a relationship. The same year, Selassie approved an eight-hundred-acre land grant for Ford and emigrants from his congregation, and sixty of his followers settled in Ethiopia around the Lake Tsana region that was set aside for Black American emigrants to develop. His congregants were part of the 150 settlers in Ethiopia referenced earlier, who experienced hardship. Though the settlers had land, they still had to find a means to clear it and build homes. Others became ill, their funds were depleted, and some returned to the United States. Ford was aware of the existence of an Ethiopian Jewish or Falasha community and sought to build his settlement near this community. Ford's Ethiopian brethren challenged the authenticity of their Afro-Judaic Ethiopian identity. This occurred when Ford presented a Torah scroll written in Hebrew rather than Ge'ez, the liturgical language of Ethiopian Judaism and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, to Ethiopian clerics.¹⁵⁸ Ford clearly embraced a romantic Black

¹⁵⁶ "50,000 Jews in Abyssinia," *The Chicago Defender*, December 27, 1919.

¹⁵⁷ "Ethiopian Jew Speaks to Pupils of Astoria," *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 2, 1931.

¹⁵⁸ Howard Brotz, *The Black Jews of Harlem: Negro Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Negro Leadership* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 93.

Nationalism based on his understanding of ancient Solomonic Ethiopia rather than a contemporary Ethiopia.

The arrival of a second Ethiopian delegation in Washington, D.C. on an official goodwill trip was another opportunity for Black Americans to turn their attention to Ethiopia and attempt to forge a lasting fraternal bond. Black newspapers expressed excitement about the arrival of Ethiopian Prince Ras Desta Demtu, son-law of Emperor Haile Selassie and special ambassador. On July 20, 1933, Demtu traveled to the United States to repay the visit of the American mission that attended Emperor Haile Selassie's coronation three years earlier. The prince traveled to Washington, D.C. and met with President Franklin Roosevelt who organized a special luncheon at the White House for the prince. *The Courier's* editor, Robert Vann, supported Roosevelt and his New Deal policies and in consequence, the newspaper became a mouthpiece of Democratic politics. *The Courier*, in turn, survived the Great Depression while other Black newspapers were in financial trouble because its coverage of Roosevelt increased circulation. On July 22, 1933, in an article, *The Courier* described how the prince's arrival in Washington, D.C. was commemorated with all "the pomp and pageantry" that was "in keeping with the rank of a member of the most important royal family in Africa." The newspaper emphasized that he wore traditional Ethiopian dress including "a tight white tunic, over which was thrown a long black cape richly embroidered in gold" and a "white sun helmet encircled with a heavy gold sash."¹⁵⁹

The 1933 Ethiopian delegation's visit differed from the 1919 delegation's visit because formal ties were established between the Black American community and Ethiopia. The same year that the prince established bonds with Black Americans, Mussolini expressed his intention of invading and vanquishing Ethiopia to restore Italian national pride that had been damaged

¹⁵⁹ "Greet Ethiopian Envoy in Capital," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 22, 1933.

after Menelik's 1896 defeat of Italy. In the wake of these developments, the prince stretched forth his hand to the Black American community by meeting with Dr. Willis N. Huggins, who was a high school History and Economics teacher and the president of the New York Branch of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.¹⁶⁰ Huggins was also involved in the Garvey movement and was the only Black American representative to meet with the prince. At the same time, Vann also used his newspaper to cultivate racial consciousness and pride in his readers by publicizing the prince's meeting and interview with Dr. Huggins.

An article published in the August 12, 1933 edition of the newspaper intended to cultivate feelings of racial pride and connection to Ethiopia by announcing how the prince appointed Huggins as an official representative of the Ethiopian Mission to the United States.¹⁶¹ The Prince's visit overlapped with the Century of Progress International Exposition of the World's Fair in Chicago, themed A Century of Progress. The prince commented on the racial progress that Black Americans made and sent well wishes to the Black American community.¹⁶² This statement attested to how he was disconnected from how the persistence of racial discrimination and other socio-economic inequalities in the United States hindered Black Americans. Demtu did not engage in extended relations with the Black American community because he wanted to retain amicable relations with the U.S. government by not commenting on the American racial situation. Overlooking how Black Americans were denied the opportunity to display their progress at The Fair, the Prince remarked on the racial progress that Black

¹⁶⁰ "Abyssinian Prince Leaves Message for U.S. Negroes," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 12, 1933.

¹⁶¹ "Abyssinian Prince Leaves Message."

¹⁶² "Abyssinian Prince Leaves Message."

Americans had made and that the Ethiopian court sent well wishes to the Black American community.¹⁶³

Dignitaries could trigger Black self-criticism for failure to rise to international standards of diplomatic protocol. Despite this interview, Ras Desta Demtu chose not to engage in extended interactions with the Black American community. James H. Bynoe, a reader from New York City, writing in the *Amsterdam News*, queried if Black Americans entertained the proper diplomatic protocol for the prince to reach out to them. As Bynoe engaged in criticism of the Black community, he emphasized that the Black people should not rely on their fraternal affection for Ethiopia to pull the prince into their orbit. Rather, they needed to observe diplomatic protocol to pull the prince into their orbit. For example, he questioned, “Did we anticipate the visit of the Ras? Did we contact the proper government department and request that a Negro be appointed to the delegation sent to the coronation? Did we request a part in the official welcome?” He believed that Black Americans should take this as a lesson for them to “swing into action, develop our nerves and nervous centers” and when Ethiopia stretches forth her hand again, “we will have the honor and pleasure of clasping that hand.”¹⁶⁴ J. A. Rogers, adopted a different perspective in an editorial in the *Philadelphia Tribune*. He reasoned that the prince did not engage in lengthy relations with the Black American community because he believed this would cause him to be snubbed by white Americans and railroad his diplomatic mission. Rogers interpreted the prince’s actions as a subterfuge as he reported that the prince was “pretend[ing] to play the white man’s game” so Ethiopia could maintain its sovereignty.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ “Abyssinian Prince Leaves Message.”

¹⁶⁴ James H. Bynoe, “In Defense of Ethiopia,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 16, 1933.

¹⁶⁵ J. A. Rogers, “Ras Demtu to Shun Negroes,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, September 14, 1933.

Black newspapers also placed Blacks in the shining symbols of 20th-century modernity. However, Black Americans were denied access to aviation because of the persistent belief that the skies were the domain of white men. The Black press celebrated Trinidadian-born pilot Hubert Fauntleroy Julian, a former member of the UNIA and resident of Harlem because of his performance of aeronautical stunts. The Black press, which christened him “The Black Eagle of Harlem,” celebrated him as a Black hero because his aeronautical skill surpassed that of white aviators such as Charles Lindbergh. Julian attempted to cross the Atlantic Ocean in 1924 in his airplane, “The Ethiopia” long before the white aviator Charles Lindbergh made his historic flight. On August 9, 1930, *The Age* reported how Julian offered his aeronautical talent to Ethiopia and entered into the Ethiopian Air Force because of an introduction to Maleku Bayen, who informed the emperor Selassie of the aviator’s early solo-trans-Atlantic flight to Africa in 1924.¹⁶⁶ Ras Tafari included aviation as part of his drive towards modernity since he was aware that Mussolini relied on airplanes to aid in carrying out his imperial expansionist program. Julian traveled to Ethiopia and he claimed in an interview with *The Age* when he visited Addis Ababa, the emperor demonstrated his gratitude to him by “stepping down from his throne” and awarding him a commission as a “Colonel” and head of the Ethiopian air force. Black newspapers reprinted this claim as fact. *The Defender*, *The Amsterdam News*, and *The Courier* even reported that Julian returned to the United States at the request of the Ethiopian government to study new aviation methods so he could introduce them throughout Ethiopia and establish an air force.¹⁶⁷

Julian was not the hero that Black newspapers made him out as signaling the dangers of the idealization of particular achievers. *The Amsterdam News* reported on November 30, 1930,

¹⁶⁶ “Hubert Julian Tells How He Became Head of the Ethiopian Air Forces,” *The New York Age*, August 9, 1930.

¹⁶⁷ “Col. Hubert Julian Speaks in Harlem,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1930.

his wings were clipped when he “defi[ed] order, took a flight in Selassie’s special airplane” and wrecked it during an exhibition staged for the emperor. The emperor ordered him to leave Ethiopia, not because of the plane crash but because he took advantage of Ethiopia’s hospitality. *The Courier’s* conservative columnist and anti-Garveyite George S. Schuyler did not see “anything about his predicament to cause anyone to shed tears” since according to him “he was a sort of Garvey of the air” as he pointed out how “both Julian and Garvey were frauds.”¹⁶⁸ J. A. Rogers, voicing a comparable perspective, was not surprised by Julian’s expulsion critiquing how the aviator used his association with the emperor to bolster his celebrity status. Rogers clarified that since Julian was a “bull in a china shop,” the Ethiopian government dismissed him. Moreover, Rogers related that his “swagger and talkativeness” and his “spout[ing] too much to the press” violated the Ethiopian government’s custom of not divulging details of government projects to the public.¹⁶⁹

The topic of Ethiopian identity occupied the discourse in the Black mainstream press in reaction to how white academics and newspapers circulated a narrative denying the Blackness of Ethiopians. These arguments, according to J. A. Rogers, occurred on the heels of expanding race consciousness in Harlem which “gave the Negro a new lease on life,” in Harlem due to the increased influence of the African Patriotic League headed by Arthur Reid.¹⁷⁰ This militant race consciousness also engendered discussions in Black newspapers concerning Ethiopians’ racial identity due to their dislike of being called “Negro.” On November 10, 1934, J. A. Rogers’

¹⁶⁸ George S.O. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 8, 1930.

¹⁶⁹ J. A. Rogers, “Rogers Explains Julian Incident,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 31, 1930.

¹⁷⁰ J. A. Rogers, “Ruminations: Race Consciousness Growing in Harlem,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, September 29, 1934.

writing in *The Amsterdam News* critiqued a letter Emperor Haile Selassie sent objecting to the word, which he viewed as “disgraceful” because it has been applied to Black people by white people to denigrate them. Rogers acknowledged how in Africa; the term “Negro” was not used because they call themselves by their tribal names. At the same time, he posited that though Ethiopians deplored the term, arguing over semantics did not excuse the fact that “Ethiopians or Abyssinians or whatever name they choose, remain a black people" and “because they are black the hand of white imperialism is against them.”¹⁷¹

By 1934, war clouds were hovering over Ethiopia as Mussolini’s fascist foreign policy turned toward Ethiopia. Mussolini moved at a slow pace regarding his plan to invade Ethiopia because of Italy’s failure to develop its existing colonies of Eritrean and Italian Somaliland in East Africa. However, by February 1934, Mussolini pushed forward with his plans to move against Ethiopia with military preparation. Mussolini, who was obsessed with restoring the ancient glory of Rome, promoted Italian strength as well as Italian racial and cultural superiority as justification for the exercise of imperial power over darker peoples. His advocacy of imperialist expansion in Ethiopia distracted from the failures of his fascist program to solve Italy’s economic depression and its overpopulation that took a toll on its natural resources. The creation of colonies was necessary to demonstrate Italy’s national prestige and fortify a nation’s economy. Mussolini’s fascist policy stemmed from his resentment regarding Ethiopia’s humiliating defeat of Italy at the Battle of Adowa in 1896 that was ingrained in the national psyche of Italians. Consequently, the loss left Italy with only three East African colonies- Italian

¹⁷¹ J. A. Rogers, “Haile Selassie and the Word “Negro.” *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 10, 1934.

Somaliland, Eritrea, and Libya, which was formed in 1934.¹⁷² Considering this, *The Courier* asserted that “The world Adowah or Adua in Italian makes all nationalistic Italians wine. Mussolini is eager to give it new meaning and at the same time make it the key to Italian Fascism’s political and economic imperial destiny.”¹⁷³ Mussolini knew that time was running out for him and that he had to move forward quickly with his martial plans because the longer he waited, the tougher that Ethiopian resistance would be.¹⁷⁴

Haile Selassie recognized that the safeguarding of Ethiopia’s sovereignty from foreign European imperial influences depended on the cultivation of international relations with imperial Japan. Selassie was a part of the ‘Japanizer’ Movement, which peaked in the 1920s and early 1930s. It included young Ethiopian intellectuals who were impressed by Japan’s dramatic metamorphosis from a feudal society to an industrial power by the end of the nineteenth century because of the Meiji Restoration.¹⁷⁵ He looked to Japan as a historical model for Ethiopia because its success proved that a non-European nation could embrace modernization and stand as a cultural and technical equal to Europe.¹⁷⁶ The Black American mainstream and alternative nationalist press expressed admiration for Japan. Black Americans admired Japan because of its push from a pre-industrial nation to a modern nation-state that applied self-help, group solidarity, and determined leadership. This was a formula that Black Americans saw as necessary for their

¹⁷² In 1890 King Umberto I announced the creation of Eritrea. It became a base from which Italy’s imperial expansion in East Africa.; Italian Somaliland was formed in 1908; Italian Libya was created in 1934 from the colonies of Italian Cyrenaica and Italian Tripolitania that Italy possessed since 1911.

¹⁷³ “Mussolini Seeks Inroads into Abyssinia: War for Control of African Feared,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 29, 1934.

¹⁷⁴ Richard J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (Indiana: Bloomsbury Publishing Group, 2000), 235.

¹⁷⁵ Clark, *Alliance of Colored Peoples*, 7.

¹⁷⁶ Hans Wilhelm Locket, *The Mission: The Life, Reign and Character of Haile Selassie I* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989): 31-32, 42.

own racial advancement.¹⁷⁷ Their admiration of Japan was sourced in Japan's defeat of Russia during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). Japan's support of a racial equality clause condemning white supremacy at the Paris Peace Conference also impressed some Black Americans who interpreted the Asian nation's actions as progressive.¹⁷⁸ Writing in *The World*, Garvey expressed that "When Japan annihilated Russia, it showed another one of the dark races was asserting its rights" and "broke the magic spell of the white man" and now "the world realized a new power emerged."¹⁷⁹ J.A. Rogers expressed excitement about an alliance between the only independent nation in Africa and the only independent nation in Asia. Writing in *The Afro-American*, he expressed that Italy and Great Britain were not happy about this growing relationship because "it would mean the white man's power in Africa might soon be at an end."¹⁸⁰ Rogers also enthusiastically expressed that "If Japan and oppressed Africa should ever join hands, then look out for the fireworks."¹⁸¹ The fact that Japan defied world opinion and withdrew from the League of Nations in March 1933 after consolidating its hold on Manchuria only meant tensions heightened between it and Western powers.¹⁸² An Ethiopian and Japanese alliance, according to

¹⁷⁷ Marc S. Gallichio, "The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895-1935 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000): 5.

¹⁷⁸ *The African American Encounter with Japan and China*, 60-61.

¹⁷⁹ "Long Awaited Answer To Critics Made By Hon. Marcus Garvey To Claim That He Universal Negro Improvement Association Are Largely Responsible For Present Widespread Conditions Among Negroes in the United States," *Negro World*, February 26, 1921; "Great Rejoicing In Liberty Hall Over Announcement of Press Reports of Revolt of Moplahs in India Against Oppression," *Negro World*, September 12, 1921.

¹⁸⁰ J. A. Rogers, "Japan Bond Is Irking Nations," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 30, 1933.

¹⁸¹ J. A. Rogers, "Abyssinia Preparing to Forge Ahead to High Spot in World," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 28, 1933.

¹⁸² In September 1931 Japan the Japanese invaded Manchuria and set up its own government. China appealed to the League and the matter was considered under Article 11, which gave members the right to raise matters that might be a threat to peace. Japan vetoed a resolution. The League appointed the Lytton Commission and in October 1932 recommended

The Defender, was a positive development because it was an indicator of “the determination of Japan to prepare the Colored races in a spirit of coordination in a unity of action on the question of white supremacy.”¹⁸³ W.E.B. Du Bois ceased editing *The Crisis* in 1934 because of his radical politics. He expressed optimism about the idea of a collaboration between Ethiopia and Japan. He advocated for the unity of the darker races and that Japan should assume its “rightful leadership of mankind” because “the world needs Asia.”¹⁸⁴ Du Bois, like most Black American supporters of a Japanese alliance, trivialized Chinese and Japanese relations. He opined in *The Amsterdam News* on October 21, 1931, that the “Chinese and Japanese are cousins” and Japan’s expansionism in Asia was positive because if she positioned herself to be “the dominant leader of the majority of mankind” and then “the end of white rule in Asia is not simply in sight, it was accomplished.”¹⁸⁵

The event that symbolized the growing bond between Japan and Ethiopia was the marriage alliance between Prince Lij Araya Adebbe, nephew of Emperor Selassie, and Miss Makoda Kurada, daughter of the Japanese Viscount Hiroyoui Kuroda. The conservative columnist George Schuyler, who at one time shunned race politics, expressed in his popular column “Views and Reviews” that if Ethiopia “[a]ssociated with Japan, the Ethiopian kingdom will doubtless become a power in African, albeit, similar to Manchokoa and Korea.”¹⁸⁶ Schuyler, whose weekly column “Views and Reviews” offered blunt commentary, did not embrace the militant politics of the New Negro but he praised Japan for “following in the footsteps of her

that Manchuria become a state under Chinese sovereignty. The Japanese government rejected the Commission's findings and withdrew from the League in March 1933.

¹⁸³ “New Ties of Blood,” *The Chicago Defender*, January 27, 1934.

¹⁸⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Listen, Japan and China,” *The Crisis* 40, no. 1 (January 1933): 20.

¹⁸⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Wide, Wide World: China and Japan,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, October 21, 1931.

¹⁸⁶ George Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 3, 1934.

European sisters” matrimonially and diplomatically, as well as economically, financially, and educationally, and imperialistically.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Schuyler voiced that the marriage would enable “Japan to become a power on the African continent” and the “Associate with Japan, the Ethiopian kingdom will doubtless become a power in Africa.”¹⁸⁸ In light of this, Italy, which had an imperial foothold in Italian Somaliland and Eritrea, expressed antagonism towards the relationship which was perceived as threatening to its imperial interests in Ethiopia. The marriage never took place because the Italian government strongly opposed how the union threatened their imperial plans.

The idea that Japan would be a champion of the darker races did not assume popularity among some Black Americans who distrusted Japan’s commitment to racial equality and its interest in Ethiopia. The Kansas City-based *The Negro Star*, a voice of Black progressivism, voiced that “the royal house of Japan and Abyssinia [has] mislead the darker people” and was only using the marriage to “reap the natural resources of Abyssinia.”¹⁸⁹ According to the newspaper, Japan’s invasion of Manchuria was a warning. It cautioned Black Americans to “study here the treatment of the Korean and Formosan people” and they “would see that Japan “is the watchdog of imperialism.”¹⁹⁰ *The Negro Liberator*, which was part of the Crusader News Agency (CNS) an official news organ of The League for the Struggle of Negro Rights, articulated race-specific and class-conscious politics appealing to Black workers. *The Liberator*’s militant Communist, anti-capitalist anti-imperialist stance came into conflict with the Black mainstream newspapers. It argued that the marriage between a member of the Japanese and

¹⁸⁷ George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 3, 1934.

¹⁸⁸ “Views and Reviews.”

¹⁸⁹ Ralph L. Lester, “Done At Random,” *Negro Star*, April 20, 1934.

¹⁹⁰ “Done At Random.”

Ethiopian royal family was nothing to celebrate. It questioned, “what consultation will this be to the black toilers of Abyssinia” who worked on the plantations and “are held in chattel slavery by the black ruling class.”¹⁹¹ The newspaper vehemently opposed an Ethiopian-Japanese alliance on grounds that Japan represented another capitalist nation seeking to exploit Ethiopia. The West Indian columnist Cyril Briggs, an ex-Garveyite and founder of the Black Nationalist African Blood Brotherhood of African Redemption (ABB) espoused a politics that merged Black Nationalism with Communism espousing workers’ rights, Black liberation, and anti-imperialism. He saw the Japanese as “imperialist bandits” and their interests in Ethiopia, according to him, “were comparable to those of the Western imperialist powers” since they “joined with the rest of the vultures in the bloody onslaughts” to “squabble for the spoils of China.”¹⁹² Moreover, the newspaper believed that the Japanese “found a willing tool in King Selassie.”¹⁹³ Despite their criticisms, the idea of a strategic alliance between Japan and Ethiopia gained currency in the Black American press as a strategic avenue for fighting back against European imperialist aggression in East Africa.

War Drums

The prospect of war between Italy and Ethiopia dramatically increased by December 1934 and contributed to the increased publicizing of Italian fascist aggression against Ethiopia. On December 5, 1934, at 3:30 in the morning, 600 colonial troops from Italian Somaliland and 1,500 Ethiopian troops clashed from the control of the strategic wells at Wal Wal in Ethiopia’s

¹⁹¹ “Japanese Imperialism and the Negro,” *Negro Liberator*, February 10, 1934.

¹⁹² Cyril Briggs, “Japan as the Champion of the Dr. Races,” *Negro Liberator*, March 17, 1934; Cyril Briggs established the Crusader News Service to shape news coverage. It served more than two hundred Black newspapers in the United States, West Indies, and Africa.

¹⁹³ “Negro Struggles Abroad: Lies of Japan Bosses Fight For Abyssinia Another “Tinder Box,” *The Negro Liberator*, October 27, 1934.

arid triangle.¹⁹⁴ *The Amsterdam News*, *The Courier*, and *The Defender* expressed a comparative perspective with *The Times* asserting that Mussolini desired to gain access to Ethiopia's rich raw materials especially since oil was discovered in the contested area. Considering this, Italy denied that it initiated military operations against Ethiopia since it had no troops in Ethiopian territory.¹⁹⁵ The Ethiopian government, on the other hand, asserted that Italian troops with tanks and military airplanes attacked without provocations. The Ethiopian government asserted that Italian airplanes constantly flying over Ethiopian territory were bombing strategic points in Ethiopia and that Italian engineering corps, were constructing roads in Ethiopian territory.¹⁹⁶ Though Ethiopia had been subject to the imperial intrigues of members of the League of Nations, it expressed confidence in the League's commitment to its Covenant emphasizing collective security. Ethiopian officials notified the League of Nations about the dispute and offered to engage in arbitration but Italy refused arbitration asserting that Ethiopia's accusations were "destitute of any foundation" and that "it is clear that the aggression came from Ethiopians and that the responsibility falls on them."¹⁹⁷ *The Plaindealer*, a local Black newspaper in Kansas City, reasoned that the incident occurred because "Mussolini wants more land for colonies" and "Il Duce probably would welcome pretext for an armed thrust into Ethiopia, either with the hope of forcible annexation of the imposition of a treaty granting Italy certain territorial rights in the

¹⁹⁴ The Dispute Between Abyssinia and Italy Abyssinia's Explanation to the League of Nations and the Conciliation Commission of the Incident Which Italy Used As A Pretext for Prospective War, Ethiopia-ANP Clipping and Releases," Folder 171-6, The Claude A. Barnett Papers, ProQuest History Vault, <https://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu>

¹⁹⁵ "Oil Termed Cause of African Clash: Discovery in Disputed Area," *The New York Times*, December 27, 1934.

¹⁹⁶ "Abyssinia Reports an Italian Invasion," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1934.

¹⁹⁷ "Italy Demands Apology in Row with Ethiopia: Mussolini Refuses to Arbitrate Quarrel" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1934.

land of Haile Selassie.”¹⁹⁸ *The Liberator* concurred that Italy desired “its natural resources” and the tremendous possibility of turning the country into huge cotton plantations” and its “strategic position which it occupies have been a source of keen rivalry” between “imperialist powers.”¹⁹⁹ At the same time, newspaper’s columnist Jerome Arnold believed the war between Ethiopia and Italy should be prevented because it would have dire consequences for the “thousands of African natives, both from Abyssinia and the Italian colonies, who would be murdered.”²⁰⁰ *The Courier* seemed less confident asserting “the future will be in the northeastern corner of Africa, no one can accurately foretell, but Abyssinia will with courage and determination fight to preserve her 2,000-year independence.”²⁰¹ Clearly, the Black fighting press was eager to join the ideological fight, in the process of underestimating Mussolini’s capacities.

Mounting hostilities between Italy and Ethiopia led Black Americans to engage in antifascist protest and organizing in the name of the defense of Ethiopian independence. The NAACP did not take the lead on pro-Ethiopian organizations because it focused on domestic civil rights and “shrank back to its narrowest program: to make Negroes American citizens”²⁰² Leftists took the lead in organizing mass protests against Italy’s provocation. *The Liberator*, now published by the attorney and Harlem Communist Party organizer, Benjamin J. Davis, Jr., publicized how the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) drafted an appeal against the “Italian imperialists” and how they “occupied Abyssinian territory.” Also, more liberal-oriented pro-Ethiopian organizations were established. Realizing the dearth of

¹⁹⁸ “Best Editorial of the Week. Ethiopia and Italy,” *Plaindealer*, December 28, 1934.

¹⁹⁹ “Ask Mass Protest against Invasion of Abyssinian Soil,” *The Negro Liberator*, December 29, 1934.

²⁰⁰ Jerome Arnold, “Negro Struggles Abroad,” *Negro Liberator*, December 15, 1934.

²⁰¹ “Italy versus Abyssinia,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 29, 1934.

²⁰² W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life From the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 291.

information on modern Ethiopia, Howard University professor William Leo Hansberry, a pioneer in African history, founded the Ethiopian Research Council (ERC) along with Maleku Bayen at Howard University in December 1934.²⁰³ The council disseminated information on the history, civilization, and diplomacy of modern Ethiopia. There is a possibility that *The Courier* received its information about Ethiopia from the ERC and the white mainstream press. At this time, *The Courier* balanced this hope with the reality that Ethiopia was only able to maintain its independence because of the imperial rivalry of England, France, and Italy who all wanted to gain a foothold in Ethiopia. *The Liberator*, on the other hand, expressed a hardline and uncompromising perspective concerning European imperialist pursuit in Africa. Jerome Arnold expressed the news of war by demonstrating that “Great Britain is also eager for some of the rich Abyssinian land” and that war meant “thousands of African natives, both from Abyssinia and the Italian colonies would be murdered.”²⁰⁴

The German fascist dictator Adolph Hitler, who established his Third Reich in 1934, posed a threat to the balance of power in Europe. The discourse in the press weighed the geopolitical relationship of Hitler’s rise to power to Mussolini’s martial plans in Ethiopia. Consequently, according to *The Courier*, “France needs to be free to throw all of her strength against Germany” and “she must thus assure herself Italy’s friendship” and there is “about to grant Italy a free hand in Abyssinia.” At the same time, according to the newspaper, “Great Britain, up to her old trick of playing one enemy off against another, prefers the extension of Italian influence to that of France, which is already too strong in Africa to suit her.”²⁰⁵ Imperial

²⁰³ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 40.

²⁰⁴ Jerome Arnold, “Negro Struggles Abroad: War Clouds Gather over Abyssinia,” *The Negro Liberator*, December 15, 1934.

²⁰⁵ “The Menace to Abyssinia,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 22, 1934.

Japan, which was proceeding forward with its Asian expansionist plan threatening Manchuria, complicated matters. Italy expressed its disdain regarding Japan's overtures to come to Ethiopia's aid.

Summary

From 1919 to 1934, the Black American press circulated an Ethiopia-based Black popular culture and political discourse that framed multiple meanings of Ethiopia that reflected Black Americans' awareness of how their condition was related to the triumphs and tragedies of Africa. Ethiopia became a place of power and prestige in a world where Blackness was condemned. Some adopted Ethiopian identities in a show of their new nationalism or love of Ethiopia and sought to emigrate to build up their homeland. Others embraced Garvey's chauvinistic Black Nationalism as they looked at Ethiopia as a place that they could emigrate to and provide their skills and talents to uplift the feudal nation so it could effectively contest European imperial threats. At the same time, Black Americans' admiration for Ethiopia did not mean that it was not absolved from criticism. Though newspapers such as *The Defender* critiqued the emperors' failure to abolish slavery, this did not prevent Black people from seeing him as a model of Black leadership. When Selassie reached out to Black people to assist in his modernizing efforts, some Black people, who observed Black Nationalist sympathies interpreted this as a fulfillment of Psalm 68:31. Black Communists and progressive voices, on the other hand, did not feel that Ethiopia was above reproach. They criticized Selassie as misguided because of his belief that Japan would defend Ethiopia against Italian aggression. By 1934, the Black mainstream and alternative presses developed an awareness of the larger geopolitical implications of Mussolini's aggression against Ethiopia. Through the consumption of Black

popular culture and public discourse from 1919 to 1934, Black Americans established early cosmopolitan connectivity with Ethiopia that was a foundation for mass activism during the Second Italo-Ethiopian war that commenced one year later.

CHAPTER III: GROUNDWORK

Introduction

Black Americans from across the country mobilized from March 1935 to September 1935 to support the defense of Ethiopia against Italy's attempt to undermine the nation's sovereignty. In the United States, writes the historian, John Hope Franklin, "even the most provincial among Negro Americans became international-minded."²⁰⁶ As Black publicists and readers turned their attention to Ethiopia, they consumed and produced a Black internationalist discourse reflecting a cross-section of competing narratives and contentious politics among the Black Nationalists, liberals, Communists, pacifists, and pan African Socialists concerning Italian aggression. Black nationalists emphasized Black America's racial affinity with Ethiopia, and it was necessary to come to her defense against white supremacist aggression to preserve the center of Black power. Liberals signaled that the Ethiopian war proved that the international system needed to be reformed because it ceased to be a democratic institution promoting world peace. On the other hand, Christian internationalists embraced liberalism that fused Christian pacifism with liberalism. Communists explained the Ethiopian crisis was due to the twin evils of capitalism and imperialism, which were threats to the white and Black working class and needed to be overthrown. Socialists adopted a comparative perspective calling on labor to unite to oppose Mussolini's aggression while advocating that the war pointed to how the capitalist system needed reform. These varied discourses captured the attention of the Black public and aided in fostering the development of an internationalist movement promoting global solidarity among

²⁰⁶ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 385.

communities of color and white supporters in the United States to strengthen their defense against Italian imperialist aggression.

Reporting and Representation of Ethiopian Volunteerism

Throughout the summer of 1935, *The Defender*, *Philadelphia Tribune*, *Amsterdam News*, and *Courier*, among the nation's most prominent Black weeklies, awakened the grassroots mobilization of Black Americans. They publicized how Italy's fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, was amassing an army on the Italian Somaliland border to invade the last Black independent nation on the African continent and fashion a Roman Empire. On March 2, 1935, *The Defender* proclaimed in a headline that "Ethiopia Is Not Afraid of Mussolini" and ready to go to war with Italy if needed because Selassie "was a keen student of military tactics" but also a diplomat as well."²⁰⁷ *The Tribune* communicated how though Mussolini was "pouring troops and war supplies into East Africa," Emperor Selassie was prepared to "order general mobilization if war is threatening and that he will never submit to Italian domination."²⁰⁸ *The Defender* reported that Selassie, who was now convinced that Italy planned to move ahead with war, began "whipping his army into shape." According to the newspaper, the Ethiopian, which included a measly 150,000 soldiers, had serviceable rifles and 6,000 machine guns, and a supply of automatic rifles.²⁰⁹

The white mainstream press was less optimistic about Ethiopia's ability to wage a successful battle against Mussolini's fascist military that was outfitted with modern implements of war. On February 24, 1935, *The Times*, a more moderate publication, questioned if Mussolini

²⁰⁷ "Ethiopia Ready for Italy: Ethiopia Ready for Italy's Soldiers," *The Chicago Defender*, March 2, 1935.

²⁰⁸ "Italy, Ethiopia Are Near "Open Break:" War is Seen Imminent as Troops Begin to Mobilize," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 16, 1935.

²⁰⁹ "Ethiopia Has 500,000 Men for Conflict," *The Chicago Defender*, June 22, 1935.

was prepared to battle. The article pessimistically asserted that "Ethiopia is today facing a grave crisis. She is at the crossroads." The newspaper reported that the Ethiopian people are "all too conscious of the danger, her ruling class all but helpless." Aside from this situation, Ethiopia was also disadvantaged because "Even if [the country] had great financial resources, she would find it hard to arm against her enemies."²¹⁰ The country also had to contend with the difficulty of receiving shipments of guns, ammunition, and other war supplies, which had to pass through areas encircled by European powers. At the same time, the newspaper recognized that Ethiopia needed to retain her independence because "the submersion of [the country] into the territories of European powers would mean unquestionably a realignment of the African map extending far beyond the territory immediately involved."²¹¹

The Courier took the lead in rolling out *dramatic* coverage on Ethiopia, and its pan-African perspective rallied the Black public to come to the aid of Ethiopia.²¹² The newspaper's editor Percival L. Prattis directed the newspaper's success which was partly attributed to ANP correspondent J. A. Rogers. His coverage of Ethiopia set the tone for early reporting and public discourse. In his column "Ruminations" in *The Amsterdam News*, he argued that there was precedence for Black Americans volunteering for military service for a foreign nation. Rogers pointed to Americans going to Cuba during the Spanish-American War, asserting, "American volunteers went to help Cuba against Spain in the '90s."²¹³ Accordingly, Rogers provided readers

²¹⁰ Joseph Israel, 2nd, "A Primitive Ethiopia Faces the West," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1935.

²¹¹ "A Primitive Ethiopia."

²¹² "War in Ethiopia by September! Italy Defies World," *The Chicago Defender*, June 15, 1935.

²¹³ J. A. Rogers, "Ruminations: Kinship with Ethiopian Black Man's Symbol, The Use of "Negro" That Slave Trade Bogey," *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 20, 1935.

with exclusive Ethiopia scoops such as “ETHIOPIA WELCOMES U. S. VOLUNTEERS.”²¹⁴ Black Communists opposed banner headlines such as this that promoted warfare. According to *The Liberator*, they believed that “the fight for Ethiopia must be waged right here in America with mass demonstrations and parades picketing and protesting the Italian consulate.”²¹⁵ Communist disapproval of volunteerism did not deter Black men's enthusiasm about bearing arms to defend Ethiopia's independence. *The Courier* promoted and then registered widespread enthusiasm evidenced from printed letters from racially proud and patriotic Black men. Men such as Robert Brown of Greenville, Mississippi, expressed that he knew a “good deal of young men [who] who want to volunteer” to go and fight “for that old Mother Land Africa.” Joe E. Thomas, a physician from Cleveland, Ohio, observed that having a common racial bond with Ethiopia reconstructed his homeland. He asserted, “every son and daughter of Ethiopia should assist their blood relatives in Ethiopia’ and that Black Americans must not desert [their] race in Africa.”²¹⁶ These Black American men observed a nationalism centered on an Ethiopian national identity as they reconceptualized nationhood and Black American citizenship as they regarded Ethiopia as their homeland.²¹⁷ Moreover, they wanted to participate in the more extensive American campaigns against European fascism as a sign of their allegiance to the nation

²¹⁴ Digest of Letter Received by the Ethiopian Research Council, Washington, D.C. NAACP Papers, Part II, ProQuest History Vault.

²¹⁵ “Fighting For Ethiopia,” *The Negro Liberator*, July 1, 1935.

²¹⁶ “Want to Sign Up,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1935.

²¹⁷ Tuire Valkeakari, “New Negro” Men, World War I and African American Masculinity in Guy Johnson’s Standing at the Scratch Line,” *Transnationalism, and Ethnic American Identity* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 50.; Martin Summers, *Manliness & Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 13.

[Ethiopia]. However, they also wanted to participate in causes that illustrated their racial affinities as diasporic subjects.²¹⁸

Black newspapers expressed support for Ethiopia while also continuing to observe that they were Americans. Black Americans also expressed how they retained faith in democratic institutions. Thus, the Ethiopian war became a testing ground for the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy and commitment to Black racial advancement. Black Americans hoped the Roosevelt administration would come to the defense of Ethiopia in its fight to preserve the Solomonic dynasty. The Black newspapers expressed support for Ethiopia; they observed that they were Americans, and they retained faith in democratic institutions. Its officials embraced neutrality and an intention to keep out of European entanglements despite the Black press's strong protest. This foreign policy reflected how the administration gave low priority to African affairs because it had not territorial stake in the continent.²¹⁹ Marcus Garvey, now residing in London, used his new irregularly published monthly organizational journal *The Black Man*, which replaced *The World* in 1934, to advocate for Ethiopian independence.²²⁰ In the July 1935 edition, he asserted, "The history and tradition of America are of such as those fighting for their freedom" and that "America at least must morally support Abyssinia."²²¹ *The Tribune* believed that the Ethiopian crisis provided Roosevelt with the opportunity to live up to his democratic idealism. The newspaper printed a statement on Italy and Ethiopia by the N.A.A.C.P.,

²¹⁸ Ivy Wilson, "Are You Man Enough?" Imagining Ethiopia and Transnational Black Masculinity," *Callaloo* 33 (2010): 265.

²¹⁹ Meriweather, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 34.

²²⁰ Liz Mackie, *The Great Marcus Garvey* (London and Hertfordshire: Hansib Publications, 2008), 50; *The Black Man* was published irregularly because it lacked the financial backing of the *Negro World*.

²²¹ Marcus Garvey, "America and Abyssinia," *The Black Man: A Monthly Magazine of Negro Thought and Opinion* I, No. 8 (Late July 1935): 2, Box 6, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Amy Memorial Collection on Marcus Garvey, Nashville, TN.

"vigorously urg[ing] the President and the Department of State to voice publicly their disapproval of the Italian government's action in Ethiopia" and to "put itself squarely on record against encroachment."²²²

The hopes of going to fight to save the Ethiopian Solomonic Dynasty were upset by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who brought Ethiopian military recruitment to a halt in July 1935, declaring volunteer efforts on behalf of Ethiopia a violation of The Neutrality Act. Under the Neutrality Act Americans were denied the right to travel to zones of combatant activity.²²³ The influence of the white supremacist conservative Southern Democrats on Roosevelt's passage of the New Deal also prevented Roosevelt from intervening in Ethiopia. *The Defender* related how Robert Ephraim, ex-Garveyite and founder of the Black Nationalist Negro World Alliance, asserted that "the refusal of the United States to throw its influence against Mussolini" was "an indication that the white races are lining up against the black."²²⁴ The Communist-oriented *Liberator*, edited by attorney Benjamin Davis, *attacked* Roosevelt for acting in the name of capitalist interests. He voiced that his inaction "sent his okay on Mussolini's robber venture in a spineless sympathetic note to Haile Selassie." In the same edition, columnist Jerome Arnold asserted that his decision "leaves no doubt the government's support at the present of Italian fascism."²²⁵ In response to Roosevelt's Ethiopian policy, *The Courier* quickly shifted its editorial stance in recruiting since its publisher, Robert Vann, supported Roosevelt's policies and did not

²²² "N. A. A. C. P. Resolutions: Wherein State of Nation is Reviewed," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 11, 1935.

²²³ Michael G. Carew, *The Impact of the First World War on U.S. Policy Makers: American Strategic and Foreign Policy, 1938-1942* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 112.

²²⁴ "U. S. Policy on Ethiopia is Criticized: Need Not Expect Black Man's Aid if Country Turns Him Down," *The Chicago Defender*, July 13, 1935.

²²⁵ "Sign Petitions!" *Negro Liberator*, July 15, 1935; Jerome Arnold, "Untitled," *Negro Liberator*, July 15, 1935.

want to use his newspaper to embarrass him.²²⁶ Black people from across the country were confused and wrote to the N.A.A.C.P to clarify the Secretary of State's statement. Mr. Horace White, pastor of Mt. Zion Temple in Cleveland, Ohio, questioned the statement in *The Courier* and wrote to the N.A.A.C.P's Walter White asking to prove this statement and "requesting information about the legality of American citizens fighting" direction about recruiting.²²⁷ Virgil White in Alliance, Nebraska wrote "all we know is what has appeared in the newspapers."²²⁸ White corroborated the statement by referring them back to *The Courier*, which became a source of information on Ethiopia.

The State Department tried to impede Black men's fulfillment of their patriotic duty to their homeland by imposing a stiff penalty for violating the American law. The federal government issued a strict warning that those who served a foreign nation in a war capacity would risk a stiff fine and three years' imprisonment; rank-and-file Black men were not discouraged from enlisting. Overflowing nationalism and racial patriotism towards Ethiopia won out over observance of American law. *The Plaindealer* publicized how the "Crack" Black aviator William Hawkins of Wilmington, N.C. flew 100 miles per hour north and south, recruiting soldiers to fight for the Emperor.²²⁹ Also, in Fort Worth, Texas, a group of men led by World War I veteran Walter J. Davis announced they were volunteering to "spill their blood on behalf

²²⁶ Andrew Buni, *Robert V. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier: Politics and Black Journalism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), 245.

²²⁷ "Mt. Walter White, Secretary N.A.A.C.P to Horace White," August 3, 1935. NAACP Administrative Subject File, Ethiopia-August 1935, Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.

https://hv.proquest.com/pdfs/001421/001421_030_0778/001421_030_0778_From_1_to_37.pdf

²²⁸ "Mr. Virgil Motley to Secretary Walter White," August 15, 1935, NAACP Administrative Subject File, Ethiopia-August 1935 Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress,

https://hv.proquest.com/pdfs/001421/001421_030_0778/001421_030_0778_From_1_to_37.pdf.

²²⁹ "Black Hawk Aids Ethiopia," *The Plain Dealer*, September 1935.

of [their] native land."²³⁰ In Harlem, Samuel Daniels founded the Garveyite-inspired populist Pan-African Reconstruction Association (PARA) that charged Black men 25 cents to sign up for war service in Ethiopia kept the idea of enlisting alive.²³¹ *The Courier* reported how PARA leaders recruited through its twenty-two offices across the U.S, enlisting seventeen thousand five hundred volunteers from Chicago; Detroit, Philadelphia; Kansas City, New York; and Boston.²³² Daniels told his Black audiences that he hoped they would stay in Ethiopia after the war to help rebuild the country after the expulsion of the Italian forces and launch a new Black industrial empire geared toward liberating the entire black world.²³³ Others like Charles Rothwell, a Pullman Porter, writing from Denver, Colorado, wanted to go to Ethiopia because it was a free and independent Black nation that offered an opportunity. In a letter to *The Defender*, he voiced that he wanted to go to Ethiopia because "the United States will never allow us to be anything as race here," so "why not wake up and try to become a respected race in Abyssinia."²³⁴ He also entertained a romanticized view of Ethiopia as a place where "gold, silver, coffee, and wealth of the earth await [Black Americans'] coming."²³⁵

Some Black journalists and publicists articulated that they were Americans first and questioned the desire of Black Americans to immigrate to Ethiopia as misguided and illogical. Robert S. Abbott, the editor of *The Defender*, used his editorial platform to promote the politics of integration and inter-racialism. Abbot prioritized domestic racial affairs over Black

²³⁰ "Texas Group May Enlist: Fort Worth Negroes Consider Going to Ethiopia," *New York Times*, July 14, 1935.

²³¹ "Ethiopian Recruiter Admits no Authority," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 20, 1935.

²³² "Move to Halt Recruiting for Ethiopia Launched," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 25, 1935.

²³³ "Ethiopian Recruiter Admits no Authority."

²³⁴ Charles Rothwell, "What the People Say," *The Chicago Defender*, March 16, 1935.

²³⁵ "What the People Say."

internationalism before the threat of the outbreak of the war. He viewed emigration and the utopian dream of Black nationhood and citizenship in Africa as tantamount to giving up on the American democratic experiment.²³⁶ Abbott reasoned that Black Americans should abide by the Neutrality Law. On July 27, 1935, the publisher, in an editorial “Why Go to Ethiopia?” thought it was illogical for Black people to work themselves into a frenzy over Ethiopia. He asked, “Why don’t they fight lynching, peonage, racial discrimination, and segregation? Why don’t you fight to which you are entitled?”²³⁷ Lillian H.C. Kirk wrote a letter to the editor of *The Defender* and contested Abbott's stance. She claimed that Abbott "evoked respect for the laws which [he] continually assure[d] his readers do not guarantee the Race the protections to which they are entitled." She reminded Abbott, a supporter of thrift and industriousness that "Ethiopia offers the American Negro youth an unlimited opportunity for the realization of his ambition to do and prove to the world that his words are not idle when he asserts that he wants an even chance."²³⁸ This aspect implied Black advancement. Likewise, *The Courier's* George Schuyler, an anti-Communist that disdained racial politics, used his column “Views and Reviews,” concurred with Abbot that it was “ludicrous” that Black Americans were willing to “die for dear Old Ethiopia.”²³⁹ However, he used his column, “Views and Reviews,” to assert his support for broad solidarity and instruct Black Americans to provide collective humanitarian aid to Ethiopia.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Ethan Michaeli, *The Defender: How the legendary black newspaper changed from the age of the Pullman Porters to the age of Obama* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 211.

²³⁷ Robert Abbott, “Why Go to Ethiopia? The Editor Speaks,” *The Chicago Defender*, July 27, 1935.

²³⁸ Lillian H. C, Kirk, “Why Go To Ethiopia?” *The Chicago Defender*, September 21, 1935.

²³⁹ George Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1935.

²⁴⁰ During the 1920s, Schuyler joined the Socialist Party of America. He also worked at A. Philip Randolph's Socialist Magazine, *The Messenger*, wrote a column in the newspaper, See

Harlem became a major center of Popular Front politics, which galvanized Black Harlemites to rally in solidarity with Ethiopia. The Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia (PCDE), the brainchild of James W. Ford, an organizer for the Harlem Section of the Communist Party (CPUSA), directed interracial and cross-organizational protests to support Ethiopia. The PCDE denounced the Black Nationalist rhetoric framing the Ethiopian war as a race war. Rather, it became a struggle against imperialism. Nevertheless, many Black Americans associated themselves with the direct-action activism of the PCDE, which formed as a coalition of liberals, Communists, clergy, Black Nationalists, civil rights organizations, and labor activities. The building of this coalition pointed to Ford's emphasis on broad unity. On March 15, 1935, *The Negro Liberator* published excerpts from a speech Ford delivered urging Black organizations that if they "stop fighting among [themselves]...long enough to unify [their] forces against our enemy---we would advance!"²⁴¹ Arthur Reid, a Black Nationalist, had long standing reservations about the Communists commitment to Black liberation. His comments pointed to Marcus Garvey's criticism of Communism. In his writing Garvey expressed that Communism was dangerous to Black people because white Communists would only use Black people to conduct their revolution. According to him this revolution would only result in "the majority group or race [still being in power], not only as communists but as white men."²⁴² At this point

Carroll, *Race News*, 60-61. Mark C. Thompson, "The God of Love: Fascism in George Schuyler's Black Empire," *CLA Journal* (December 2004), 185.

²⁴¹ "Gigantic Ethiopian United Front Rallies Harlem Masses," *The Negro Liberator*, March 15, 1935.

²⁴² Garvey expressed in *Negro Communism, Trade Unionism and His (?) Friend: Beware of Greeks Bearing Gifts*, that white trade unionism would betray Black workers. He believed that the only friend the Black worker had was the white capitalist. Garvey believed that Communism was a danger to Black people in the United States because they were a minority in the population. He believed the party would use them to engage in working-class revolution to create a government that was only beneficial to the white working class. See, Marcus Garvey, "The Negro, Communism, Trade Unionism and His (?) Friend," in *Philosophy and Opinions of*

the Garvey Movement was in a state of decline and dissension. A.L. King led the Harlem Branch and embraced united front activism since it tapped into Black radicals' sentiments concerning pan-Africanism and the global nature of fascism.²⁴³ Garveyites were also attracted to the PCDE because it was a base for the mobilization of the Black community. They recognized that the process of Black American and anti-colonial liberation could only be achieved through the formation of strategic cross-organizational alliances.

James W. Ford led the Black Popular Front, which was organized in the name of the interests of Black people but also included white allies, quickly rallied around Ethiopia in a demonstration of racial solidarity. Ford, a major voice in the Seventh Communist International called for the establishment of a new platform called the International Negro Liberation Committee. This platform followed Popular Front policies but envisioned a broad people's front among Black people. The Comintern rejected this approach.²⁴⁴ However, Black Communists and progressives organized in the name of addressing the needs of Ethiopia while articulating an anti-imperialist and anti-fascist politics. This is evidenced by the formation of The Medical Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, composed of Harlem Doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals, was chaired by Dr. J.J. Jones, and Dr. Arnold Donowa was the secretary. The Committee directed the collection of medical supplies to send to Ethiopia. It also recruited medical missions composed of dentists, physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and technicians for Ethiopian forces. *The Negro Liberator* argued that collecting medical supplies was one of the best ways to support Ethiopia because, "Soon Mussolini's guns long aimed at Ethiopia, will

Marcus Garvey or Africa for the Africans, edited by Amy Jacques Garvey, 1st ed. Black Thought and Culture (London: Frank Cass & Company, 1967), 69-70.

²⁴³ Carroll, *Race News*, 69.

²⁴⁴ Holger, "Framing Black Communist Labor Union Activism," 275.

belch forth death and destruction on the last independent Negro nation on earth.”²⁴⁵ Since Mussolini was "hell-bent on proceeding with plunderous warfare which will set the world aflame," it was imperative that "every lover of peace, every hater of fascism, every fighter for Negro rights-Negro and white" provided concrete aid to Ethiopia.²⁴⁶ On September 26, 1935, *The Cleveland Call and Post*, known for its dramatic reporting of violence on its front page, covered how Black doctors peacefully protested at the Italian consulate to protest Mussolini's intended invasion of Ethiopia. The Medical Committee sponsored the protest for the Defense of Ethiopia.²⁴⁷ The New York Police Department (NYPD) had a contentious relationship with Popular Front activists, disparaged as threats to law and order. The police routinely provoked Popular Front protestors to provoke a physical reaction from them to use force against the protestors. The protestors, carrying signs with anti-fascist and pacifist slogans such as "Down with the War and Fascism" and "Hands off Ethiopia," did not give the police the opportunity to intervene.²⁴⁸

The not so-broad left supported and organized many pro-Ethiopia protests in major urban areas. These protests, which were animated by Popular Front politics, were reported extensively in newspapers to attract publicity for the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist politics.²⁴⁹ On August 3, 1935 white newspaper *The Daily Worker*, the official newspaper of the CPUSA, emphasized that the fight against war and fascism relied on Black and white unity. In Harlem 100,000 Black and white workers, liberals, and ministers marched in solidarity against the imperialist plans for the

²⁴⁵ "Medical Aid to Ethiopia," *The Negro Liberator*, September 16, 1935.

²⁴⁶ "Medical Aid to Ethiopia."

²⁴⁷ "Negro Doctors Rally To Defense of Ethiopia," *The Cleveland Call and Post*, September 26, 1935.

²⁴⁸ "Negro Doctors Rally to the Defense of Ethiopia Picket Outside of Italian Consulate," *The Cleveland Call and Post*, September 29, 1935.

²⁴⁹ Carroll, *Race News*, 70.

“rape and looting of Ethiopia by the “Fascist warmongers.”²⁵⁰ This interracial unity occurred alongside escalating violence between Italians and Black people over the racial politics of the war. The *Amsterdam News*, a bastion of militant agitation and supporter of Popular Front activism, printed excerpts from Reverend William Lloyd Imes, pastor of St. James Presbyterian Church. He voiced, “We have not bitterness toward the Italian people.”²⁵¹ Likewise, *The Negro Liberator*, depicted the depth of working-class solidarity and anti-fascist determination by reporting how activists were singing, “We’ll never fight our class brother, we shall not be moved.”²⁵² Moreover, Black Communists and Italian Americans’ class solidarity was based on a recognition that Italian workers would suffer the most in Mussolini’s planned war against Ethiopia. On May 15, 1935, *The Negro Liberator* voiced that Mussolini’s continued aggression against Ethiopia meant that Italian worker would be “cannon fodder for the fascist government’s robber war against Ethiopia.”²⁵³ Furthermore, Jerome Arnold, believed that it was important to support Italian workers because an “uprising of workers in Italy [might] cause the collapse of Italian fascism and the defeat of the unintended invasion of Ethiopia.”²⁵⁴

Publicists Reporting on the League of Nations’ Commitment to Collective Security

The threat of war between Ethiopia and Italy tested the global commitment to checking expansionist moves that threatened the peace and sovereignty of non-belligerent nations. On August 5, 1935, The PCDE sent Harlem's Dr. Willis N. Huggins, a firm believer in liberal internationalism and Executive Secretary of the International Council of Friends of Ethiopia, as

²⁵⁰ “Negro, White Rallies, Held in East, West,” *The Daily Worker*, August 3, 1935.

²⁵¹ “Will March Today,” *The Amsterdam News*, August 3, 1935.

²⁵² Ruth James, “Ethiopia Rallies Harlem: International Solidarity Burns Deeply in the Hearts of Young and Old,” *The Negro Liberator*, August 15, 1935.

²⁵³ “Rather Starve Than Go To Ethiopia,” *The Negro Liberator*, May 15, 1935.

²⁵⁴ Jerome Arnold, “Negro Struggle Abroad,” *The Negro Liberator*, August 1, 1935.

an unofficial goodwill ambassador to Geneva Switzerland to plea that the League protects Ethiopia's independence.²⁵⁵ Like many Black Americans, Huggins expressed faith in the diplomatic machinations of the League. *The Amsterdam News* quoted Huggins, who asserted, "I am convinced that the League cannot tolerate a war fraught with so much peril to the world."²⁵⁶ He also hoped to seek support from Maxim Litvinov, Soviet Delegate and President of the League Council, and hoped he would "use his best efforts in behalf of peace."²⁵⁷ The League, dominated by the democratic imperialist powers, England and France, failed to intervene on behalf of Ethiopia and check Mussolini's fascist imperialism. *The Tribune* acknowledged that the League's inaction revealed its "bankruptcy in the face of the greatest test of its usefulness."²⁵⁸ The League was bankrupt because of the subjective application of the principle of collective security. What one member of the gathering saw as criminal behavior was interpreted more sanguinely by another member as passing mischance. Also, the imposition of a forceful corrective upon a recalcitrant nation by the collective was expensive both in finance and in measure of mutual interests among nations.²⁵⁹

Black Americans broke down the geopolitical rationale of the League into two factors, racism and imperialism.²⁶⁰ *The Tribune* acknowledged that the League's inaction revealed the League's "bankruptcy in the face of the greatest test of usefulness."²⁶¹ The liberal activist

²⁵⁵ "Ethiopia Supports Rally in New York Due August Third," *Negro Liberator*, August 1, 1935. "In Geneva," *The Chicago Defender*, August 24, 1935.

²⁵⁶ "Huggins Sees League Hope: Educator Returning from Geneva Trip for Ethiopia," *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 24, 1935.

²⁵⁷ "Huggins Sees League Hope."

²⁵⁸ S. Haynes, "Denounce Italy's Designs on Ethiopia," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 8, 1935.

²⁵⁹ Carew, *The Impact of the First World War*, 110.

²⁶⁰ Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 184.

²⁶¹ "Denounce Italy's Designs on Ethiopia."

William Pickens, an A.N.P correspondent and Assistant Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P, "condemned the "self-seeking diplomacy" of "the great nations of Europe," who ignored democratic idealism in favor of buttressing imperial interests."²⁶² The Negro Liberator's editor Benjamin Davis, Jr. agreed. He voiced that England and France "gave their consent to Mussolini's plans" and that "the Paris meeting was to prevent Italian fascism from stepping on the toes of Britain and France," both of whom have large interests in Ethiopia."²⁶³ Therefore the League, which was dedicated to peace, became an enabler of fascist militarism because it refused to confront Italian fascist aggression. Huggins, writing in *The Amsterdam News*, expressed anger because his trip to the Geneva amounted to his being a "witness at an ante-mortum." At Geneva, "imperialist morticians" were "preparing the diplomatic and military shroud for their living victims" by getting on their mark for a dash into East Africa to carry out a world-advertised, wholesale lynching in Ethiopia."²⁶⁴ On August 17, 1935, *The Courier's* George Schuyler observed that the League's inaction was a litmus test for the Western world. He said that the "writing was on the wall" to imply that "White civilization is doomed" because the global war that would "finish Europe and ready it for the Dark Age was inevitable."²⁶⁵

George Padmore critiqued how the League's inaction revealed that Black people had to rely on themselves to struggle against fascist imperialist domination. Padmore, was former leader of the Communist International Negro Bureau, tasked with organizing Black and African

²⁶² William Pickens, "Pickens Observations: Negroes and Italian Unite Against the War," *The New York Age*, August 10, 1935.

²⁶³ Benjamin Davis, Jr. "Ethiopia and Soviet Russia: Litvinoff, Soviet Diplomat in the League, The Real Thorn In Mussolini's Side.," *The Negro Liberator*, September 2, 1935.

²⁶⁴ "Dr. Willis N. Huggins, "Selassie is Greatest Black, Huggins Holds: Unofficial Delegate Writes Opinions of Impending War," *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 31, 1935.

²⁶⁵ George Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 17, 1935.

workers Socialist revolution. He was also the former editor of the Black Communist newspaper the *Negro Worker*, which focused on African labor struggles and provided thousands of Black workers with information, advice, guidance, and ideas about Black struggles on every continent.²⁶⁶ Padmore established a working relationship with Black Communists in the United States through the League of Struggle of Negro Rights (LSNR) and he became an associate editor of the organization's newspaper *The Negro Liberator*. By 1933, Padmore resigned from the international communist movement because of his criticism of the Soviet Union's compromising anti-colonial organizing in the African diaspora. Padmore's politics represented a new discourse on Leftist Black internationalism that emerged outside of Communism. His race-first perspective on Black internationalism and radical pan-Africanism was at odds with the Comintern's class-first policy that defined the Popular Front Strategy.²⁶⁷ After his expulsion from the Communist Party, he did not counter the move because he believed defeating fascism depended on overthrowing its causes—capitalism and colonialism. Padmore did not join the Popular Front because of his criticism of how political liberalism, which was associated with capitalism, only supported the racial, political, and economic oppression of Black people.

Though Padmore remained outside the Popular Front, his pan-African Socialist politics did not hinder him from making editorial alliances with the Black mainstream press. Black mainstream publications circulated his militant political critiques concerning Ethiopia to accommodate the expanding militancy of its readers. He remained in London but wrote for *The Crisis* in 1935 and contributed a syndicated column for the ANP news service.²⁶⁸ Padmore used

²⁶⁶ Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism From Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 178.

²⁶⁷ In *The Cause of Freedom*, 176.

²⁶⁸ Carroll, *Race News*, 72.

the mainstream press as a space for him to articulate his anti-imperial politics, critiquing how the League succumbed to the imperialist impulses due to the influence of its most influential members, Britain and France. In the editorial "Ethiopia and World Politics" in *The Crisis*, he critiqued how Britain and France sacrificed Ethiopia to Italy to "defend the status quo" and that the Soviet Union collaborated with the imperialist powers so as not to antagonize Italy."²⁶⁹ In consequence, Padmore reminded Black readers that the League of Nations would prefer that Mussolini "make war in Africa than disturb the status quo of Europe."²⁷⁰ Along with the N.A.A.C.P, Padmore ridiculed the Soviet Union and Maxim Litvinov, Commissioner for Foreign Affairs for the Soviet Union at the League Council, as abandoning opposition to imperialism despite its claim to defend weaker peoples. *The Courier* quoted a cablegram that N.A.A.C.P sent to Geneva questioning the Soviet Union's silence on Italian aggression. The association questioned, "Does your anti-imperialism stop at black nations?"²⁷¹ Padmore judged the Soviet Union's silence as hypocritical and another example of how it ceased to be a voice of democratic freedom as lambasted, "Litvinov refused to raise his voice in protest in fear that it might offend... and antagonize Mussolini. Ethiopia was left to fend for herself."²⁷²

Padmore's pan-African politics and questioning of the CP's commitment to Black liberation put him at odds with James W. Ford, the C.P.U.S.A's leading Black organizers. Ford strictly followed the Comintern's class-before-race approach to the radicalization of Black workers. Black Communists like Ford denounced any type of nationalists' tendencies within the Harlem Section of the Communist Party. Ford publicly denounced Padmore in *The Liberator* as

²⁶⁹ Padmore, "Ethiopia and World Politics," 156-57.

²⁷⁰ "Ethiopia and World Politics."

²⁷¹ "N.A.A.C.P. Scores Soviet Silence on Italian Imperialism in Ethiopia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 1, 1935.

²⁷² "Ethiopia and World Politics," 157.

a "discredited renegade" and "police agent" who "sold to imperialist interest."²⁷³ Black Communists also immediately denounced Padmore's criticism of the Soviet Union. The *Liberator*, reminded Black readers that the Communists were anti-racist by proclaiming how the Soviet delegate, "denounced emphatically any attempt of the League to discriminate against Ethiopian on account of their skin color." The delegate further said that the "Soviet Union refused to agree to any plan that will deprive Ethiopia of her independence."²⁷⁴ Benjamin Davis, Jr. also praised Litvinov's diplomacy as a clear indication that the Soviet Union was the only "country in the world without an imperialist appetite."²⁷⁵ The Soviet diplomat, according to the newspaper, "represented a government of workers and farmers" which "stands for the equality of all oppressed nationalities and minority people, including the Negro people all over the world."²⁷⁶

On September 16, 1935, an article in the newspaper described that the diplomat delivered a "stinking rebuke" of fascist Italy and the other imperialist members of the League all of whom refusal to condemn discrimination against Ethiopia signaled how they gave their blessings to Mussolini's intention to "civilize a backward people."²⁷⁷ The paper reassured its readers that Litvinoff remained an "anti-fascist peace lover regardless of race, creed, or color." The newspaper proudly printed excerpts from his address asserting, nothing in the covenant entitles us to discriminate between members of the League as to their internal regimes, the color of their skin, their racial distinctions, or the stage of their civilization, nor accordingly, to deprive some

²⁷³ Dan Pope, "Ford Analyzes Padmore as Police Agent and Spy," *Negro Liberator*, August 25, 1934.

²⁷⁴ "Union of Soviets against Mandates," *The Negro Liberator*, October 17, 1935.

²⁷⁵ Benjamin Davis, Jr. "Ethiopia and Soviet Russia," *The Negro Liberator*, August 15, 1935.

²⁷⁶ "Ethiopia and Soviet Russia."

²⁷⁷ "Soviet Supports Ethiopia," *The Negro Liberator*, September 16, 1935.

of the privileges, which they enjoy in the virtue of their membership and their inalienable right to integrity and peace.²⁷⁸

Despite these assertions some Black internationalists continued to express reservations regarding the Communist's commitment to Black liberation. *The Courier's* prolific contributor George Schuyler expressed a conservative politics and Black internationalism. Schuyler, a member of the NAACP, moved to the political rights in the 1930s in reaction to the CPUSA's influence in Black politics. His anti-Communism became cornerstone of his conservative politics that he expressed in his column, "Views and Reviews." Schuyler criticized the Communists and the "Moscow boy" Litvinov as opportunists, whose use of Black Americans reflected one of the political tactics that they used to expand their base. Accordingly, he denounced Communists as dishonest, opportunistic, and contradictory in their tactics.²⁷⁹ He rejected their tactics because of their shift from the Black Belt Thesis, emphasizing Black self-determination in the South, to the Popular Front strategy in order to combat fascism reflected a political inconsistency to him. Schuyler also scoffed at the Communist's creation of a united front with liberal democratic participants as a major contradiction of Soviet policy. Considering all of this, Schuyler held that the Communist Party did not have a clear program to address the needs of Black people. He also did not believe that Communists could defend Black people's civil rights of Ethiopia since they had a history of using "sadistic torture chambers, their dungeons, their prison camps, and forced labor." These actions, according to Schuyler, demonstrated how Communism in Russia was indistinguishable from fascism since both ideologies resulted in ruthless dictatorships.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ "Soviet Supports Ethiopia," *The Negro Liberator*, September 16, 1935.

²⁷⁹ George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1935.

²⁸⁰ "Views and Reviews."

Joel A Rogers, who had a long-standing interest in the race problem in the United States offered a comparable perspective regarding the Communists commitment to Black freedom and Ethiopian self-determination. On August 10, 1935, Rogers writing in his column “Ruminations” in *The Amsterdam News*, praised how white Communists expressed goodwill towards Black people by demonstrating in support of Ethiopia’s fight to protect its self-determination. However, he believed that Black people should only “travel with the Communists as far as they go on [their road]” concerning pro-Ethiopia organization. This support, according to Rogers, stemmed from white workers’ disdain for the “capitalists who sows the seed of race hate to his advantage.” However, he told Black people that they should not disregard how the “Communists are held as a shocking example of a group that wishes to overthrow the constitution and Government of the United States” because of how capitalists applied it inconsistently.²⁸¹ Though Rogers realized the inconsistencies of how the U.S. Constitution was applied, he warned that there was a “despotism” in Communism. Because of this, he felt that it was best for Black people to not “cultivate these weeds” by building stronger links with them in hopes of racial emancipation.²⁸²

Haile Selassie remained confident that Ethiopia could contest Italy if war broke out. He moved forward with preparing his imperial army. On August 17, 1935, *The Courier* reported that the emperor was preparing 600,000 men in the field to go to war. One of the commanders of the army was his nineteen-year-old son. The newspaper was relying on reports from the white Associated Negro Press (A.N.P). Also, the Ethiopian Government launched a campaign against poison gas attacks, and they sent orders to Poland for shipments of gas masks.²⁸³ *The Defender's*

²⁸¹ J.A. Rogers, “Ruminations: Sympathy for Ethiopia Negroes Conservative Methods of Attack Dogmatic Radicals,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 10, 1935.

²⁸² “Ruminations.”

²⁸³ “Ethiopia’s Immense Army Ready for Conflict,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 17, 1935.

correspondent Martin Dwyer reported how Emperor Selassie's newspaper, "Light and Peace," sounded the battle tocsin by printing an announcement calling on all fathers and grandfathers to give their lives in the defense of their freedom. Also called on parents to allow their sons to volunteer for military service. He appealed to the "tribes to unite and answer the call to duty to come to the defense of their country."²⁸⁴ Selassie stressed that "subjugation to a foreign power is worse than slavery, and death was much better."²⁸⁵ *The Herald Tribune*, owned by Negrophobe fascist William Randolph Hearst, provided coverage of the war slanted towards Italy since it employed some pro-Mussolini journalists. The Italian American journalist, Gaetano Polverelli, portrayed Ethiopia as a semi-barbarous nation dedicated to war and the domestic slave trade. To him, Ethiopia was a nation where "hordes of savages assault entire populations, burning slaying, kidnapping men, women, girls and children" who were [bound] in chains." He reiterated that "Slavery in Abyssinia [was] a disgrace to the Twentieth Century." Thus, "the best means of introducing civilization into Abyssinia and abolishing slavery forever would be to entrust Italy with "reorganizing the country on civilized principles."²⁸⁶

Reactions to the Ethiopian and Japanese Alliance

The threat of war with Italy led several leading newspapers and publicists to express their support for a military alliance with imperial Japan to counteract the threat of Italian fascism. Publicists in the Black mainstream press was optimistic about the endurance of imperial links and Japan's commonality of interest with Ethiopia's fight for independence. The enthusiasm expressed by Black internationalists showed they observed a constricted racial view of

²⁸⁴ Martin Dwyer, "War Tocsin is Sounded in Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, September 28, 1935.

²⁸⁵ "War Tocsin is Sounded"

²⁸⁶ Gaetano Polverelli, "Italy's Case in Ethiopia: Ethiopia, Semi Barbarous," *Herald Tribune*, August 18, 1935.

imperialism as they looked past Japan's aggression in the name of building its empire. *The Defender's* moderate liberal reporter, Martin Dwyer, exposed how Ethiopia was forced to bear the burden of war alone since the United States, which Ethiopia saw as her only true hope, decided to remain neutral. Though Japan committed to sending Ethiopia weapons, it had its hands full trying to keep the Soviet Union out of Manchuria. Additionally, Japan wanted to wait and see how things developed in Ethiopia before "showing her hand."²⁸⁷ Black internationalists viewed an alliance as one of the biggest threats to the continuance of the Western imperial project.

The pan-African Socialist George Padmore, writing in *The Courier*, pointed to how Western countries abhorred an Ethiopian and Japanese alliance. It tilted the racial balance of power since "a strong black state in Africa would be considered worse than bolshevism" because "it would inspire other blacks "on the continent."²⁸⁸ On July 27, 1935, *The Amsterdam News* reported how the Japanese ultra-nationalist P. Manansala, an organizer with the Pan-Asiatic Association, during a spirited address asserted, "Japan cannot and will not remain neutral if Italy makes an attack on Ethiopia;" he also reassured the audience that "Japan never breaks her word and she will fulfill the secret treaty she has with Ethiopia in the event she is attacked by Italy."²⁸⁹ On September 6, 1935, A.N.P's *The Plaindealer* optimistically published an article by Wilson James, reporting from Addis Ababa, acknowledging that the Black nation successfully arranged for importing arms and ammunition from Japan. He asserted that this "Colored Alliance," "set

²⁸⁷ Martin Dwyer, "Ethiopia Must Bear Burden Along," *The Chicago Defender*, September 7, 1935

²⁸⁸ Padmore, "Ethiopia and World Politics," 157.

²⁸⁹ "Says Japan May Defend Ethiopia, July 27, 1935, *The New York Amsterdam News*.

the stage for revolutionary changes to relations of white and blacks in Africa.”²⁹⁰ Moreover, there was a belief that “Italy could not win this war if Ethiopia was armed” because Italy’s population would be killed before they could penetrate Ethiopian defenses and subdue the spirit of Ethiopian fighters.²⁹¹ This possibility, according to Padmore, meant “Mussolini was playing with fire,” and the “Ethiopians despite their air force” will “make him break his teeth if he attempts to bite.”²⁹²

All Black people were not enthralled by the possibility of an Ethiopian and Japanese alliance. These critics were convinced that Japan used the Ethiopian crisis as a stepping stone for expanding their imperial reach. William Jones, editor of *The Afro-American* believed that Japan was never the defender of Ethiopia because “Japan [was] now herself engaged in a campaign of subjugating another colored race closely allied in blood to her own, and has definitely joined the ranks of the imperialists.”²⁹³ Jones believed that the Japanese were only interested in the commercial exploitation of Ethiopia. Thus, he judged that Japanese official policy “coincide[ed] with the policy of Italy in raiding Haile Selassie’s kingdom.”²⁹⁴ The Black Communist Left remained outside of the imagined community as they critiqued how the Japanese were a capitalist and imperialist nation that benefitted from the exploitation of the Chinese and would have no problem doing the same to Ethiopia. Intervening in Ethiopia provided Japanese capitalists an opportunity to further their colonial expansion. Black Communists believed that Japan was using the Ethiopian situation as an “an opportunity to hide her own colonial plunder

²⁹⁰ Wilson James, “Japan Ready for Import of Fire Arms,” *The Plain Dealer*, September 6, 1935.

²⁹¹ James, “Japan Ready for Import.”

²⁹² Padmore, “Ethiopia and World Politics,” 139.

²⁹³ William Jones, “Red Use World Opinion To Crack Down on Il Duce,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, September 14, 1935.

²⁹⁴ “Red Use World Opinion.”

by raising the slogan of Unity of the Darker Races."²⁹⁵ Japan, according to them, was no different from the European imperialist nations of France and England, which pursued military alliances to preserve or extend their imperial interests.

On September 2, 1935, The editor of *The Liberator*, Benjamin Davis, Jr., reflecting on Japan's aggressive imperial expansion in Asia, saw similarities between Japanese militarism and Italian fascism as he observed that Japanese imperialists were "butchers of the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean masses" and would "do to Ethiopia just what Italian fascism wants to do."²⁹⁶ *The Liberator's* columnist, Loren Miller, echoed this assertion expressing continued distrust of Japanese motives as "The Japanese militarists have everything to gain by playing sympathy and gesturing towards Ethiopia." He warned readers that they should be wary of militarist Japan's professed sympathy for Ethiopia because "If Mussolini and Mitsui can get together and do a little horse-trading, the support will vanish as quickly as it appeared."²⁹⁷ On August 24, 1935, *The Age*, a liberal-minded newspaper, disparaged the alliance as an illustration of "the intrusion of Japan" while declaring "the question of inconsistency is at one raised, for there is a painful resemblance between what Japan has done in Manchuria and what Mussolini proposes to do in Abyssinia." The newspaper excoriated the emperor as misguided for looking to Japan as a model of progress since "it copied the Western world" and like the West, it was only interested in "find[ing] new markets for the goods she must sell if she is to support her huge population" and "prefers an independent Abyssinia to one annexed or "protected" by Italy."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ "The Question Box," *The Negro Liberator*, August 1, 1935.

²⁹⁶ Ben Davis, "Ethiopia and Soviet Russia," *Negro Liberator*, September 2, 1935.

²⁹⁷ Loren Miller, "This Way Out: New from Tokio," *Negro Liberator*, August 15, 1935.

²⁹⁸ "The Corner of the World," *The New York Age*, August 24, 1935.

The Black Mainstream Press and Reporting from Ethiopia

Claude Barnett, a staunch Republican, saw the impending crisis as a space to expand the ANP, which controlled 112 Black newspapers, into a Pan African news agency. This move paved the way for it to become the hub of a network of informants who sought to reach a large Black American and Pan-African audience by passing on new items to the ANP.²⁹⁹ Barnett also shifted his editorial content to the Left to satisfy the radicalism of his readers. The Ethiopian war provided Barnett the opportunity to satisfy his readers' radical sentiments and build up the infrastructure he needed to transform the ANP into an international media outlet.³⁰⁰ Barnett recommended Mississippi-born John C. Robinson, who was then a resident of Chicago's Black Southside, to Selassie's nephew Maleku Bayen because the aviator was a "reliable and competent" "young man of good character, a graduate of Tuskegee Institute," as well as a licensed pilot and mechanic.³⁰¹ Robinson was the polar opposite of the flamboyant aviator Hubert Julian because he was not a publicity seeker, taught others how to fly, and founded the Challenger Pilots Association for Black Americans in Chicago, Illinois. Robinson also joined the Ethiopian Imperial air force because Jim Crow prevented him from gaining employment in the aviation industry. None of the transportation companies would employ him or permit him to

²⁹⁹ Horne, *The Rise, and Fall of the Associated Negro Press*, 57.

³⁰⁰ Claude A. Barnett to The Press Secretary of the Imperial Majesty The Emperor of Abyssinia, June 2, 1936, Ethiopia Correspondence, Including Former Tuskegee Airman Colonel John C. Robinson, The Claude A. Barnett Papers. 1918-1967, Series 2: Africa and Other Foreign Interests, 1925-1966, <http://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu>.

³⁰¹ Associated Negro Press to Maleku Bayen, January 8, 1934, "Ethiopia incl. John C. Robinson), 1930, 1933 Correspondence and News Clippings, The Claude A. Barnett Papers, 1925-1966, ProQuest History Vault, <http://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu/>; Maleku E. Bayern to Claude A. Barnett, January 3, 1935, The Claude Barnett Papers, ProQuest History Vault, <http://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu>.

work in their laboratories despite his valuable ideas.³⁰² He believed he would do spectacular things in aviation if he went to Ethiopia. The emperor, who continued his modernization program, desired Robinson's expertise because he believed that development "should be made by blood brothers of the Ethiopians."³⁰³ The Ethiopian government paid for his transportation, and Robinson quietly entered Ethiopia in May 1935. His arrival coincided with Italy's preparation for the upcoming invasion. Upon arrival, he was attached to the Ethiopian air corps and registered as a mechanic. Selassie, interested in "acquaint[ing] American Negroes with the happenings in Ethiopia through the Negro press," saw Robinson as an excellent publicist for the Ethiopian cause. Barnett was receptive because he wanted to "obtain all possible information about Ethiopia" and use Black newspapers to help the Ethiopian cause, seeing it as an advantage to provide a racial perspective on the war. Robinson became an ANP reporter writing under the pseudonym Wilson James and contributed pan African news network filtering dispatches from Ethiopia to allow for "quick transmission of news" to the U.S. to be circulated in Black newspapers. His dispatches were part of a counter-narrative to the "misinformation that some of the white papers -were trying to create among Negroes" in the United States.³⁰⁴

Colonel John C. Robinson's reporting from the Ethiopian front offered the Black public a first-hand perspective on the war that spread awareness about battleground conditions while reinforcing existing pan-African sentiment among Black readers. His dispatches were infrequent,

³⁰² "Life Begins at "Forty," The Claude A. Barnett Papers, 1918-1967, John C. Robinson-Scrapbook, Folder 171-5, ProQuest History Vault, https://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu/pdfs/252247/252247_171_0005_0001_From_1.

³⁰³ Maleku E. Bayen to, E.G., Robert, July 17, 1935, The Claude A. Barnett Papers, 1925-1966, ProQuest History Vault, <http://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg/pdfs>.

³⁰⁴ Associated Negro Press to Kamazmach Taklamarkos Woldegabriel, April 26, 1935, The Claude A. Barnett Papers, Maleku E. Bayern to Claude Barnett, May 6, 1935, The Claude A. Barnett Papers, ProQuest History Vault, <http://hv-proquest.comlibproxy.uncg/pdfs/>.

and newspapers did not receive his reports until two weeks after they were sent because Claude A. Barnett, The ANP Director, miscalculated the time it took for the dispatches to arrive. However, newspapers and the Black public anticipated his coverage which countered the biased reporting in white mainstream newspapers. From May 1935 to May 1936, Colonel Robinson was in Ethiopia, who served as the personal pilot to Haile Selassie, sending dispatches to *The Courier* about the war's progress. *The Courier*, in a special bulletin, criticized how *The Herald Tribune*, which relied on censored Italian news reports, continued "a combination of deliberate fabrication by unscrupulous sensation hunters and the pitiful communications service have made it impossible to have more than the vaguest details of events."³⁰⁵ Robinson offered a pragmatic but optimistic perspective and Black newspapers, large and small, routinely reprinted his observations concerning the war since he was their only reporter near the front lines.

Mussolini's belligerence against Ethiopia coupled with his overtures to Ethiopia's Muslim minority to ally with him in the fight against the Christian Emperor Haile Selassie was a source of critique. *The Courier* rebuked Mussolini as an opportunist since he exploited tense Muslim and Christian relations in Ethiopia to his advantage to form an alliance in preparation for the impending war. The newspaper communicated that "God Save Ethiopia" was the slogan that was resounding throughout Christendom since Mussolini appointed himself as "Protector of the Moslems."³⁰⁶ Mussolini's title did not impress The Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, who declared, "I personally do not like Mussolini" because "his manner of speaking and the way he appears in photographs make me imagine him to be a cheap comedian." Furthermore, the Emir expressed his dislike for the fascist dictator because of his "pompous personal demonstrations that do not

³⁰⁵ "Colonel Robinson Believes There Will Be No War: Chicago Fighter Expects Fighting To Be Light," *The Plaindealer*, October 4, 1935.

³⁰⁶ "God Save Ethiopia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1935.

appeal to the Arab accustomed as we are to the simplicity of Saharan life.”³⁰⁷ Mussolini exploited divisions between Muslims and Christians that went back for centuries. During Menelik II's reign, he expanded his direct rule under Muslim opposition. This happenstance was because Muslims were regarded as second-class citizens by Christian Ethiopians. However, Muslim communities were allowed religious freedom, but they had to acquiesce to Christian supremacy.³⁰⁸

The Black Protestant Church also mobilized considerably in support of Ethiopia beyond a simple belief in the Biblical prophecy of Psalm 61:31. Black publicists in print amplified and extended the reach of these church and community-based responses. The Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, the city's largest Black congregation, became a cultural cauldron of the united front and a site where Black internationalists and Communists expressed solidarity in the name of anti-imperialism, anti-fascism, and Black self-determination. *The Negro Liberator* framed the church, which had a long history of local grassroots protest, as the center of Black working-class militancy and Popular Front politics. On March 15, 1935, the newspaper publicized how the "Abyssinian Baptist Church was literally rocked with the spirit of militant struggle against Italian fascism." During a mass meeting called by the PCDE, 3,000 people at an overflowing meeting

³⁰⁷ God save Ethiopia.”

³⁰⁸ F. Peter Ford, Jr. “Christian-Muslim Relations in Ethiopia, A Checkered Past, A Challenging Future,” *ATLA Religious Digest* (June 27, 2008): 57 and 58 <https://repository.westernsem.edu/pkp/index.php/rr/article/view/1607>; In the 17th century when Jesuit priests came entered Ethiopia following a Portuguese intervention and enticed Emperor Susenyos to covert. His son Fasilidas was alarmed by this encroachment by Western Christianity, and he collaborated with the Muslims to expel or kill the European foreigners. Falishas’s policy enable Islam to become more established in areas. Harar was established as a very influential Islamic cultural and religious center. By the late 17th century, Fasiladas’ son Yohannes took renewed steps to the new Islamic threat. His degree forced Muslims in Abyssinia to live in segregated ghettos where they lived in bad conditions. This move became an officially sanctioned attitude up to modern times.

listened attentively to James W. Ford, who warned the audience to "stop fighting among ourselves long enough to unify our forces against our enemy... Unless we do this, we perish!"³⁰⁹ Activist clergy such as Harlem's Adam Clayton Powell, Jr used his pulpit to negotiate the political terrain of Black popular front protest. Powell, the Abyssinian Baptist Church pastor, who was later named vice-chairman of the executive committee of the Committee for Ethiopia, also spellbound the audience, saying, "This is a struggle against fascism! Fascism is eating into the very vitals of our people!"³¹⁰

On the contrary, The Black press explained how a minority of white and Black rejected direct mass protest actions as they embraced a Christian pacifist internationalism. This philosophy juxtaposed the phenomena of militarism and imperialism with the political and ethical choices of the historical Jesus.³¹¹ Black ministers from all parts of North Carolina, who were attending the fourth annual session of the Shaw University Ministers' Conference, voiced their concern for Ethiopia by "pray[ing] that a passionate love of the peoples of the world for peace and justice will voice itself" to prevent war.³¹² Ethiopia's appeal to Christendom led many Christian pacifists to encourage non-racial sectarian organizing that supported liberal internationalism. On August 3, 1935, *The Courier* publicized how more than 1,000 white and Black clergymen across the United States, affiliated with The Christian pacifist Committee for Ethiopia, opposed the recruitment of volunteers for Ethiopian military service, public appeals for funds that were underway in various parts of the country and public demonstrations.

³⁰⁹ "Provisional Committee Will Hold Giant Parade on March 30th; Mass Meet Packs Church," *Negro Liberator*, March 15, 1935.

³¹⁰ "Provisional Committee Will Hold Giant Parade on March 30th."

³¹¹ Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 29.

³¹² "Clergymen Condemn Italian Imperialism," *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 25, 1935.

Additionally, they drafted peace petitions and circulated them among Ethiopian sympathizers hoping at least 100,000 people would sign the petition. According to the newspaper, these protest methods were "contrary to the policy of the Committee," which supported a day of prayer in protest against war and Italian aggression against Ethiopia.³¹³ On August 6, 1935, the white newspaper *The Monitor*, a liberal internationalist voice, described how the multi-racial committee for Ethiopia in Harlem appealed for 10,000 signatures to a petition urging President Roosevelt to invoke the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Briand Peace Pact. This Pact was between the United States and other Powers and expressed their renunciation of war as an instrument of foreign policy.³¹⁴ Additionally, 900 Presbyterian Churches joined in praying for the "Lion of Judah " and his Christian subjects.³¹⁵ In the end, Christian pacifist internationalism was not an aspect of pro-Ethiopian activism that the Black public widely embraced since they were influenced by the militancy of ministers advocating for anti-fascist direct action protest.

Summary

The seven months before the outbreak of the Second Italo-Ethiopian war was a watershed for Black American political thought. The war contributed to the production and circulation of different visions of Black internationalism, which focused on preserving Ethiopia's sovereignty. Black journalists, publicists, editors, and activists produced a narrative in newspapers, which opened up discussion of how the war is a perfect space for Black Americans to examine how

³¹³ "Thousands of Ministers Pledge Sunday of Prayer against War on Ethiopia by Italy," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1935; "Race Churchdom Protests Aggression by Italians," *The Chicago Defender*, August 3, 1935.

³¹⁴ "The Kellogg- Briand Pact," Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law and History and Diplomacy," The Avalon Project: Kellogg Briand Pact 1929 (yale.edu).

³¹⁵ "Peace Forces Seeking Curb on Black-White Hostility in Italo-Ethiopian Dispute," *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 6, 1935.

their own domestic experiences of racism, which overlapped with Italian fascist aggression and the Western international community's failure to protect Ethiopian sovereignty. Although Black publicists' voice varied and Black internationalist discourses focused on Black liberation, there is not one specific discourse that Black people gravitated to during this period. The most significant impact of this period is that it contributed to the political development of Black political consciousness as Black Americans cast wider as they experienced sympathy with Ethiopia during her time of need.

Although the Black mainstream and the Communist press at times expressed differing political analyses of the war, they both agreed that Ethiopian independence needed to be defended at all cost. Ethiopian independence meant the continuance of Black self-determination. The Communist Press and the Black liberals agreed that enlisting to fight was not a practical solution that Black Americans should observe to defend Ethiopia. The Black press pulled its readership into the orbit of international politics by supporting the construction and circulation of Pan-African and antifascist discourses, reflecting the expansion of Black internationalist discourse in the press. Though journalists, publicists, and activists representing different political orientations agreed on the need to galvanize in support of Ethiopia, they did not always agree regarding adopting a strategy to defeat the Italian fascists. At the same time, they expressed their desire to safeguard Ethiopia's independence in the face of fascist aggression. They were also aware that the war provided an outlet to challenge white hegemony and force the League to atone for how imperialism and fascism eroded its standing as an international arbiter of justice. Black journalists, newspaper editors, activists, intellectuals, and readers became the "diplomats" for the Black community. They created and interpreted international developments by creating a lively internationalist discourse and grassroots activism that confronted the global forces of fascism.

CHAPTER IV: WAR!

Introduction

Italy's unprovoked invasion of the last independent Black nation in Africa, a symbol of self-determination, provoked the democratic crisis. The nation's weeklies responded to Mussolini's defiance of the Western rules of warfare and the rule of humanity when he unleashed a brutal invasion against a defenseless people in the abolition of slavery, the extension of Christianity, and civilization Ethiopians. From October 1935 to Italy's annexation of Ethiopia in May 1936, Black publicists engaged in debates critiquing the hypocrisy of the League of Nations, Roosevelt's neutrality policy, and Mussolini's definition of civilization.

During the invasion and course of the war, Mussolini's Black shirts and Italian native troops committed countless war atrocities. They ranged from the aerial bombing of defenseless women, and children, blanketing areas with poison gas to weed out dissidents, and decapitating Ethiopian prisoners. As Mussolini marched across Ethiopia leaving a trail of death, the League of Nations did little as possible to bring a halt to Mussolini's reign of terror. The failure of the League to intervene and the United States' neutrality in the situation tested their commitment to upholding the very democratic values that they claimed were sacrosanct. Their silence spoke to their prioritization of their self-interests, and observance of a white supremacist mindset undermined their democratic idealism. Communists, liberals, Christians, Black Nationalists, and Socialists responded to the international community's inaction by galvanizing in the name of Ethiopian self-determination. They all recognized the need for solidarity to protect Ethiopia's independence, and they created communication networks and activist networks that united labor leaders, ministers, Black nationalists, liberals, Communists, and Socialist, who engaged in

debates focusing on how white supremacy, war, capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, and fascism undermined Black self-determination.

Representing the Invasion

On October 3, 1935, Italian forces led by Marshall Emilio de Bono, Supreme Italian colonial military commander in East Africa, invaded Ethiopia. On October 5, 1935, *The Amsterdam News*, a labor-oriented publication, ran the headline: "ADOWA BOMBED! WAR RAGES!" Describing the early morning surprise invasion of the sovereign kingdom of Ethiopia. Fascist squadrons, according to the newspaper, "rained death upon the village of Adowa—a town of 3,000." According to reports, "one hundred houses were destroyed there, including a Red Cross hospital, and in the missions, an undetermined number of nurses and nuns died at the hospital." "Italian bombing planes dropped tons of shells which carried death and destruction in their wake."³¹⁶ *The Washington Tribune* provided the revolting details of fascist brutalities against innocent civilians describing how "Hundreds of women and children were killed... when Italian planes flew over this mountain town and dropped bombs on a helpless population."³¹⁷ *The Negro Liberator*, which sought to create revolutionary heroes, praised the valor of the aviator John Robinson, who had been confined to carrying military information from Addis Ababa to the battle lines. He was an anti-fascist hero as he was "doing his bit to drive off the invading Italian fascists" when he flew from Addis Ababa to Adowa and "single-handed[ly] in an antiquated plane, fought off two modern Italian invaders," and successfully delivered dispatches to Aduwa.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ "Adowa Bombed! War Rages: Italian Airmen Kill Women and Children," *The New York Amsterdam News*, October 5, 1935.

³¹⁷ "Extra Women and Children Killed," *Washington Tribune*, October 5, 1935.

³¹⁸ John Robinson of Chicago, Ace Ethiopian Army Pilot," *Negro Liberator*, October 17, 1935.

Black Publicists and Representation of the Western International Community's Response to the Invasion

The invasion struck a chord in the Black community since Ethiopia had held a great deal of political and cultural currency in Black popular culture for a long time. *The Washington Tribune's* liberal-minded reporter Rudolph Dunbar pointed to this fact as he recounted how the historic town of Adowa, which was part of the potent historical, cultural memory of Black Americans, was "the scene of the disastrous defeat of the Italians on March 1, 1896."³¹⁹ Mussolini's invasion, which he intended to wipe out the stain of Adowa, violated the League of Nations Covenant, affirming that members should submit all serious disputes to a peaceful arbitration to the League Council."³²⁰ *The Amsterdam News's* Roi Otley, in his popular column, "Hectic Harlem," foresaw Italy's aggression toward Ethiopia as "filled with dynamite" because it was a "symbol of the White man oppressing the Black."³²¹ On October 5, 1935, The Roosevelt administration confirmed Otley's comments when it placed an arms embargo on Italy and Ethiopia that prevented them from importing weapons because of their belligerency. *The Cleveland Gazette* scoffed at the neutrality claims of Roosevelt and the "inconsistency of Roosevelt's foreign policy since "New York Bankers [were] busy floating Italian bonds to help Premier Benito Mussolini raise generally needed funds to carry on his war against Ethiopia."³²²

³¹⁹ Rudolph Dunbar, "200,000 Ethiopian Soldiers Ready for Italians, 500,000 More Await Orders," *Washington Tribune*, September 21, 1935.

³²⁰ Rudolph Dunbar, "200,000 Ethiopian Soldiers Ready for Italians, 500,000 More Await Orders," *Washington Tribune*, September 21, 1935.; "The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendment adopted to December 1924), The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Avalon, law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp.

³²¹ Roi Otley, "Hectic Harlem: The Call to Colors," *The New York Amsterdam News*, October 5, 1935.

³²² "On What's Doing," *Cleveland Gazette*, October 12, 1935.

Capitalism, the exigencies of the Great Depression, and Roosevelt's acquiescence to the powerful Southern Democrats viewed support for Ethiopia as hostile to their white supremacist interests. Though the Black public voted for Roosevelt, he displayed his hypocrisy since "thousands of American mules" and "scores of American precision machines" [were] in wide use in Ethiopia. In contrast, "a wide variety of American raw materials were used in Italy" to manufacture war material sent to Ethiopia.³²³

Black newspapers covered the Ethiopian crisis extensively to see if the League of Nations would finally live up to its Covenant and come to the defense of Ethiopia. On October 7, 1935, the League lifted the arms embargo on Ethiopia that prevented it from importing firearms to defend itself. Eventually, the League imposed economic sanctions and branded Mussolini the aggressor. *The Courier* optimistically proclaimed that "the League fired its first "economic broadside against Italy."³²⁴ *The Plaindealer*, on the other hand, expressed pessimism and argued that they were "a polite gesture" and "in reality meant to be more effective in hindering the progress of Ethiopia than Italy."³²⁵ *The Daily Worker*, the CPUSA'S official newspaper, was more optimistic regarding the efficacy of sanctions. It voiced that the League members had to reach a common ground and that "effective collective sanctions would defeat the imperialist plans" of Italy.³²⁶ At the same time, according to the newspaper, it was essential to ensure that "the British imperialists did not use them for their own purposes."³²⁷ The Black American labor

³²³ "A Joke, So-Called American Neutrality? U.S. Trucks Bounce," *Cleveland Gazette*, October 26, 1935.

³²⁴ "Arms Embargo against Ethiopia Lifted: League of Nations Orders World Wide Boycott of Italian Goods," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 19, 1935.

³²⁵ "Best Editorial of the Week: Ethiopia the Golden Calf," *The Plaindealer*, November 8, 1935.

³²⁶ "Questions and Answers," *The Daily Worker*, October 22, 1935.

³²⁷ "Questions and Answers."

activist and journalist Frank Marshall Davis' writing in his weekly column, "The World in Review," in *The Plaindealer* voiced that Britain would possibly do this because it practiced muddled diplomacy because they "feared that white supremacy in Africa [would be] endangered by the crushing of Mussolini."³²⁸ *The Defender's* Metz T.P. Lochard, the possible member of the CPUSA, adopted a more cynical attitude asserting that "the whole world witnessed a comedy successfully enacted at the expense of poor Ethiopia by a troop of poker-face-international crooks at Geneva."³²⁹

Reporting on Italian Fascist Violence and its Meaning to Western Civilization

Sanctions did not stop Mussolini's war machine, and his armed squads of Black shirts continued to flagrantly violate international rules of war as their fascist violence breached the standard for Western civilization outlined by international law. According to the *Washington Tribune*, they used vicious dum dum (soft-nosed) bullets, which were long outlawed by the international rules of warfare.³³⁰ *The Herald Tribune*, a sympathizer with Italy, printed Italy's accusations that Ethiopia was using dum-dum bullets. In the end, the League settled the matter when it was revealed that Ethiopian munitions were purchased from countries requiring export licenses and imported in countries that require the bullets to be inspected.³³¹ The Ethiopians believed that the Italians made this accusation to cover up their use of poison gas.³³² In the face of these discussions, Marcus Garvey communicated his disdain for Mussolini's violent

³²⁸ Frank Marshall Davis, "World in Review: The War in Africa, Muddle Diplomacy," *The Plaindealer*, December 27, 1935.

³²⁹ Lochard, "Justification for Mussolini's Onslaught," *The Defender*, October 12, 1935.

³³⁰ "Proof of Atrocities by Italians Cited by Red Cross Director," *Washington Tribune*, October 26, 1935.

³³¹ Linton Welles, "Ethiopia Denies Italian Charge of Dum Dums," *The New York Herald Tribune*, December 25, 1936.

³³² "Ethiopia Denies Italian Charge."

expansionism in his poem “The Beast of Rome,” published in the October 1935 edition of *The Black Man*. Garvey asserted:

Down from the Seven Hills of Rome
Come brutes in human form,
Our Motherland to storm

In the last two lines of the poem, Garvey lambasted Mussolini's hypocrisy of violating modern rules of warfare and undermining his claim of Italian civility as he voiced:

And when their war was just begun
They fought like cannibal³³³

Black publicists articulated a discourse denigrating fascist because Black troops from Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, forced into the colonial army, performed the bulk of the fighting. *The Courier* exposed how this tactic enabled Mussolini to assemble 800,000 men in Ethiopia Italian Black natives' forces as tools of fascism.³³⁴ *The Defender's* foreign correspondent, Chatwood Hall, on November 23, 1935, explained how this was nothing new but "an old trick of imperialism in pitting native tribes against each other to oppress and exploit them all."³³⁵ Garvey also questioned Mussolini's manhood as he framed that he and his fascist Black shirts were cowards since “The European soldier has been marching behind the native soldier” and that Italy's successful invasion was “due to the native African soldiers” used by Italy who functioned as “shock troops” in his “so-called army of conquest.”³³⁶ At the same time, he mocked those African natives that sided with the Italian Fascists as fools in his poem, “The Brutal Crime,” as he wrote:

³³³ Marcus Garvey, “The Beast of Rome,” *The Black Man: A Monthly Magazine of Negro Thought and Opinion* I, no. 10 (Late October 1935): 7.

³³⁴ “Nearly Half Million Troops Hurlled into Ethiopia in Duce's War of Conquest,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 9, 1936.

³³⁵ “Mussolini Pursues Policy of Divide and Rule in Ethiopia,” *The Chicago Defender*, November 30, 1935.

³³⁶ Abbott, “What the People Say.”

Askaris, grinning soldiers,
Like April fools at summer play
Did shoulder arms for Italy
To give the Beast of Rome the day
When blacks fight blacks in white man's wars
They're fools for all of their valiant pain."³³⁷

Black publicists and readers undertook broader reflections on how Italy degraded Western civilization. Black publicists inverted fascist discourse by reflecting how Mussolini's violent expansionism in Ethiopia disregarded Western rules of modern warfare by using modern implements of war against people who did not possess comparable weapons. On October 10, 1935, *The Tribune* printed an editorial questioning Mussolini's meaning of civilization, asserting, "How does it lie in the mouth of Mussolini to talk about barbarous Ethiopia, if civilization means no more than superior implements of war, the civilization itself has not moved very far. It seems as though the nations which Mussolini calls barbarous is no less than his own." Though Mussolini marched under the banner of civilization and Christianity, publicists critiqued his use of imperial violence and his sadistic rationalization of violence in the name of bringing civilization to Ethiopia. An editorial in *The Defender* labeled him "a murderer pure and simple," who "baptizes those who cause in the blood of 1700 inoffensive women and children in Ethiopia" in her effort to civilize and Christianize.³³⁸ J. A. Rogers' writing in *The Amsterdam News*, concurred as he posited that "Native wars, native diseases, native oppression, and ignorance were veritable blessings in comparison with the civilization" of the Italians.³³⁹

Ethiopia groups increased their activities and the geography of Popular Front organizing expanded as they continued to advocate that Black people across the country should tangibly aid

³³⁷ Garvey, Marcus Garvey, "Brutal Crime," *The Black Man* (Late October 1935), 1.

³³⁸ "Italy Christianizing Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, October 12, 1935.

³³⁹ J. A. Rogers, "Ruminations: "Civilized" Wars Fascist Butchers: The Inevitable Things to Expect," *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 9, 1935.

Ethiopia. *The Courier's* columnist George Schuyler continued to balance his conservative politics with his advocacy for Ethiopia as he asserted, "there is not a red-blooded Negro, who does not want to see Ethiopia emerge from the present crisis with glory and victory."³⁴⁰ Black newspapers advertised the fundraising campaigns and medical relief organizing to collect medical supplies and equipping the Red Cross in Ethiopia destroyed by fascist bombing campaigns. The liberal-minded Dr. Willis N. Huggins, a fixture in Harlem politics and an established advocate for Ethiopia, headed the Friends of Ethiopia. J.J. Jones, a Harlem doctor, chaired the Medical Committee affiliated with the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia (PCDE). In Harlem, the Medical Committee sponsored dances at the Savoy Ballroom, a center of Black entertainment, to raise money for medical supplies to be sent to the Ethiopian Empire. These activities expanded to Chicago, where physicians organized a medical committee, and even Mobile, Alabama, where supporters formed a Friends of Ethiopia committee to collect medical supplies.³⁴¹

By February, Italian bombing planes were targeting Addis Ababa, the imperial capital, to bring the city to its knees to facilitate its addition to existing fascist spoils of war. On February 15, 1936, J. A. Rogers, reporting from Addis Ababa, communicated that Emperor Selassie "crippled one of the bombing planes that swooped down upon Dessye" by firing a shot at the plane. Italian responded by waging three attacks against the imperial army headquarters in Dessye, the bombers "scores of inflammable bombs" near the palace. Rogers accentuated Selassie's valor and willingness to put himself in harm's way for Ethiopia when he reported that the emperor refused to take shelter in a bombproof dugout despite the urging of his advisors.

³⁴⁰ George Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 23, 1935.

³⁴¹ "Plan to Organize Medical Aid for Ethiopia," *Plaindealer*, October 18, 1935. "Plan to Organize Medical Aid For Ethiopia," *The Plain Dealer*, October 18, 1935.

Instead, Selassie picked up an anti-aircraft gun and started shooting at the Italians.³⁴² Rogers announced that Selassie's proactiveness during the war made him a target for assassination, and because of this, the emperor did not stay in Dessye continually. Italians knew the emperor's location because, according to Rogers, some of the emperor's closed military advisors believed that spies within the Ethiopian lines notified the Italians of his whereabouts.³⁴³

The Courier reported how airplanes and tanks deployed by the fascists failed because of the terrain. The fascists' modern implements of war proved ineffective due to the Ethiopian terrain, which caused them to fail. Ethiopians were fearful because of Ethiopia's makeshift war machine. Their fears were quelled when they received reports that there were "serious defections of men whose nerve gave out under the daily attacks." The newspaper related that one army was decimated by half and reduced by mass desertions.³⁴⁴ These dysfunctions were almost passed since there were reports from the north that only a small number of troops were under fire. Also, the number of fascist bombs thrown at Ethiopians was small as troops learned how to "scatter and lie flat when planes appear[ed]."³⁴⁵ Fascist tanks also failed due to the excessive heat, which was torturous to crews, encased by a metal roof that would heat up quickly. The tanks were also bogged down by the rains rendering them useless.³⁴⁶ In an article in *The Courier* on April 26, 1936, J. A. Rogers reported that the Ethiopian army was in a precarious situation because "If the Italian in Ethiopia has come to grips with the Ethiopian army, the forces of the Lion of Judah will be wiped out." He judged that Ethiopia "had no chance, in a military since against the

³⁴² J. A. Rogers, "Hint Plot to Kill Selassie!" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 15, 1936.

³⁴³ "Hint Plot to Kill Selassie!"

³⁴⁴ "Planes Tanks, Fail Miserably in Italy's Futile Campaign," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 15, 1936.

³⁴⁵ "Planes, Tanks, Fail Miserably."

³⁴⁶ "Planes, Tanks, Fail Miserably."

Italians” since Italy has “half a million men in Ethiopia.”³⁴⁷ He weighed Ethiopia’s chances in the war based on the condition in Europe, the financial conditions in Italy, the possibility of Italy observing the civilized laws of warfare, and the natural conditions in Ethiopia.³⁴⁸

The National Negro Congress (NNC) and Anti-Fascist Activism

The Second Italo-Ethiopian War coincided with establishing the National Negro Congress (NNC) in Chicago in February 1936. The organization, which was part of the Black Popular Front, included a united coalition of Black civil rights organizations linking racial justice with the economic liberation of Black American labor. It reflected the intersection of anti-fascist activism and the domestic Black freedom struggle.³⁴⁹ The Leftist-oriented newspaper, *The Los Angeles Sentinel*, expressed enthusiasm about the Congress, which called for decent wages for Black workers, equal labor conditions, the organization of Black workers, and it was against discrimination in trade unions, the extension of aid to Black farmworkers.³⁵⁰ Black liberals such as Walter White and *The Defender’s* Robert Abbott did not attend the Congress because they believed Communism contradicted American ideals. However, Roy Wilkins, Assistant Secretary of the NAACP and editor of *The Crisis*, attended the Congress as an observer on behalf of the NAACP despite Walter White’s assertions that he did “not find it desirable to endorse or

³⁴⁷ J. A. Rogers, “Ethiopian War Has Cost Italy Millions,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 25, 1936.

³⁴⁸ “Ethiopian War.”

³⁴⁹ “The vision of uniting Black organizations into a single federation went back to Cyril Brigg's concept of a World Negro Congress and the Comintern's vision of a might global gathering of all the forces for Negro liberation. It echoed the ANLC's aspiration to unite the black working class as a basis for broader cooperation among African Americans,” Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: The University of Mississippi Press, 1993), 301.

³⁵⁰ “Congress Will Meet to Probe Negro Problems,” *The Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 2, 1936.

participate in the National Negro Congress.”³⁵¹ The Leftist-oriented economist John P. Davis of the Joint Committee on National Recovery conceived the organization, partly an outgrowth of the Communist Party's "Hands off Ethiopia" Campaign in 1935.³⁵² Harlem Communist leader James Ford outlined the Congress's three-pronged program that included a labor-Negro alliance, a broad Black Popular Front of the struggle for civil rights, and internationalist solidarity with anti-fascism that was unanimously agreed upon.³⁵³

A. Philip Randolph, a doctrinaire Socialist, believed in white and Black alliance and gravitated to united front politics as an avenue for fighting against the "super-exploitation of the Negro sharecropper and industrial worker" as well as the expansion in the United States and the practice of Jim Crow in all its forms.³⁵⁴ These dysfunctions or "the hydra-headed monster of Fascism [was] as threatening our rather weak democratic institutions" and that it was "imperative that the mass voice of Negroes and their familiar allies be spoken through the National Negro Congress."³⁵⁵ He believed in democratic reform of the capitalist system, and he remained a bitter opponent of the Communist Party because he did not want the interests of Black workers to be

³⁵¹ "Walter White to Miss Marcia Fossig, Chairman, Race Education, Committee of the Y. W. C. A., February 7, 1936" NAACP Administrative File, Subject File National Negro Congress, November 5, 1935-December 24, 1936, The Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., <http://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu/pdfs/001418/>; "Editor of Crisis Attending National Negro Congress, February 14, 1936," NAACP Administrative File, Subject File National Negro Congress, November 5, 1935-December 24, 1936, The Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., <https://hv-proquest-com.libraryproxy.uncg.edu/pdfs/001418/>.

³⁵² Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer, and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 167.

³⁵³ "The National Negro Congress," 303; Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 150.

³⁵⁴ "Randolph Urges Trade Unionism," *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 22, 1936.

³⁵⁵ "Randolph Asks United Backing for Congress," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 30, 1936.

subsumed by the Party line that did not differentiate between the Black and white working-class struggles.³⁵⁶ The Italo-Ethiopian dispute represented a significant rallying point for the attendees at the Congress who interpreted Italian fascist aggression as undemocratic. On February 22, 1936, *The Chicago Defender* reprinted the Congress's political platform, including a resolution on Ethiopia submitted by Randolph stating:

Whereas Fascist Italy is making war upon the Ancient Kingdom of Abyssinia with a view to its exploitation and subjugation for the benefit of Italian imperialists, be it there for Resolved the National Negro Congress goes on record as condemning this piece of international brigandage as a threat to world peace and unjustified invasion upon the land of a peace-loving people.³⁵⁷

The Defender reprinted Randolph's speech asserting that "Fascism seeks the complete abrogation of all civil liberties and political liberties" and "It is a menace to America. It is a world menace. It is a menace to religious tolerance and the freedom and security of all minority groups."³⁵⁸ Randolph, an avowed pacifist, believed that "War is the twin and sister of Fascism" and that it presented "a danger to American workers, black and white, who fight and pay for all wars in blood and taxes."³⁵⁹

Mussolini's Abolitionist Rationale for Invasion

Black newspapers and other pro-Ethiopian news outlets also engaged in a debate addressing Mussolini's attempt to legitimize Italy's invasion as a humanitarian act proposed abolishing slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia. Mussolini's fascist government launched a

³⁵⁶ Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 150; Philip A. Randolph letter February 3, 1936, NAACP Administrative File Subject File National Negro Congress, November 4, 1935-December 24, 1936, The Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C, http://hv.proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu/pdfs/001418_015_0309_0001_From_1_to_50.pdf

³⁵⁷ "Resolutions Adopted by the National Negro Congress," *The Chicago Defender*, February 22, 1936.

³⁵⁸ "Forward! Exhortation of A. Philip Randolph to Congress," *The Chicago Defender*, February 22, 1936.

³⁵⁹ "Forward! Exhortation of A. Philip Randolph."

propaganda campaign directed by the Ministry of Press and Propaganda in Rome, distributing a plethora of fabricated English language pamphlets on slavery and other European atrocities.³⁶⁰ Black Americans were aware of the continued existence of slavery in Ethiopia and the emperor's abolition efforts. Though abolition proceeded slowly, they expressed faith in Selassie's commitment, recognizing he did not need "Muss" to start "the good word."³⁶¹ *The Liberator* criticized how "Ethiopia is being painted as bloodthirsty nation of slaveholders bent on wrecking civilization" by Italian papers so Mussolini could narrow down his "robber war" to an anti-slavery and humanitarian mission.³⁶² *The Defender* reprinted statements from the popular radio Catholic priest and fascist sympathizer Father Charles F. Coughlin, who echoed Mussolini's argument that Selassie was a "usurper" and that Mussolini "has been doing all in his power to stamp out the existing remnants of slavery."³⁶³

Arthur Brisbane, a white columnist and editor of the tabloid *The New York Daily Mirror*, owned by Hearst, concurred. He justified Mussolini's invasion by asserting, "Clearing out a rattlesnake's den would be criminal compared with clearing out the hideous brutalities of Ethiopian savagery." Like many white mainstream reporters, Brisbane relied on Italian press statements they could rarely verify since Ethiopian authorities banned white reporters from its front lines.³⁶⁴ Brisbane published Italian propaganda photographs of chained men and women presented to the League of Nations by the Italian government to prove that Ethiopia was not fit to

³⁶⁰ Ribi Amalia Forclaz, *Humanitarian Imperialism: The Politics of Anti-Slavery Activism, 1880-1940* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 165.

³⁶¹ "A Deserved Rebuke," *New York Age*, October 26, 1935.

³⁶² *Humanitarian Imperialism*, 165. Loren Miller, "This Way Out: Not Fit to Print," *The Negro Liberator*, October 17, 1935.

³⁶³ "Father Coughlin O.K.'s Duce in Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, November 21, 1935.

³⁶⁴ Fred Carroll, *Race News: Black Journalists and the Fight for Racial Justice in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 75.

be a member of the “family of civilized nations.”³⁶⁵ The Black mainstream press and other pro-Ethiopia press outlets shattered the civilizing claims of Brisbane. An unsigned editorial in *The Daily Worker* castigated the photographs as “FAKE” because “some were posed and others showed conditions for which the present Ethiopian government was in no way responsible.”³⁶⁶ The N.A.A.C.P countered the stereotypical news coverage of Brisbane. On October 26, 1935, *The Defender* published a lengthy editorial written by the N.A.A.C.P condemning the journalists' hypocrisy, asserting:

And what of the 'slavers' themselves in other parts of Africa, in British, Italian, French, and Belgian colonies? Dispossession from the land, denial of the vote and of any semblance of justice, vicious exploitation based upon color merely drags out the suffering of the natives. In light of what is happening in the Belgian Congo, Kenya, and South Africa, slavery in Ethiopia is undoubtedly worse than the horrors that natives in these territories endure at the hands of civilized nations.

The N.A.A.C.P questioned whether Brisbane "would on the same principle say that Italy has the right and obligations to invade the United States and 'civilize' it because of barbarities" such as the lynching of Claude McNeal, who was slashed with knives, had a slow fire built under him, and was tortured to death. According to the civil rights organization, this horrific event attested to the need of Mussolini to "invade America, seize our government and civilize us. Especially in the Southland."³⁶⁷

The ANP's John Robinson provided readers with some of the earliest reports concerning the progress of the war. On October 11, 1935, he divulged how Ethiopia lacked modern military weapons, and its reliance on traditional warfare methods disadvantaged the small nation against Italy's modern war machine. *The Plain Dealer* reprinted Robinson's observations concerning the

³⁶⁵ “Brisbane Aids Mussolini,” *The Daily Worker*, October 17, 1935.

³⁶⁶ “Brisbane Aids Mussolini.”

³⁶⁷ “Rebuke Paper in New York for Ethiopia Slurs: NAACP Scores the Daily Mirror,” *The Chicago Defender*, October 26, 1935.

readiness of the Ethiopian military. John Robinson asserted the military "only possessed only 50,000 new Muser rifles and 560,000 rifles of all types dating back to before the Battle of Adowa in 1896, 12 tanks, 100 Colt and Browning automatic rifles, and about 800 hand grenades."³⁶⁸ The biggest disadvantage, according to him, was in the air since the Italian Air Force numbered 300 aircraft on the northern front and about 100 aircraft on the Southern front.³⁶⁹ The Ethiopian Imperial Air Force, according to Robinson, only had eleven airplanes, and eight were serviceable" however, "they [were] of ancient heritage and slow as snails in comparison with the modern Italian planes."³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Robinson remained optimistic about an Ethiopian victory. His reporting differed from *The Herald Tribune* because of his pan-African intention. *The Courier's* editor P.L. Prattis, a staunch pan-Africanist and proponent of Black industrialism, promoted Robinson in the press as an example of "grit and self-determination to get ahead" for himself but also Black people.³⁷¹ Robinson hoped to use the Ethiopian war as a space to open the way for other Black American pilots to contribute their technical skills to render service to Ethiopia.

In contrast to Robinson, Garvey used his writing to present a discourse focused on development and modernization, questioning Ethiopia's ability to counter Italian imperial aggression. Preparedness was a constant aspect of his discourse because he believed that preparation would help Black people to deal with any obstacle placed in their way to hinder their

³⁶⁸ "Colonel Robinson Describes Ethiopians' Arms, Armies, and the Air Forces [Ineligible] Natives of Numerous and Are Willing," *The Plain Dealer*, October 11, 1935.

³⁶⁹ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 159.

³⁷⁰ "Colonel Robinson Describes Ethiopians Arms."

³⁷¹ P.L. Prattis, "Ethiopia's Black Condor: The Story of John C. Robinson," *The New York Amsterdam News*, October 22, 1935.

progress. Even though Garvey expressed enthusiasm for Emperor Haile Selassie, whom he praised as a Messiah for the Black race, he criticized how Ethiopia was handicapped because the emperor was slow to implement an industrial policy. Garvey believed execution of the industrial policy would have enabled Ethiopia to contest Italian imperial advances effectively. Garvey asserted, "The Italo-Abyssinian war affords only one example of what unpreparedness means to a people." He argued that Italy could penetrate "Abyssinian territory partly since Abyssinia was not sufficiently equipped from a military point of view to oppose the invasion." He believed that if Selassie had been prepared, "Mussolini would have been scared to touch a black kingdom because we would have been on intellectual, political, scientific power that would be demanded respect from every man."³⁷²

In a direct challenge to this quasi-fascist flagellation of Black slackness, *The Afro-American* in November 1935, published the first photographs of Ethiopian soldiers in Harrar in eastern Ethiopia; the center of some of the fiercest fighting, reassuring readers that the 1896 defeat at Addis Ababa would be re-enacted on a vaster scale.³⁷³ The Black public learned how Selassie mobilized 120,000 troops, forming a defense ring in the mountains around Makale in northern Ethiopia in anticipation of Italy's "big push" into the city.³⁷⁴ The League's economic sanctions went into effect against Italy on November 18, 1935, but they did not include oil or steel, which aided Italy in its military mobilization. Though Ethiopian soldiers displayed a

³⁷² Marcus Garvey, "Lest We Forget," *The Black Man: A Monthly Magazine of Negro Thought and Opinion* 2, No. 8 (December 1937), 11, Box 6, Folder 6, The Amy Garvey Memorial Collection on Marcus Garvey, The John Hope, and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Nashville, TN.

³⁷³ "AFRO Presents First Pictures from Ethiopian Battlefield," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, November 2, 1935.

³⁷⁴ "Another Italian Plane Shot Down: Nations Prepare for "Key" Battle Emperor Haile Mobilizes 120,000 Troops," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 2, 1935.

passionate martial spirit, this was not enough, and the Italians occupied the strategic town of Makele, located 485 miles north of Addis Ababa, on November 8, 1935. *The Plain Dealer* reprinted an editorial from *The Defender* proclaiming that economic sanctions were a "polite gesture" and "more effective in hindering the progress of Ethiopia than that of Italy". Now the "cloak was removed," according to the newspaper, revealing the "holy alliance between Great Britain, France, and Italy" who agreed not to plunder or rob each other of the territory of goods" at "the detriment of Ethiopia."³⁷⁵

J. A. Rogers and the Expansion of the Pan-African News Network

Robert Vann contributed to the expansion of the pan-African news network by hiring J. A. Rogers in November 1935 to provide reporting from the front, which added to the editorializing of the Ethiopian crisis. Vann hired J. A. Rogers to satisfy his readers' thirst for a Black perspective on Ethiopia by reporting news from the Ethiopian front.³⁷⁶ On November 2, 1935, L.F. Coles, a reader from New York City, voiced those newspapers such as *The Courier*, *The Baltimore Afro-American*, *Philadelphia Tribune*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, *Kansas City Call*, *Chicago Defender*, and *Amsterdam News* needed to send a Black reporter to the Ethiopian front. There is a possibility that Vann read this editorial.³⁷⁷ Nonetheless, he was interested in satisfying the demands of his readers and increasing circulation numbers. So, he hired Rogers because the Black public recognized him as an authority on Ethiopia due to his early travels as an official correspondent covering the inauguration of Ras Tafari in 1930. *The Courier*

³⁷⁵ "Best Editorial of The Week: Ethiopia the Golden Calf," *Plaindealer*, November 8, 1935.

³⁷⁶ J. A. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Off to War Zone," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 26, 1935.

³⁷⁷ L. F. Coles, "We Agree with You Mr. Cole," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 2, 1935.

publicized Rogers as the only war correspondent sent to the front by a Black newspaper. This perception was far from the truth since *The Defender's* Martin Dwyer was in the country for years. The newspaper's Foreign News Department also claimed to have sent a second correspondent, referred to as Operative No. 22, to Addis Ababa in November 1935 to provide first-hand information.³⁷⁸ Robert Abbott, who resented the ANP's Barnett, emphasized this in an attempt to undermine the ANP's editorial influence. Edwin Horde, a reader from Costa Rica, voiced Vann's right move by sending Rogers to the front because this move had made the most significant impact on the unification of the Negroes throughout the world."³⁷⁹ However, when *The Courier* sent Rogers to the front, *The Courier's* circulation increased by twenty-five thousand copies.³⁸⁰ According to the ANP correspondent Floyd J. Calvin, this increase indicated how the Black press was "a definite social agent, a vital force in the stream of Negro consciousness."³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ "Defender's Second Representative Now in Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, November 23, 1935.

³⁷⁹ Edwin Horde, "Says Sending J.A. Rogers to Ethiopia Was Great Move," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 28, 1935.

³⁸⁰ Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 45.

³⁸¹ Floyd J. Calvin, "Race Eager for Rogers' Ethiopian War News," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 30, 1935; *The Chicago Defender*, on the other hand, prided itself as the newspaper that "first predicted that Italy would invade Ethiopia" during the fall. The newspaper also claimed that this prediction was what "marked the beginning of real American interest in the Ethiopian situation. It claimed that white mainstream newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*, *Daily News*, *Daily Times*, *Evening American*, and the *Associated Press* called it to provide news about the Ethiopian war. The newspaper prided itself on sending a second correspondent to the Ethiopian front. On November 23, 1935, *The Chicago Defender* included a photo of an envelope of a letter written from Operative No. 22, its new representative in Ethiopia, who succeeded in gaining admittance to the war-torn country. The journalist chose to work under a code name because of "the strict rules of censorship which prevailed during the war, and because nations fear espionage, especially from newspaper workers." The newspaper relayed that it added Operative No. 22 to its news staff because of "a long-desired wish of this newspaper to have a second man writing first-hand information about Ethiopia." # It turned out that Operative No. 22 was editorial writer Metz T. P. Lochard, who culled information from daily newspapers while writing his stories from Chicago.

Rogers' reporting at times downplayed facts that deviated from the narrative that Ethiopia would experience a victory like that of 1896. At the same time, Percival Prattis, Rogers' editor, promoted Rogers to readers, promising his objective reporting would counter Italian propaganda, asserting, "Our readers must have the truth. Regardless of cost!"³⁸² In one of his earliest reports on November 16, 1935, Rogers refuted the claims of American and European papers that "would have their readers believe that Addis Ababa is in hourly danger of being bombed." He asserted that those "major victories are merely Italian propaganda."³⁸³ All the while, "swift-moving" bands of guerillas continued to harass the invaders, and "most of those killed," according to Rogers, were Italians.³⁸⁴ His reporting also framed Ethiopian's victimization as a part of the continuing cycle of oppression linked to imperialism as he exposed how the Italian army and Black colonial troops enjoyed a "Roman Holiday," engaging in the "wholesale raping of Ethiopian women and girls."³⁸⁵ Rogers described how women were targets of the soldiers' "sex-lust" and that soldiers even assaulted priests' wives and nuns from convents.³⁸⁶

The Black Mainstream Press and Reporting on the Course of the War

From November to December 1935, *The Courier*, *The Defender*, *Amsterdam News*, and *The Cleveland Call and Post*, in direct rebuttal of the white mainstream press, was overflowed with positive representations of Ethiopian success against the Italians to galvanize the public by reassuring them of successful Ethiopian resistance against the Fascist invaders. *The Times*

³⁸² Percival Prattis, "Rogers Along Giving the Real Facts on War, Belief," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 16, 1936; Rogers, "Rogers Off to War Zone."

³⁸³ J. A. Rogers, "Duce's Sons Challenged to Air Duel by Sons of Ethiopian Minister: Rogers, in Port Said, Find Selassie's Army, 500,000 Strong, Waiting Force in Bombproof Forts," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 16, 1935.

³⁸⁴ J. A. Rogers, "Duce's Sons."

³⁸⁵ J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Exposes War Atrocities, Girls Nuns Raped," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 23, 1935.

³⁸⁶ Rogers, "Rogers Exposes War Atrocities"

believed, "The war Ethiopia [was] waging [was] a forlorn hope, a fight for a lost cause."³⁸⁷ J. A. Rogers offered a different slant describing how "guerillas had captured three columns of Italian infantrymen" and that he "knows guns and ammunition are being rushed into the country."³⁸⁸ In one of his most dramatic stories, Rogers described how 50000 Ethiopian troops, "all of them modernly equipped," were camped out in the mountains "contrary to what American newspapers and Italian propaganda asserted."³⁸⁹ *The Amsterdam News* celebrated how Italian soldiers were driven back by Ethiopian warriors were making gains as they "learned to conceal themselves in the heavy underbrush" and "under the protection of their gunners were able to capture Italian tanks" which they "cover with gasoline, set them afire and roast the Italian foes."³⁹⁰ *The Cleveland Call and Post* and *The Defender* emphasized how Italian colonial troops were defecting from the fascist military and joining the Ethiopian war effort. *The Post* asserted that native Embassy Guards defected to receive better clothing.³⁹¹ *The Defender* described how when the Askaris known as the "Human Mules" were "insubordinate, his Italian officer use[d] the lash upon him."³⁹² According to Chatwood Hall, this treatment caused "One thousand Italian native soldiers deserted to Ethiopia" and "pledged their allegiance to Emperor Haile Selassie bringing

³⁸⁷ "Ethiopians Set to Trap Italians," *The Chicago Defender*, November 9, 1935. Harold Denny, "Ethiopia Wages Hopeless Fight, Foreign Observers Are Convinced." *The New York Times*, November 22, 1935.

³⁸⁸ J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Contacts War Zone! Flood of Modern Arms and Ammunition," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 9, 1935.

³⁸⁹ J. A. Rogers, "DUCE'S Son's Challenged to Air Duel by Sons of Ethiopian Minister," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 16, 1935.

³⁹⁰ "Italians Are Driven Back by Warriors," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 30, 1935.

³⁹¹ "Italian Soldiers Desert to Il Negust," *The Cleveland Call and Post*, November 7, 1935.

³⁹² "Human Mules Fight for Italy But Not Long," *The Chicago Defender*, November 2, 1935.

with them over 50 mule loads of ammunition, machine guns, and rifles."³⁹³ *The Times* labeled turmoil in the Ethiopian army as evidence of how those Ethiopian soldiers who signed on to fight as "the simple, unbelievably ignorant" because they "pictur[ed] this warlike their own tribal battles" revealing they have no concept of the sizeable coordinated fire they will meet.³⁹⁴ Haile Selassie launched his major offensive during the war in December 1935 in the strategic town of Desseye in the north. Then he took personal command of his troops. In the south, Italians commanded by General Rodolfo Graziani were "facing 70,000 Ethiopians who [were] ready to leap upon their foe with the latest implements of war." According to *The Defender*, Italy's bombing campaigns wasted martial and fiscal resources as "an aerial squadron dropped more than 300 bombs at Dagah Bur" and "the sole casualty was one prairie chicken."³⁹⁵ *The Herald Tribune*, in contrast, provided favorable coverage to the Italians as it reported that the Italians "have enough oil and other war materials to stick to their plans during the campaign." However, the fascists still experienced difficulty, according to the newspaper, because of the "difficult terrain" and the "Emperor's unwillingness to meet the Italian troops in open battle" means that "a definite conquest of Ethiopian territories will be slow and definite."³⁹⁶ Although chemical weapons were banned in warfare after the twentieth century, the imprecise language of the Hague Convention, made enforcement difficult. Though Italy signed and ratified the 1925 General Protocol banning all chemical and biological weapons usage, Mussolini violated the agreement.³⁹⁷ *The Tribune* related that Italy's violation of international law and use of "Al

³⁹³ "Mussolini Pursues Policy of Divide and Rule in Ethiopia."

³⁹⁴ "Ethiopians Set to Trap Italians."

³⁹⁵ "Haile Selassie Opens Offensive with 500,000 men," *The Chicago Defender*, December 7, 1935.

³⁹⁶ Sonia Tomara, "Italians Have War Supplies, Won't Retreat," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 8, 1935.

³⁹⁷ Nault, *Africa and the Shaping of International Human Rights*, 66.

Capone tactics” was the only way it could counter the Ethiopian offensive.³⁹⁸ Italy was only able to counter the Ethiopian offensive, according to *The Tribune*, by engaging in “Al Capone tactics.”³⁹⁹ From March through May 1936, the Italian army displayed their ruthlessness as they deployed their implements of genocide, including poisonous gas using aerial bombardments raids that facilitated their drive into Ethiopia. Italy's use of mustard gas, a chemical that causes burns on the skin, against civilian and Ethiopian troops violated international law and marked the most ruthless phases of the war. On March 28, 1936, *The Amsterdam News* described how Italian troops were using “asphyxiating and corrosive gasses along the northern front” that resulted in a “blanket of poisonous gas victimizing civilians and livestock as well as military forces.”⁴⁰⁰

The Black Press and Reporting on the Possibility of an Ethiopian Victory

The Black press continued to report positively on Ethiopian military engagements to buoy readers' spirits. J. A. Rogers continued to display unabashed optimism that Ethiopia would not be defeated. However, Ethiopia needed guns and bullets. He called on Black men to come to the display with a "spark of chivalry and to help Ethiopia to purchase arms" because "here is an opportunity for the black man to rise to the occasion." His reporting countered how some journalists in the mainstream press, who were sympathetic to Mussolini, reported the triumphant advance of the Italian army columns and Ethiopian atrocities committed against Italian citizens during warfare.⁴⁰¹ *The Courier's* editor, P.L. Prattis as having the truth as he asked, “Who should Courier readers’ believe the lone typewriter of Rogers pounds out daily-the Ethiopian side.”⁴⁰²

³⁹⁸ F. Robb, “Il Duce,” Exalted Capone: Italy Launched Attacks on Ethiopia 2,100 Years Ago,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 12, 1935.

³⁹⁹ “Il Duce” Exalted Capone.”

⁴⁰⁰ *The Amsterdam News*, March 28, 1936.

⁴⁰¹ Sonia Tomara, “3 Italian Units Strike Deeper into Ethiopia,” *The New York Herald Tribune*, March 14, 1936.

⁴⁰² P.L. Prattis, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 11, 1936.

On March 28, 1936, *The Defender* reported how the emperor led an offensive where warriors engaged in for the first time since the war began in "swift, smashing assaults that stunned the Italians and disorganized their operations on the northern front. Ethiopian Fokker planes also succeeded in grounding five Italian Caproni planes in an aerial battle in the north."⁴⁰³ Despite this win, Mussolini's bombing planes continued "their drive of mass murder," dropping tons of explosives on civilians and homes in demilitarized zones and cities.⁴⁰⁴

Jim Crow segregation was one of the most odious systems akin to fascism because of its restrictions on democratic rights due to racial differences. The system was dependent on maintaining white supremacy by maintaining legal structures intended to define full citizenship in the nation based on whiteness. The Italians, according to Rogers, took a cue from the United States by enforcing a segregation system in Ethiopia that "anger[ed] young Ethiopians" that prohibited Ethiopians from entering white establishments. Rogers critiqued how the fascist colonial system extended privileges to Europeans but denied Ethiopians the same privileges. For example, Ethiopians were "shunted off the street right or left to the sidewalks by the police. The European pedestrians, on the other hand, were "permitted to continue in the middle of the road while Ethiopians had to walk on stony walkways."⁴⁰⁵ Ethiopians were also not allowed to venture out at night after nine o'clock, while foreigners could stay out as late as they would like. The police never challenged foreigners directly on the street, but they discretely approached them to ask questions. Rogers believed that "Ethiopians suffered much the same way as Haiti

⁴⁰³ "Emperor Leads Ethiopian Army on Northern Front to Great Victory," *The Chicago Defender*, March 28, 1936.

⁴⁰⁴ "Mussolini's Bombers continue to pillage," *The Chicago Defender*, April 11, 1936.

⁴⁰⁵ J. A. Rogers, "Segregation Attempts in Ethiopia Disclosed," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 21, 1936.

and Liberia."⁴⁰⁶ For example, "If an Ethiopian, a Haitian or Liberian [was] attacked in a European country or American country, redress is a simple court matter." However, attacking a European "slightly in Ethiopia, Haiti, or Liberia, the attack is elevated to the status of a diplomatic incident."⁴⁰⁷ This environment, according to Rogers, resulted in good white men being categorized with fascist-minded white men. Consequently, the "racial feeling is going to be far stronger with the result that the bad ones and the prejudiced ones are going to make it harder for the good and the broadminded" in Ethiopia.⁴⁰⁸

The possibility of Ethiopian disunity proved to be one of the most unpleasant realities of the war since Black Americans galvanized around the image of Ethiopian nationalism in the struggle against Italian imperialism. J. A. Rogers remained passionate in his commitment to Ethiopia and countered such reports of disunity as false and misleading, declaring the war "was destined to continue for years" and that the Ethiopian spirit of resistance was more robust than ever.⁴⁰⁹ Rogers left Addis Ababa in April 1936 for London. In an article printed in the *Afro-American* on April 11, he affirmed, "Nature as I see it, is winning the war for Ethiopia,"⁴¹⁰ He reasoned that Italy would be disadvantaged even if it overran Addis Ababa. He maintained that the war would last for years, and there was no disunity in Ethiopia, acknowledging, "The war has united Ethiopians more than anything can do."⁴¹¹ Col Robinson, who and Rogers returned to the United States in May 1936, refuted Rogers' account of unity. He asserted. "Ethiopia was

⁴⁰⁶ "Segregation Attempts."

⁴⁰⁷ "Segregation Attempts."

⁴⁰⁸ "Segregation Attempts."

⁴⁰⁹ "Operative 22's Mail."

⁴¹⁰ J. A. Rogers, "Rogers, Quits Addis; Arrives in London: Selassie Far from Licked; Red Cross Bombing Deliberate; War Will Last Years," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, April 11, 1936.

⁴¹¹ Rogers, "Rogers, Quits Addis."

overthrown by revolution, not foreign conquest" due to the "mass bribery of provincial chieftains, together with the intrigues of a small group of princes who wanted to depose Haile Selassie." Despite these internal dysfunctions, Robinson remained confident in an Ethiopian victory and believed Ethiopia had adequate manpower, reporting "three large Ethiopian armies in the field". Fifty thousand well-armed men were waiting near Gore, west of Addis Ababa, where a provisional Ethiopian government had been proclaimed. He remained confident that Italy could be defeated.⁴¹² Calvin J. Floyd's editorial, "Ethiopia's Darkest Hour," offered a more sobering view of the war. He argued that gallantry and zealous patriotism were not enough to hold the "mighty horde of Fascists at bay."⁴¹³ He thought the emperor was placing too much faith in the League and displayed "naiveté regarding how Ethiopia was an unequal member and the victim of "tricky double-crossing diplomats in Europe."⁴¹⁴

Espionage and intrigue forced Emperor Selassie to curtail editorial freedoms in Ethiopia in the name of preserving Ethiopian national security. On May 2, 1936, J. A. Rogers reported that this Selassie, the "noblest of men," imposed censorship in the empire because of certain circumstances. He imposed censorship on Ethiopia because "long before the war began, Italians had been strategically placing themselves in deep into Ethiopian territory under the guise of establishing consulates." However, they sent expeditions into some Ethiopian towns and villages where there was no possibility to trade. According to Rogers, Italy did this to have her emissaries spread throughout the country. Like the average newspaperman, Rogers opposed censorship, and he considered the censor to be a "meddler and nuisance." He tolerated censorship because most

⁴¹² Rankin, "Watchtower: John C. Robinson."

⁴¹³ Calvin J. Floyd, "Ethiopia's Darkest Hour," *Cleveland Call & Post*, April 23, 1936.

⁴¹⁴ Floyd, "Ethiopia's Darkest Hour."

of the news in Ethiopia was delivered by radio that Italian stations picked up.⁴¹⁵ On May 7, 1936, Italy annexed Ethiopia, and Rogers recognized that Italian rule would have dreadful consequences for Ethiopians and result in "new terrors and atrocities in the name of white imperialism."⁴¹⁶ The Black American mainstream press and Garvey had a long-standing contentious relationship because of his separatist Black Nationalist politics. There was an element of truth in Garvey's criticisms. He believed that Black newspapers such as *The Courier*, *The Defender*, and *The Afro-American* convinced their readership that they could aid in winning the war with passionate newspaper articles and radical speeches. However, he believed that the mainstream Black press betrayed Black people as the "most venal ignorant and corrupt." The mainstream Black press engaged in "unprincipled, unscrupulous" reportage about the war because editors were only concerned with enriching themselves. Garvey, on the other hand, reasoned that Ethiopia was defeated. Although the Black press expressed a genuine commitment to the Ethiopian cause, editors such as Robert Vann and John Sengstacke were driven by profit margin. Its positive coverage of the Ethiopian crisis increased circulation and pulled both papers that the Depression had debilitated out of the red. However, Garvey's criticism was not taken seriously by journalists, editors, activists, and intellectuals who believed that editorial coverage of Ethiopia was done entirely in the name of altruistic concern for the maintenance of Ethiopia's independence.

Black mainstream papers did romantically misreport to keep the Black public's interest in the war. This criticism was linked to Garvey's firm belief that the function of the Black press was to ensure "a public service without prejudice or partiality, to convey the truth" without favoritism

⁴¹⁵ J. A. Rogers, "Uncensored! "The Inside Story," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 2, 1936.

⁴¹⁶ J. A. Rogers, "Fascist Rule for Ethiopia to be Stern," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 16, 1936.

or bias. Furthermore, he attributed the Black nation's defeat to Selassie's ineffective leadership. In an article he wrote in *The Black Man*, he asserted that the emperor outlived his usefulness in Ethiopia. His refusal to educate "thousands of his countrymen and women" to obtain the necessary knowledge to advance Ethiopia contributed to their defeat by Italy. Moreover, Garvey questioned Selassie's commitment to pan-Africanism since he relied on Belgian advisors, who prevented him from creating a racialized war policy. Garvey also believed Selassie's appeal to the League of Nations was counterproductive because it provided Mussolini with allies that he would not have otherwise had. After all, Ethiopia failed to conform to Western ideals as it failed to check domestic slavery and modernize to thwart European imperialist threats effectively.⁴¹⁷

The Ethiopians continued to lack fiscal resources to pay for a protracted war and stretched their hand out to raise awareness about the conflict to stimulate fundraising. *The Courier* directed one of the most extensive fundraising campaigns. The newspaper reminded readers that Italians in the United States raised over \$500,000,000 to give to the Italian Red Cross, caring for the sick and the wounded in Italy. He lambasted Black Americans for sending funds through Ethiopian Aid committees since they talked. He informed readers that Ethiopian Consul John Shaw authorized the *Courier* to raise funds for the Ethiopian war effort. Keeping in mind depression-era conditions, Rogers voiced to readers if 12, 0000, 000 Negroes sent in a dime a week, which would give Ethiopia over a noble condition. He also voiced that if they gave \$1.00 a week, Ethiopia could raise 52, 0000, 0000 ... enough to give plenty of modern arms, equipment, and arms. To encourage giving, he warned, "if Ethiopia is defeated, the Negro

⁴¹⁷ Marcus Garvey, "Italy's Conquest?" *The Black Man* (May-June 1936) In *Marcus Garvey The Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Volume X, African for the Africans, 1923-1945*, edited by Robert Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 57.

kingdom will be swept from the earth... and that the Protestant religion will be out of Africa?"⁴¹⁸
He asserted that the "national slogan of Negroes should be "I have sent my dollar, have you sent yours?"⁴¹⁹

Mussolini rewarded Pietro Badoglio for leading fascist troops into Addis Ababa by appointing him the Viceroy of Ethiopia. Italian troops entered the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa on May 5, 1936, during the fascists' "March of Iron Will." Two days later, Italy annexed Ethiopia, and the Italian King Victor Emmanuel III was proclaimed emperor of Italian East Africa. Mussolini's announcement that he annexed Ethiopia in the name of recreating the Roman Empire astonished League members. *The Herald Tribune* reported hardening against the fascist nation before the annexation that sanctions should be maintained even though Ethiopia was vanquished.⁴²⁰ Delegates from neutral nations were concerned that Mussolini's aggression would affect possible future developments in Europe. They viewed it as a dangerous example likely to be imitated in Europe.⁴²¹ Smaller nations also viewed these developments with concern because it would be possible for a considerable power in the future to attempt to conquer small European countries which dared to support sanctions. Neutral nations opposed any attempt to expel Ethiopian delegates from the meeting at Geneva.⁴²² In the end, The League condemned the "misuse of power by the aggressor" and "refused to recognize the conquest." The emperor,

⁴¹⁸ A. Rogers, "Dollars Not Words Will Win the War," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 2, 1936.

⁴¹⁹ "Dollars Not Words."

⁴²⁰ "Il Duce Setting a Bad Example; Bad Example, Geneva Fears," *The Herald Sun*, May 10, 1936.

⁴²¹ "Il Duce Setting a Bad Example."

⁴²² "Il Duce Setting a Bad Example."

defenseless against the invaders, boarded the British ship Enterprise and traveled to Jerusalem in British mandated Palestine.⁴²³

J. A. Rogers reasoned that the fascists could advance quickly to Addis Ababa because they used poison gas. He asserted that the gas spread from "Aschangi to Quoram, where the imperial road begins." Consequently, the entire areas were drenched with poison gas, and no living creature was found." Rogers declared, that "gas was the only weapon that the Ethiopians feared." When Italy signed the 1928 Convention, she promised not to use poison gas. Italy reneged on the promise, according to Rogers, because she was "bled to death economically from her East African War," and "she resorted to every desperate means, no matter how dirty or atrocious."⁴²⁴ The Ethiopians quickly submitted a report to the League of Nations describing how the Italians were breaching international law. Ethiopia also submitted evidence that Italy unleashed an attack on an unarmed city, and "shots were fired from machine guns from a shallow height," although "the town was devoid of means of defense."⁴²⁵

If the use of poison gas was not enough, the Italians also "cut off the head often of Ethiopian prisoners who resembled the emperor," they then "mounted it on a pole, photographed it, and distributed print copies of it throughout Ethiopia to create the impression that the emperor was dead."⁴²⁶ *The Defender's* Martin Dwyer also exposed how the Ethiopians were sold "dud bullets," which did not fire when they discharged their rifles. Years ago, they were sold these bullets by an Armenian living in Addis Ababa but thinking about profit over safety, the merchant

⁴²³ J. A. Rogers, "League of Nations Refuses to Recognize Italy's Poison Gas Conquest," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 16, 1936.

⁴²⁴ J. A. Rogers, "Uncensored! The Inside Story!" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 9, 1936.

⁴²⁵ "Il Duce Ignore's League's Query," *The New York Herald Tribune*, April 5, 1936.

⁴²⁶ "Uncensored!" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 9, 1936.

filled the shells with mud.⁴²⁷ The climate and terrain were saving graces for Ethiopia. Rogers noted that heavy rains would assist Ethiopia in fighting back the Italians as it diluted the poison gas from the fascist planes. This aspect would give the Ethiopian five months to recuperate. At this moment, a large part of the country was unconquered. Also, the heavy rains washed away their roads. The Ethiopians destroyed the railroads and the roads that the Italians built. This negative impacted Italian trade to “decrease by sixty percent while her gold reserves were heading towards the vanishing point.”⁴²⁸ The residents of Addis Ababa did not capitulate to the Italians. Instead, they destroyed the city "brick by brick," so there was nothing but ashes when they arrived.

The fascists’ atrocities sparked Popular front demonstrations in protest of their barbarity. On May 16, 1936, *The Amsterdam News* reported how thousands of people gathered on Lennox Avenue in Harlem to Seventh Avenue to march against "Italian imperialism and military barbarism in Ethiopia." The marches represented a broad cross-section of Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, Communists, and followers of Father Divine as well as representatives from Local 112 Cafeteria Workers Union, Puerto Rican organizations. Also, the Harlem Communist James W. Ford led the way. He was followed by a truck draped with the Ethiopian emblem, and another group carried an effigy of Mussolini, which they destroyed at the meeting. Captain A.L. King, head of the Harlem Branch of the UNIA and an adversary of Garvey, spoke. Also, the Secretary of the United Aid for Ethiopia spoke. J. A Rogers also spoke and told attendees how “poison gas and aerial bombs were hurled against defenseless women and children by the fascist invaders. In the wake of Italy’s atrocities, the marchers appealed for the

⁴²⁷ “Uncensored!” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 9, 1936.

⁴²⁸ “Uncensored!”

intensification of League sanctions. The march's planning committee also drafted letters to President Roosevelt and twenty-three congressmen requesting that they "take a definite and unequivocal on the anti-lynching bill and urge its passage."⁴²⁹

Summary

Mussolini's atrocities were not noticed by publicists such as Joel A. Rogers and Martin Dwyer, who offered writers two different writing styles with comparative perspectives. Although there was a time when it was difficult to tell the politics of journalists, it is evident that their discourse expressed appreciation for anti-colonialism, anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and Black Nationalism. Some journalists such as Joel E. Rogers may have had a louder voice in the press than other journalists. Notwithstanding this, Rogers and his colleagues, including liberals, Communists, Socialists, Christian internationalists, and pacifists were part of a Black internationalist community, which understood that fascism was a political philosophy that bred war and violence brutality, racial oppression in the name of civilization.

⁴²⁹ "Thousands in Protest Here Against Italy," *The New York Amsterdam News*, May 16, 1936.

CHAPTER V: THE OCCUPATION

Introduction

The Italian fascist military occupation of Ethiopia was the editorial focus of the Black press from June 1936 to December 1937. Black newspapers expressed outrage regarding fascist genocidal violence against Ethiopian guerillas and civilians. This reportage reflected how pro-Ethiopia discourse underwent an ideological transition as Garveyite nationalism came under question as to the antithesis to Ethiopian liberation. During this period, various anti-fascist internationalist discourses embedded in national, local, and international contexts linked journalists, activists, and readers. Pan-Africanist and pan-Africanist socialist internationalism emphasized racial solidarity between Black Americans and Ethiopians while criticizing the corrosive effects of Italian imperialism as symptomatic of the spread of global white supremacy. Leftist anti-fascist internationalists reflected a dynamic race/class politics emphasizing how fascism was the bedfellow of capitalism, imperialism, and militarism. Ethiopian freedom and Spanish freedom became synonymous with Black American workers' freedom. Liberal anti-fascist internationalists, on the other hand, critiqued the inefficacy of the League of Nations to secure the peace and security of the world as well as the Vatican's support of Mussolini's imperial dream. Black antifascists, victimized by Jim Crow, pointed to how domestic and global fascism and the recognition of Italian conquest threatened the survival of democratic values. These discourses, in turn, became a bridge between the Ethiopian cause and Popular Front activism focused on Spain, and the consequences of unchecked Italian aggression on the expansion of fascism in Europe and Japan set the stage for world war.

Press Reporting and Representation of the Occupation

The exiled emperor was now in London. Although Britain did not do enough to counter Italy's invasion and occupation of Ethiopia, they welcomed Selassie there as he sought exile. *The Courier* communicated to readers that Britain's overture to Selassie did not necessarily mean that the British government was an ally of Ethiopia, especially since "no official British government welcome of Emperor Haile Selassie when he arriv[ed] in England" only "confirm[ed] the suspicions of the discerning" that "the Negus is left holding the bag."⁴³⁰ *The Age* also expressed skepticism regarding Britain's overtures as it saw Britain's allowing Selassie to come to London as a "diplomatic salve" since Britain's failure to intervene on Ethiopia's behalf precipitated the emperor's exile.⁴³¹ Though *The Age* supported Selassie, the emperor was not above criticism. The newspaper echoed Marcus Garvey's sentiments as it voiced, "What Selassie should have done to preserve his empire was to equip it with a strong army, gas bombs, airplanes, tanks and all the destructive elements of modern warfare. Then trust in God and the League of Nations."⁴³² The western third of Ethiopia was now entirely under the authority of the new Ethiopian government centered in the southwestern town of Gore and led by the emperor's cousin Ras Imru. *The Times* disputed Haile Selassie's claims that an organized Ethiopian government existed, asserting, "there is no trace anywhere in Ethiopia of an organized government."⁴³³ *The Cleveland Gazette*, *The Defender*, *The Tribune*, *The Courier*, and *Amsterdam News* offered optimistic coverage of Ethiopian Patriots' protracted guerilla warfare campaign against the fascists. *The Defender* interpreted that Ethiopia was rising again as

⁴³⁰ "Haile Selassie Holds the Bag," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 6, 1936.

⁴³¹ "John Bull and Selassie," *New York Age*, June 13, 1936.

⁴³² "John Bull and Selassie."

⁴³³ Arnaldo Cortesi, *The New York Times*, July 9, 1936.

"Roving Ethiopian tribesmen estimated at between ten and fifteen thousand rose in war" and "massacred more than 250 Italians in the ambush near the village in the Wollege Province" in western Ethiopia. According to the newspaper, these bands overwhelmed fascist detachments during raids that killed a high-ranking fascist officer.⁴³⁴ As Ethiopians resumed their guerilla fighting, "Thousands of Ethiopians," according to *The Courier*, "organized into small military bands under the leadership of the army general left behind by Haile Selassie."⁴³⁵ *The Courier* reprinted an editorial offering a favorable view of Ethiopia's guerilla warfare as it proclaimed, "Italy's troubles in Africa are far from ended with the formal conquest," and the "mopping up process promises to be long and painful."⁴³⁶

Black Press's Reactions to Great Britain Lifting Economic Sanctions

Haile Selassie believed solidly that the League of Nations was a democratic forum committed to resolving international disputes in the name of international justice and equitable peace. The possibility of Great Britain lifting economic sanctions against Italy inspired emperor Selassie to travel to the League of Nations Council in June 1936. Selassie's previous requests regarding financial assistance to aid in Ethiopia's defense were refused. On June 26, 1936, he delivered an impassioned speech before the League appealing for a loan of 50,000 to aid in renewing Ethiopia's fight.⁴³⁷ Metz T. P. Lochard expressed pessimism regarding the efficacy of Selassie's appeal and that it was doomed for failure because "he was speaking before a pack of thieves within their den" whose one year ago told him to fight on against Italy. At the same time,

⁴³⁴ "Ethiopia Rises Again Against Italians," *The Chicago Defender*, July 18, 1936.

⁴³⁵ "Ethiopians Resume War; Seize Addis Ababa Road," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 18, 1936.

⁴³⁶ "Views Of Other Editors: Guerilla Warfare in Ethiopia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1936.

⁴³⁷ "Selassie Turned Down by League," *New York Age*, July 11, 1936.

at the League Council, they "crucifi[ed] the Ethiopian people upon the altar of imperialism and colonial rapacity."⁴³⁸ The British government and the rest of the League members ignored his pleas while deciding it would not recognize Italy's alleged conquest of Ethiopia. Selassie's speech resonated with the Black American press, which expressed sympathy for him.

The British heiress and A.N.P correspondent Nancy Cunard, in *The Amsterdam News*, voiced that "it was shown here, during each daily session of the League that the nations wish[ed] to be through with the whole Abyssinian question." She concluded that the League's decision spoke to how it "wish[ed] to collaborate in continuing the struggle against the abominable murder of an almost defenseless but very valiant and spirited people." The ending of sanctions against Italy seemed as though the League was paving the way for recognizing Italy's conquest of Ethiopia.⁴³⁹

A. Philip Randolph weighed in on this issue. He urged the AFL to pass a resolution condemning "scheming, hypocritical, imperialist, capitalists nations" that "mouth empty phrases about democracy and peace."⁴⁴⁰ An unsigned article in *The Courier* emphasized that the League's lack of action evidenced that Britain, a leading voice of the international body, "used Selassie to further her interests. Now she is through with him."⁴⁴¹ *The Defender* publicized how the religious director of WGN radio station, a Christian radio station, interpreted the League's refusal of justice to Ethiopia as "the shame of all Christendom" and made the League a "perjured particeps-criminis in the most astounding piece of international brigandage ever perpetrated by one nation

⁴³⁸ Metz T.P. Lochard, "World Loses Faith in League after Selassie's Dramatic Plea Exposes Its Lack of Power," *Chicago Defender*, July 11, 1936.

⁴³⁹ Nancy Cunard, "International Battle for Ethiopians Urged," *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 25, 1936.

⁴⁴⁰ "Seeks A.F.L. Boycott for Italian Goods," Randolph, President of Porters, Also Attacks Mobs," *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 21, 1936.

⁴⁴¹ "Britain's Debt to Haile Selassie," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 4, 1936.

against another.”⁴⁴² The newspaper related how liberal white Protestants allied with Ethiopia as it reprinted excerpts from an edition of the *Religious Digest*, acknowledging that the “fall of Ethiopia adds another list to the white man’s crimes in subjugating other peoples to himself. It marks the fall of the last independent African power before the march of European colonization.”⁴⁴³

Continuing Organizing

Black publicists spearheaded debates and Popular Front protests regarding the political economy of war and the consequences of Britain's lifting of economic sanctions against Italy. *The Amsterdam News* reported how the United Aid for Ethiopia and the Caribbean Union held a mass meeting at Harlem's St. James Presbyterian Church, a major center of Popular Front organizing, and passed resolutions demanding Great Britain maintain sanctions against Italy and that no recognition be given to Italy's annexation of Ethiopia.⁴⁴⁴ Additionally, several local grassroots organizations such as the National Negro Congress (NNC), International Council of Women of Darker Peoples, League of Friends of Ethiopia, Rising Sun Club of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Committee for the Aid of Ethiopia, and League of against War and Fascism sent a cablegram to Britain’s Prime Minister in protest. *The Tribune* printed a copy of the cablegram, which reflected the organizations’ anti-fascist convictions read and as follows:

"The reported decision of the British Government to recommend the cessation of sanctions against Italy has shocked the moral responsibilities of the powers of justice the world over in view of Britain’s well-defined and often reported policy on the Italian War.... Such recommendation at this time is tantamount to the betrayal of a sacred trust."⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴² “WGN Minister Hits League Sanction of Ethiop Rape,” *The Chicago Defender*, July 18, 1936.

⁴⁴³ “Fall of Ethiopia White Man’s Crime,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 6, 1936.

⁴⁴⁴ “Two Groups Hit England’s Move: Refusal to Push Fight for Ethiopia Cited,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 4, 1936.

⁴⁴⁵ “Organization Score British Ethiop Policy,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 26, 1936.

These efforts were of no avail. On July 15, 1936, The British lifted economic sanctions against Mussolini. The British Government's support of ending economic sanctions was due to a "fear of weakening Britain in its relation to Germany."⁴⁴⁶ At this point, Britain's wariness of Germany was due to German dictator Adolf Hitler's increasing territorial demands and his threatening war if they were not met. Thus, according to *The Courier*, Britain's actions revealed that the "threatening attitude of Germany was more vital to English aristocracy than the death of a black nation," so "the English government deliberately sacrificed Ethiopia."⁴⁴⁷ According to the newspaper, Britain's position was disastrous to Haile Selassie but a blessing to British imperialists because it removed Italy as a rival but kept her as an ally to hold back Germany, which was England's real rival.⁴⁴⁸ *The Defender*, a competitor of *The Courier*, agreed with the newspaper as it critiqued that the British Government's vote to end sanctions was another act of betrayal to Ethiopia and of collective security.⁴⁴⁹ This development, according to *The Amsterdam News*, was indicative of how "Great Britain [had] decided that Ethiopian sovereignty [was] a lost cause."⁴⁵⁰

Critiques of Roosevelt's Neutrality Policy

A public argument in the Black American press reflected how the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy, which oscillated from neutrality to moral democratic leadership, needed to be resolute and committed to non-recognition of Italian conquest in Ethiopia. At the beginning of the war, the Roosevelt administration observed a neutrality policy on Ethiopia. The

⁴⁴⁶ "British Not Likely to Recognize Aggressor's Title to Ethiopia," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 1936.

⁴⁴⁷ "Forum of Fact and Opinion," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 13, 1936.

⁴⁴⁸ "Britain's Debt to Haile Selassie," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 4, 1936.

⁴⁴⁹ "Selassie Challenges the Claims of Italy," *The Chicago Defender*, June 27, 1936.

⁴⁵⁰ "This Week's Guest Editor Says," *The New York Amsterdam News*, June 20, 1936.

Black public urged Roosevelt and the U.S. State Department to take a stand and not recognize Italy's occupation of Ethiopia. Italian nationalistic and patriotic feelings bled into the American judiciary and tested the exceptionality of American democratic institutions. *The Courier* broadcast how Italian-American New York Supreme Court Justice Salvatore A. Cotillo was a long-time supporter of Mussolini and his invasion of Ethiopia.⁴⁵¹ He professed that he intended to do everything to “make Fascism known as more brigandage...but as a lawful and strong government.”⁴⁵² He made good on his promise by lobbying Roosevelt, urging him to recognize Italy's conquest of Ethiopia. *The Courier* printed excerpts from a letter he sent to Roosevelt explaining “neutrality require[ed] that [the United States] recognize Italy’s claim over Ethiopia” and “To refuse [was] to be unneutral.”⁴⁵³ On June 13, 1936, an editorial in *The Amsterdam News* quoted Cotillo as saying, “now the war was declared, and that it was unfair for the United States not to recognize Italian conquest”. According to the newspaper, this assertion meant that Judge “forfeited his claim to impartiality and love of justice.” It was contradictory to profess “believing in law, justice, and reason” and “moved to pleas for recognition of an act of banditry accompanied by the cold-blooded murder of civilian, women, and children.”⁴⁵⁴

The Committee on Racial Problems of the Excelsior Literary Society sent a telegram to President Roosevelt pleading with him to “exercise his best judgment and interest in establishing a policy of American non-recognition of Italy’s conquest.” According to the editorial, recognition of fascist conquest would amount to “American recognition of Fascism—a system of

⁴⁵¹ Salvatore A. Cotillo was a grandmaster of the Order of the Sons of Italy and propagated the nationalist cause of Italian-Americans.

⁴⁵² Timothy Newark, *The Mafia at War: Allied Collusion with The Mob* (Chicago: Frontline: 2012), 56.

⁴⁵³ “N.Y. Judge Asks U.S. Recognize Italy in Ethiopia,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 13, 1936.

⁴⁵⁴ “No Recognition,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, June 13, 1936.

government opposed to our immediate form of government.”⁴⁵⁵ If Roosevelt recognized Italian conquest by Mussolini's legions, this would be "tantamount to United States approval" of the “Italian conquest of Ethiopia.”⁴⁵⁶ *The Cleveland Gazette* was also critical of Roosevelt’s inconsistent foreign policy. The newspaper labeled the Roosevelt administration as an agent of fascism since “it has not joined the peace front” and the “fascist-minded reactionaries to the right of Roosevelt would even line to give pen aid and comfort to the fascists.”⁴⁵⁷ The newspaper was correct mainly since Roosevelt supported the Allies morally in the war against fascism in Europe while "permit[ing] huge increases of exports to Italy, thus, helping to maintain the arms that were crushing defenseless people.”⁴⁵⁸ In the end, the United States refused to recognize Italian conquest while William Phillips, U.S. Ambassador to Italy, accredited Italy’s King Victor Emmanuel as “Emperor.”⁴⁵⁹

Critiques German, Italian, and Japanese Alliances

Public debates about Italian recognition conflicted with discussions regarding the geopolitical implications of an Italian-German friendship. German dictator Adolf Hitler had recognized Italy's invasion and occupation of Ethiopia in June 1936. By July 1936, Germany solidified its relations with Italy by recognizing Italy's sovereignty over Ethiopia by the first nation. *The Defender’s* columnist, Metz Lochard, explained that arrangement meant that Germany recognized Italian rule in Ethiopia because “the ambitious scheme of the Reich

⁴⁵⁵ O. Cecil Hall and A. Carlisle, “Against Recognition,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, June 27, 1936.

⁴⁵⁶ “U.S. About to Recognize New Ethiopian Rule,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 26, 1936.

⁴⁵⁷ “Bought and Paid for.”

⁴⁵⁸ “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: This Country’s Position on the Italian Invasion,” *Cleveland Gazette*, July 11, 1936.

⁴⁵⁹ “U.S. Fails to Recognize Italy in Ethiopia,” *Wyandotte Echo*, November 12, 1936.

government” intends to “reclaim her lost African colonies either by persuasion or by force.” Thus, Hitler used the Italian conquest as a precedent for Germany's East African colonies.⁴⁶⁰ *The Defender* reasoned that this Italian and German alliance was a consequence of how France “clogged up the machinery of the League of Nations to remove all obstacles in the war of Italy's military subjugation of Ethiopia”.⁴⁶¹ Now Mussolini had the space to “go out of his way to agree with Germany, France's bitterest enemy.” This bond, according to the newspaper, threatened the security of Europe.⁴⁶² The major price of this alliance, according to *The Defender*, was that “wanton dismemberment of the Ethiopian empire.”⁴⁶³ The ardent antifascist Adam Clayton Powell Jr. recognized that Italy and Germany’s alliance that caused the expansion of fascism “constitut[ed] the greatest menace to civilization in our day.” Powell proclaimed that Nazism and Fascism were “rightful bedfellows” and that if these “two exponents of cruelty and oppression come together so rapidly, dictators and would-be dictators will flock to the standard” and “civilization will not be able to withstand the force of Fascism.”⁴⁶⁴ According to Powell, the international community missed the opportunity to check the spread of fascism “when Italy announced the beginning of the conquest of Ethiopia ” but it [was] too late.⁴⁶⁵

Critiques of the Meaning of Japanese Recognition of Italian Conquest

The aggressive foreign policy of imperialist Japan and its recognition of Italian conquest led to political debates concerning the consequences of Italo-Japanese relations to the Ethiopian

⁴⁶⁰ Metz Lochard, “Panorama of World News, *The Chicago Defender*, July 18, 1936.

⁴⁶¹ “Can Europe Take It?” *The Chicago Defender*, August 1, 1936.

⁴⁶² “Can Europe Take It?”

⁴⁶³ “Can Europe Take It?”

⁴⁶⁴ Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. “Soapbox: Decline of a Great Leader,” *The New York Amsterdam News*. January 30, 1937.

⁴⁶⁵ “Soapbox: Decline of a Great Leader.”

crisis. By December 1936, Japanese leaders recognized Italy's conquest of Ethiopia. Since Japan was coming into its own as an imperial power, officials in Tokyo used the rumbling of war in Europe to create alliances with Italy. This development stemmed from Japanese government officials' chief interest in preserving Japanese hegemony in China. *The Washington Tribune* reprinted excerpts from a pro-Japanese speech by W.E.B Du Bois, who, unlike most Black Americans, ignored Japan's policy towards Ethiopia as he continued to believe that Japan was a friend of darker peoples. He expressed an economic analysis that high tariff barriers on imported raw materials from other countries caused the Japanese government to engage in imperialism in China to acquire cheap raw materials. Japan's actions, in turn, were seen as "dangerous" by the Western world "because of how the Japanese were able to compete with either nation in the manufacture of goods."⁴⁶⁶ The United Aid for Ethiopia, along with the American League Against War and Fascism (ALAWF), quickly denounced Japan's undeclared war on China as they recognized "what Japan is doing in China [was] what fascist Italy did in Ethiopia" and was "fascist aggression pure and simple."⁴⁶⁷ On October 23, 1937, an unsigned editorial in *The Age* critiqued how Japan signed an anti-Comintern Pact with Italy and Germany because "it was promised a share in the robber-exploitation of the Ethiopian people in exchange for a North China for Italian goods."⁴⁶⁸ Anti-fascists criticized this action. To them, it questioned how "fascists [were] attempting a redivision of the markets and resources of the world... wishes of the people who inhabit the countries where they exist."⁴⁶⁹ *The Defender* confirmed this

⁴⁶⁶ "Japan Offers Economic Challenge to the World," *The Washington Tribune*, March 20, 1937.

⁴⁶⁷ "Likens Japan's War in China to Italy's Rape of Ethiopia," *The New York Age*, October 2, 1937.

⁴⁶⁸ "Japan To Join Italian Army in Exploiting Ethiopia," *The New York Age*, November 20, 1937.

⁴⁶⁹ "The Japanese Military Fascists," *The Southern Worker*, September 1, 1937.

by explaining how Italy gave Japan the exclusive right to monopolize Ethiopian natural resources such as teak wood, raw cotton, date palm, coffee and sugar cane, and salt.⁴⁷⁰

The Representation of Italian Colonization

The Black press demonstrated continuity in their discourse of colonialism by critiquing the centrality of Eritrean Askari and Somali troops in helping the Italian fascists secure their hegemonic dream of glory, god, and gold in Ethiopia. This utilization of native troops was a continuation of existing European imperial expansionist models. Italian fascist logic like imperialist France and Britain emphasized the divide and rule strategy. Thus, Ethiopia's Italian invasion and occupation represented a continuation of the narrative of empire and the exploitation of imperial bodies to reinforce racial hierarchies. Italian officials organized a native army outfitted with modern equipment to facilitate the occupation. Colonel John C. Robinson publicized these divisions asserting that the tragedy of the war was that "blacks were pitted against blacks in the most tragic contest in African history."⁴⁷¹ George Padmore sharply criticized European imperialism, recognizing how Italy was following the political tradition of the British who, according to him, were "past-masters at the art of exploiting the quarrels between rival tribes of blacks to obtain a footing and then take control of the territory themselves." He explained that when Mussolini, like many imperialists, entered into the territory, "the fighting habits of the natives [were] exploited to enlist them in armies to preserve 'law and order' not only in their own country but in other parts of the world as well."⁴⁷² Padmore deplored

⁴⁷⁰ "Grants Japan Exclusive Rights to Ethiopia's Salt," *The Chicago Defender*, April 23, 1938.

⁴⁷¹ "Rulers Deceive Race Troops."

⁴⁷² "Rulers Deceive Race Troops."

this policy as he argued that "In using his East African troops against Abyssinia, Mussolini only did what France did before him and what Franco has done with the Moor since."⁴⁷³

Black and white mainstream newspapers participated in debates regarding the social archaeology of the war in Ethiopia since Mussolini tried to reconstruct a New Roman Empire to restore Italian glory. By June 1, 1936, Mussolini executed his grand vision of the Italian Empire by proclaiming the merging of Ethiopia with the existing Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland.⁴⁷⁴ *The Times*, instead of Black newspapers, provided extensive positive coverage of Mussolini in his drive to become master of Ethiopia. Mussolini's Fascist colonialism followed the example of ancient Rome by enforcing law employing a centralized authority. King Victor Emmanuel III was named the Emperor of Ethiopia, and General Pietro Badoglio led the mechanized invading army and was named the first Viceroy of the new Italian colony. Italy's military occupation spanned less than half of Ethiopia, including the two principal cities of Addis Ababa, the former capital of the Ethiopian Empire, and the principal commercial center of Harrar. Also, Mussolini formally divided Ethiopia into five administrative-territorial divisions, including Asmara, Gondar, Jimma, Harrar, and Sidamo. The divisions were in parts of Ethiopia that were not yet wholly conquered but under the direct administration of the Viceroy's central administration in Addis Ababa. Mussolini's imperial dream included transforming Addis Ababa into the most beautiful city in Africa with a million inhabitants.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ "Rulers Deceive Race Troops, Says Noted British Writer," *The Chicago Defender*, October 9, 1937.

⁴⁷⁴ John Gooch, "Reconquest and Suppression in Fascist Italy's Pacifications of Libya and Ethiopia," 1922. *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28; no. 6 (August 2006), 1022.

⁴⁷⁵ Charles Schaefer, "Serendipitous Resistance in Fascist-Occupied Ethiopia, 1936-1941," *Northeast African Studies* 3, no. 1 (1996): 89.

Italian-American supporters of Mussolini recognized that the occupation offered Italy an opportunity to rise from its subordinate position in the international community and create a modern and prosperous nation. *The Times* reported how Italian legitimized the fascists' imperial fantasy by celebrating its occupation in Rome and how Mussolini proclaimed, "We have reached one station on the road."⁴⁷⁶ *The Courier*, on the other hand, spotlighted how "the sawdust Napoleon" was using the occupation to divert the Italian people's attention away from his failed economic policies leaving "Italy in even a worse state now" since "Italy [was] floundering up to its nose in the worst of all debts."⁴⁷⁷ With that said, Italy's occupation of Ethiopia represented a turning point for Italy as an imperial power but came at a price according to the *Plaindealer*, which recognized that its new status was only achieved by its "climb[ing] on the backs of another people." According to the paper, Italy's actions signified how it was "now of the master class." However, this new role was only achieved through brutal methods of Italy as "she shoots the Ethiopians in batches, [and] greedily grabs everything" in the "new colony."⁴⁷⁸ On June 6, 1936, *The Courier* published a photo depicting how among the "the horrors of war" was the decimation of Ethiopian civilization depicted by stacked Ethiopian bodies in the streets of the capital, which was reduced to ruins by Black shirted troops.⁴⁷⁹

Pro-Ethiopian Organizing in the Wake of Fascist Occupation

Italy's pronouncement of its triumph inspired a wave of militant anti-fascist activism representing various political and social groups. The Wichita-based newspaper *The Negro Star* in

⁴⁷⁶ "Mussolini Absent At Rome Triumph, *New York Times*, June 8, 1936.

⁴⁷⁷ "Uncensored! The "Inside Story" of the Ethiopian-Italian War," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 6, 1936.

⁴⁷⁸ "Things to Remember," *The Plain Dealer*, June 5, 1936.

⁴⁷⁹ "Horrors of War!" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 6, 1936.

the section "World's Flashlight" reported how "Exiled groups of Harlemites have been gathering on the street corners discussing the ominous news from Ethiopia of the flight of the Emperor and the occupying of the Ethiopian capital by the Italians."⁴⁸⁰ *The Star* related that the announcement of Italy's annexation of Ethiopia led to an increase in grassroots Black Nationalist protest as it "brought back the soap-box fad" and "on nearly every corner of Lenox and Seventh Avenue, great crowds assembled to listen to the roar and splutter of oratorical cannons." Likewise, "Large trucks loaded with Ethiopian sympathizers drove down the street with their occupants yelling, "Don't Buy From Wops." Harlemites also paraded, and the participants carried Mussolini in effigy down Lenox Avenue while yelling, "Down With Mussolini."⁴⁸¹ On June 19, 1936, *The Star* reported the pro-Ethiopia organization, the "Ethiopian Pacific Movement, Inc., flooded Harlem with bills announcing an 'Ethiopia Not Conquered' Mass Meeting at Rockland Palace.⁴⁸² *The Courier* reported how in New Orleans, the NAACP, the Louisiana League for Peace and Freedom, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, and the League Against War and Fascism protested a victory parade where 2,000 of the city's Italians and delegations from surrounding parishes marched for three hours proclaiming, "Vie L' Italians" and raising the right hand in the fascist salute.⁴⁸³ In response to these events, the Dillard University professors L.D. Reddick, Byron Augustine, St. Clair Drake, and James LoFourche, secretary of the NAACP, cut in front of the fascist protests with their automobile bearing the sign, "We Protest against the Celebration of Aggressive War and Fascism."⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸⁰ "World's Flashlight," *Negro Star*, June 5, 1936.

⁴⁸¹ "Hated Anti-Mussolini," *Negro Star*, June 5, 1936.

⁴⁸² "Hold Ethiopia Not Conquered Mass Meeting," *Negro Star*, June 19, 1936.

⁴⁸³ "Protest New Orleans Italian Victory Parade," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 6, 1936.

⁴⁸⁴ "Protest Italian Parade," *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 11, 1936; "Professors Protest Italian Celebration," *The Chicago Defender*, June 6, 1936.

Anti-fascist internationalist discourse explored how police practices and confrontations with Black civilians in Harlem neighborhoods in the wake of increased pro-Ethiopia activism paralleled the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. On June 13, 1936, Chas Augustine Petioni, an Italian American observer and anti-fascist sympathizer, editorialized in *The Amsterdam News* against the "presence of a police army of occupation." This public argument pointed to how the ongoing war exacerbated existing tensions between Black Harlemites and the New York City police.⁴⁸⁵ According to *The Courier*, New York City Police Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine reasoned the police presence was in reaction to how "Harlem is a volcano" and "TNT" since the Ethiopian war broke out.⁴⁸⁶ The commissioner reiterated that the increased pro-Ethiopia activism caused a volatile environment, and "the police had to protect the Italians from the Negroes, in certain sections of Harlem, and vice versa in other sections." However, the Harlem Committee had a different view than the mayor, who contributed to the "fascist suppression of Harlemites" by packing the community with officers, who "expressed a wanton disregard for the people of Harlem." Furthermore, the Committee pointed out that Mayor Fiorella LaGuardia's actions were indicative of his alleged fascist sympathies that were demonstrated when he "spoke at an Italian fascist meeting directly organized to support Mussolini" where "Tammany and Fusion politicians aided in raising \$900,000 sent to the despoiler of Ethiopia."⁴⁸⁷ An article appearing on June 20, 1936, in *The Defender*, explained the increased police presence as reactionary to how "ever since the apparent defeat of Ethiopia Harlem [was] worked up to a fever pitch over the

⁴⁸⁵ Chas Augustine Petioni, "Mostly False and Dishonest," *The New York Amsterdam News*, June 13, 1936.

⁴⁸⁶ "New York Chief of Police Says Harlem is Explosive," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 13, 1936.

⁴⁸⁷ "New York Chief of Police."

idea.⁴⁸⁸ According to *The Defender*, the pro-Ethiopia and anti-Italian activism of Black Nationalist soapbox orators such as Ira Kemp led Harlemites to become "so aroused over the entry of Italy into Emperor Haile Selassie's country that they changed into a milling mob and wreaked their vengeance on an Italian grocery store and fruit stand nearby." This environment, coupled with a series of unprovoked shootings of Black Harlemites, contributed to the militarization of the police, which was reflected by their positioning a "deadly machine gun manned by several officers" on the rooftop of a building at the intersection of 133rd Street and Lenox Avenue.⁴⁸⁹

Black Newspapers Interrogating Italian-American Fascist Sympathy

Black newspapers interrogated how a ring of fascism existed in the United States, evidenced by how Italian Americans celebrated the alleged conquest. These debates spotlighted how Italian-Americans negotiated Italian nationalism and pride with their American identity. Though numerous Italian Americans were naturalized as U. S. citizens, their naturalization did not result in their acculturation or assimilation. Instead, it resulted in their strong ethnic ties to their ancestral country and fascists in Italy.⁴⁹⁰ *The Courier* revealed the enduring relationship between fascist Italy and Italian Americans. The *Wyandotte Echo* revealed the enduring relationship between Italian-Americans, who existed in a country where they were thought inferior, who believed that Mussolini had finally won Italy a place in the sun as he proclaimed a new Roman Empire. According to the newspaper, a key component of Mussolini's occupation campaign to make Ethiopia "a white man's country" was the pro-fascist mobilization of Italian

⁴⁸⁸ "Machine Gun Trained Harlemites: Fear Rioting," *The Chicago Defender*, June 20, 1936.

⁴⁸⁹ "Machine Gun Trained Harlemites."

⁴⁹⁰ Stephano Luconi, "Fascism and Italian-American Identity Politics," *Italian Americana* 33, no. 1 (Winter 2015), 7.

Community Associations in many American cities. According to the newspaper, these organizations were spaces where members were "impregnated with the vicious Fascist doctrines of war and white supremacy."⁴⁹¹ Readers were warned that this sentiment spoke to how segments of the Italian American community comprised a fascist fifth column. The extent of the involvement of Italian authorities in the affairs of the Italian American community is indicated by the close direction of Mussolini, his Foreign Affairs Minister, and the Italian Ambassador to the U.S. Giacomo de Martin managed and intervened in the political activities of Italian immigrants and Italian American citizens.⁴⁹² Furthermore, this issue was of concern to Black Americans because there were 5,000,000 Italian Americans in the United States, and many of them read Italian newspapers. According to the newspaper, Mussolini's propaganda infiltrated Italian American educational institutions like the "Dante Alighieri schools in America, once controlled by Italian Americans." These schools were transformed into Fascist cells that were "taking orders from Mussolini, and their instructors were "required to wear the same Black Shirt that the oppressors of the Ethiopian war" wore. The American electoral system was compromised since Italian Americans in "Millions vote and some high officials of Italian descent are open supporters of Mussolini's murderous tactics." Black Americans were advised to push back against the influence of Italian fascism, "We can vote against it, we can fight for the return of these alien propagandists to their native land, and we can stop spending our money with them who support this Negrophobic viewpoint."⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ "Mussolini in America," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 5, 1936.

⁴⁹² Robinson, *Fascism and the Intersections of Capitalism*, 98-99.

⁴⁹³ "Mussolini in America."

The Black Press and Its Reporting on Mussolini's Colonization Plan

The war impacted the formation and conceptualization of identities and racial boundaries in Ethiopia. It offered Mussolini the opportunity to carry out social engineering. J.A. Rogers articulated a discourse emphasizing how Italian fascist laws were analogous to American segregation, declaring that the fascists “gather[d] all the worst doctrines of Southern Jim Crowism, Mussolini with his efficiency in oppression, has intensified them in Africa.” *The Courier* was among the few Black newspapers that covered this fascist segregation policy.⁴⁹⁴ Rogers was correct. *The Courier* informed readers that fascist politician Alessandro Lessona, Minister of Italian Africa, created a bureaucratic organization intended to clearly define the relationship between Italians and Ethiopians; the Jim Crow system inspired them.⁴⁹⁵ The plan outlined that “There [was] to be no intermingling between blacks and whites” and that “The status of the white man as conqueror [was] to be upheld with rigorous severity.” Bus services in Addis Ababa, Harrar and Gondar, and other cities were segregated with two sections for whites and natives, segregated living areas were planned, and Mussolini planned to create a secondary education system in Ethiopia based on the same model as American educational institutions established for Black Americans.⁴⁹⁶ The Fascist government in Rome made it a crime for Italians to marry natives in Italian East Africa. *The Monitor* explained how the Vatican's anxiety regarding the preservation "of white Roman Catholics" and "their original spirit which can never be that of the blacks" influenced this policy. Additionally, Fascist officials believed that the sizeable mixed-race population in Italian Eritrean which adjoined Ethiopia, was a “painful sore”

⁴⁹⁴ J. A. Rogers, “Italian Civilization Will Desolate Ethiopia: Oppressor Will Take All Leave Natives Nothing,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 20, 1936.

⁴⁹⁵ “Italy Copies American Color Line in Ethiopia,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 25, 1936.

⁴⁹⁶ “Rome Divides All in Ethiopia.”

for Italy and a source of weakness in a colonial structure.⁴⁹⁷ The alleged conquest of Ethiopia provided Italy an opportunity to restore the national character of Italians through demographic colonization.⁴⁹⁸ Mussolini also envisioned solving Italy's overpopulation by resettling the land-hungry Italian working class in Ethiopia.

According to *The Courier*, Mussolini and fascist officials encouraged white working-class male emigrants to populate Ethiopia and strengthen the colony through an "increase due to natural birth causes which is in line with Mussolini's desires and a factor that is in line with Mussolini's domestic and international policy that "population in power."⁴⁹⁹ According to the *Herald-Tribune*, Italian leaders mandated that most of the male poor and landless emigrants were "peasant boys" who "are either married or bound in engagement vow in their early twenties or late teens." Also, the Fascist government in Rome "made provision to send their girls out with them."⁵⁰⁰ *The Courier* also argued that Italy's resettlement plan was another example of a failed fascist policy because "few Europeans, including Italians have ever cared to settle in Africa" and that even a "pro-Italian newspaper correspondent reported from Djibouti that as soon as the Italian soldiers arrived at Addis Ababa, their first question was when they would leave for home."⁵⁰¹

Mussolini intended to use the occupation and colonization of Ethiopia as an opportunity to construct a progressive colony by extracting Ethiopia's wealth. Mussolini and fascist officials

⁴⁹⁷ "Italy Seeks Racial Purity in New Empire of Ethiopia: Vatican Anxiety," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 9, 1937.

⁴⁹⁸ "Segregation Era Launched in Ethiopia by Fascist to Curb Race Intermingling," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 25, 1936.

⁴⁹⁹ "Mussolini Plans Jim-Crow Regime in Ethiopia: Natives Will Do Work and Whites Will Reap," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 27, 1936.

⁵⁰⁰ "Rome Divides All in Ethiopia."

⁵⁰¹ "Uncensored," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 6, 1936.

saw Ethiopia as an El Dorado that would repay the cost of conquest in a few years by producing gold, oil, and other valuable minerals to foster Italy's imperial enterprise and support its growing domestic population. The Fascists, like their Roman ancestors, focused on building roads to help them reach their "promised land," but the Northern Ethiopian Mountains were an obstacle requiring a lot of engineering skill and energy. However, Italian colonization and exploitation remained slow because the Fascists failed to completely subdue Ethiopian resistance and bring the country under the Fascist administration. *The Tribune* described that under the fascist colonial system, "Ethiopia was divided into zones of industry, production, and habitation." Also, the strict division of labor meant that "natives [would] toil on the large plantations," where they were supervised by "Italian agricultural experts" who were tasked with providing Italy with raw materials and other agricultural products.⁵⁰² Fascist officials counterbalanced this policy by claiming that "the Abyssinian stands or living will be raised and on their plantations, natives [would] be given means to use plows and other agricultural implements under the guidance of Italian agricultural experts."⁵⁰³ Though Fascist colonial officials expressed their concern about Ethiopia's use of slave labor, they enforced a colonial economic regime only concerned with "brawn and no brains" as they forced Ethiopians to labor to meet capitalist demands.⁵⁰⁴ According to Rogers, Ethiopians in the fascist-occupied port city of Massawa labored in brutal slave-like conditions in "the principal business of the evaporation of salt" as they routinely were "handling this very heavy commodity in a temperature of from 115 to 130 degrees in the shade is perhaps the hardest and most life-shortening work in existence."⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² "Segregation Era Launched."

⁵⁰³ "Segregation Era Launched."

⁵⁰⁴ "Segregation Era Launched."

⁵⁰⁵ "Segregation Era Launched."

The Black Press and Reporting on the Course of the War

The Courier's publisher Robert Vann tried to bolster the Black public's support of the Ethiopian cause by sending another reporter to the Ethiopian Front to provide first-hand coverage of the occupation. *The Courier's* R. W. Merguson, the newspaper's Paris correspondent, reported on the 1936 Summer Olympics of *The Courier*. Robert Vann, hired to report on the occupation to keep the Black public's interest in the war, arrived in Ethiopia in November 1936. *The Courier* dramatized his travel to Ethiopia by describing how he was entering into a country, which was "the wildest in the world" and that when he arrived, he would be the "Only war correspondent in the world to give *The Courier* readers the "other side" of the story."⁵⁰⁶ Upon his arrival, he reported that "Bloody and battered Ethiopia is still fighting back with her back..., but with a never die spirit which is compelling proof that Italy will never conquer that country until the last man is dead!" In an early dispatch, he relayed to readers that he received first-hand information about how "three Italian planes" were captured and the "death of 33 Italians" as he emphasized that "Ethiopia is not conquered."⁵⁰⁷ As Ethiopians fought back the invaders, Merguson observed that "Ethiopia is still alive" and the "national spirit is as conscious and developed as before" as Ethiopian boys expressed great confidence in their country and that right and justice would prevail.

The white mainstream press offered reports on the Italian occupation that contradicted the Black press's claims of widespread Ethiopian resistance. *The Times* disputed claims that Ethiopian warriors were over-running the Italian fascists as it proclaimed that the "Ethiopian

⁵⁰⁶ "Merguson near Back Door of Gore, Ethiopian Capital," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 7, 1936.

⁵⁰⁷ R. W. Merguson, "Ethiopia Still Fights!" Merguson: Courier Writer Sends Word from Inside," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 26, 1936.

warriors, though they fought bravely and well as long as they thought they had a chance against Italy, have either thrown away their weapons and returned to their villages.” Furthermore, the resistance that Black newspapers reported was only minimal, according to the newspaper, and attributed to small groups of brigands.⁵⁰⁸ According to the paper, the resistance was not politically motivated but a consequence of Ethiopian men's warrior tradition and disdain for working in occupations that they deemed as reserved for women and the enslaved.⁵⁰⁹ Accordingly, *The Herald Tribune*, a consistent foe of the Ethiopian cause, reported positively on iron fascists' performance and reception, countering Black journalists' descriptions of wartime Ethiopia.

Black newspapers pushed back against these claims of Ethiopian capitulation to fascist rule. On November 14, 1936, *The Philadelphia Tribune* reprinted an extensive statement from *The New Times and Ethiopia News* where the exiled emperor warned against believing the claims of Ethiopian concession to Italian colonial authority. He asserted, “a warning to the World against the erroneous and misleading stories circulated about Ethiopia by fascist Italy.”⁵¹⁰ The emperor claimed that “more than two-thirds of the Empire remain inviolate” to counteract how Italian propaganda tried to “convince people that the Ethiopian Government no longer exists and I, myself, am resigned to that state of affairs.” The emperor reassured his supporters that “the provisional government is in control of Western Ethiopia.”⁵¹¹ *The Herald-Tribune* countered Black newspapers' claims. The newspaper, which was sympathetic to Mussolini, may have exaggerated how the Ethiopians welcomed the fascists. *The Herald-Tribune* described how

⁵⁰⁸ “Ethiopian Bandits.”

⁵⁰⁹ “Ethiopian Bandits.”

⁵¹⁰ Floyd J. Calvin, “Battle Goes Ahead, Haile Selassie Says,” *New York Amsterdam News*, November 14, 1936.

⁵¹¹ Calvin, “Battle Goes Ahead.”

Italian troops received a warm welcome from the people when they entered Gore. As troops entered that city, according to the newspaper, they "found no signs of an organized government in this part of the country" and "Italian airplanes constantly patrol[ed] the country, and the pilots report[ed] there [were] no gatherings of warriors."⁵¹² The newspaper also claimed that Italian troops did not meet resistance and that everywhere "the troops were hailed by the people as liberators."⁵¹³

Critiques of American Democratic Politics' Relationship to Fascism

Italy's invasion and occupation of Ethiopia presented the Black journalists with the opportunity to produce a liberal anti-fascist public discourse educating readers about democratic contradictions in American politics. Discussions concerning the fascist occupation of Ethiopia also spilled over into the 1936 presidential contest where Mussolini sympathizer and newspaper publisher, William Randolph Hearst, ran for president with Kansas's Governor Alfred M. Landon on the Republican Liberty ticket. This campaign brought how fascist elements were operating in the United States under American democratic institutions. *The Tribune* reprinted excerpts of a speech delivered by James W. Ford, Communist candidate for Vice President, where he warned an audience that "Those who curtail the civil liberties of citizens must be driven out of public office." Ford linked how Black America's civil liberties were being infringed upon with "Ethiopia's condition," which he saw as "a warning that colored people cannot afford to be indifferent to the growth of fascism."⁵¹⁴ The journalist and historian J. A. Rogers, in a similar fashion, warned Black readers that they should not be fooled by the Landon and Hearst's

⁵¹² Sonia Tomara, "Italians Occupy Gore, Ethiopia's Second Capital," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 28, 1936.

⁵¹³ "Italians Occupy Gore."

⁵¹⁴ "Fascism vs. Democracy Is Campaign Issue," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 13, 1936.

commitment to protecting democracy because Landon was "hitched up" with "Hearst, the boon companion of Hitler and Mussolini."⁵¹⁵

The American Communist Party (CPUSA) assailed how the United States was at a crossroads as it could move on the "road to progress and democracy" or "down the bloody path of reaction, Fascism and war."⁵¹⁶ Additionally, The CPUSA exposed the Hearst-Liberty League's plot to bring Fascism to the United States. *The Amsterdam News* reprinted excerpts from a speech by James W. Ford, Communist candidate for Vice President, warned his audience that the "Hearst-Liberty League Landon combination challenges our democratic institutions" and "the colored people have cause to be alarmed at the sinister threat from these Fascist-minded men." The ticket demonstrated its fascist tendencies, according to Ford, when Black Republican delegates were Jim-crowded at Landon's nomination acceptance ceremonies. This discriminatory treatment, according to Ford, meant the Landon-Hearst ticket deserved nothing but contempt because it was "the greatest danger to those "elementary rights of human beings." Ford warned Black people to see past the "the tricks of capitalist politicians" who "do not strive to win those elementary rights of human beings."⁵¹⁷ This presidential ticket spelled doom for Black people, according to Ford, who urged that lambasted they "should join to defeat the pro-fascist tool" of the Hearst-Landon presidential ticket" because if they came to power, it would be the "butt of the pro-fascist forces of discrimination and race hatred."⁵¹⁸ *The Courier*, which had a long-standing contentious relationship with Hearst, revealed that "in the forefront of the Fascists" was "that

⁵¹⁵ J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Reveals Political Stupidity of Foreign Diplomats," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 31, 1936.

⁵¹⁶ "Browder Calls for Alliances to Bar Fascism," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 3, 1936.

⁵¹⁷ "Vote G.O.P. and Rope Goes on Necks, Ford Asserts to Millions," *The New York Amsterdam News*, September 26, 1936.

⁵¹⁸ "For Negro Rights," *The Daily Worker*, August 8, 1936.

high priest and spokesman of reactions and race prejudice William Randolph Hearst" whose "newspaper have done more to hamper the growth of liberalism in this country than any other single agency."⁵¹⁹ Black people's only hope in fighting against these reactionary forces was by "building up a mighty united movement of the colored population" and throwing their support behind the Communist Party.⁵²⁰

Denouncement of Garveyite Black Nationalism

Garveyite Black Nationalism was another ideology under the Black press's editorial chopping block. Garvey and the Black American mainstream press continued their antagonistic relationship because of the Black Nationalist leader's continued attacks against Emperor Haile Selassie. In a provocative editorial in *The Black Man*, Garvey questioned Selassie's commitment to Black solidarity and Pan-Africanism. He asserted, "Selassie will go down as a great coward who ran away from his country to save his skin" and that the emperor "was a man of limited intellectual calibre" and "weak political character" unlike the "racial, patriotic character of the late Menelik" since Selassie, according to him "surrendered himself to the white wolves of Europe."⁵²¹ He questioned Selassie's commitment to Pan-Africanism, and he wrote in *The Washington Tribune* that "Ethiopian held themselves to be separate and distinct from the Negro race" and "the Amharic race felt they were descended from a superior race" and "cared nothing about American Negroes." Reacting to how the Black American press praised Selassie's

⁵¹⁹ "Roosevelt and the Fascists," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 3, 1936.

⁵²⁰ "Vote G.O.P."

⁵²¹ Marcus Garvey, "The Failure of Haile Selassie as Emperor," *The Black Man* (March/April 1937), 24. The John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Collection, Special Collections & Archives, Fisk University Library, Nashville, TN.

diplomacy, he asserted the emperor "knows nothing about European diplomacy" and was interested in no one else but himself and his family."⁵²²

The Afro-American pilloried Garvey asserting his jealousy of Selassie because it was rumored that he "refused to meet with the colored delegations when he arrived in London."⁵²³

Dr. Maleku Bayen, in a January 1937 editorial in the multi-racial Ethiopian World Federation's (EWF) official newspaper *The Voice of Ethiopia*, lambasted Garvey as a "militant usurper" who was guilty of engaging in actions that were counterproductive to "race emancipation."⁵²⁴

Questioning Garvey's motives, he reasoned that Garvey was motivated by greed and imperial ambitions.⁵²⁵ The Black mainstream press also attacked Garvey because he concluded that the Ethiopian cause was lost. Powell related how Garvey's questioning of Selassie showed his disdain for how he superseded him as the new "sincere and sympathetic" leader that would bring the redemption of Africa.⁵²⁶ Floyd J. Calvin asserted that Garvey's defeatist attitude also indicated how his "Black Legion is no longer necessary" since it did not see the virtue of resisting the fascist invaders.⁵²⁷

Black journalists and readers also criticized Garveyism as a fascistic political philosophy that undermined Black liberation and Ethiopian independence. In a letter to the editor of *The*

⁵²² Marcus Garvey, "Abyssinia's War and what comes next," *Washington Tribune*, January 22, 1937.

⁵²³ "Garvey Issues Rumor against Haile-Bayen" *The Baltimore Afro-American*, March 13, 1937.

⁵²⁴ Maleku Bayen, "Is Marcus Garvey Faithful to Himself?" *The Voice of Ethiopia* 1, no. 1 (January 1937) in "Haile Selassie News Clippings, News Releases, and Pamphlets," January 1-December 1966, Claude Barnett Papers, 1918-1967, Series 2, Subseries 2; Topical Files Grouped Geographically by Continent and Nation.

⁵²⁵ Bayen, "Is Marcus Garvey Faithful to Himself?"

⁵²⁶ Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. "Soapbox: Decline of A Great Leader," *The New York Amsterdam News*, January 30, 1937.

⁵²⁷ Calvin, "Around the World."

Amsterdam News, Leon Bell, a reader from Harlem, concluded that Black Nationalism was a fallacious theory that would mean "mass suicide" for Black people rather than the gains of economic, social, and political independence."⁵²⁸ Furthermore, Bell bitterly opposed Black Nationalism because "nationalism in any country leads to Fascism and a dictatorship."⁵²⁹ On June 5, 1937, *The Courier's* George Schuyler agreed as he expressed that "our black segregationists who mouth nonsense about group economy and voluntary segregation" are "push[ing] him farther away from other Americans and so make his extermination easier."⁵³⁰ Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. led the charge against Black Nationalism as he waged a verbal battle against Garvey in his weekly column, "Soapbox" in *The Amsterdam News*. Powell, who saw the efficacy in international organizing, lambasted Garveyism as outdated because of its emphasis on race separatism. On January 2, 1937, Powell advised Black readers that "The one thing we should drop as we greet the New Year is the spirit of black nationalism."⁵³¹ He observed that Garveyism outlived its usefulness because it was "the mother of fascism" since it called for "boycotting all whites, the formation of all-Black labor organizations, the creation of all-Black schools and a new Black Christianity." Anti-fascist internationalism, according to Powell, was the future as he concluded that "our salvation is in a world brotherhood of all the oppressed—and that is the majority."⁵³² African redemption, according to Powell, could only be accomplished

⁵²⁸ Leon Bell, "Black Nationalism, Mass Suicide," *The New York Amsterdam News*, March 27, 1937.

⁵²⁹ Leon Bell, "Nationalism and Fascism," *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 13, 1937.

⁵³⁰ George Schuyler, "View and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 5, 1937.

⁵³¹ Adam Clayton Powell, "Soapbox: Black Nationalism is Out; Danger in the Wrong Hands Product of Fascism," *The New York Amsterdam News*, January 2, 1937.

⁵³² Powell, "Soapbox: Black Nationalism is out."

through internationalism, which included “the wretched of the earth rise[ing] up together” in the fight for liberty.⁵³³

Critiquing Ethiopian National Unity

The continued existence of Ethiopian national unity was a source of public debate within Black newspapers because it threatened the ability of Ethiopia to defend itself against fascist aggression. One of the lowest points of the war effort was when Emperor Haile Selassie fired Brigadier-General Ras Gestachaw, commander of the Ethiopian forces in the Danakil desert during the climax of the war, for selling Ethiopian secrets to the Italians.⁵³⁴ On December 5, 1936, *The Defender* reported how powerful tribal chieftains such as Ras Gugsa, the emperor's son-in-law and former commander, defected to the Italian side. The Black press vilified Gugsa as a Judas because he defected to the fascists, which was a "severe blow to the Ethiopian cause as it affected the morale of natives who might have remained faithful to the last."⁵³⁵ Mussolini's reliance on a fascistic cinema reveals his awareness of the power of imperial visual propaganda to buttress fascist rule in Ethiopia. The Fascists also relied on Fascist cinema to encourage defection by depicting Italy's occupation provided Ethiopians with progress and civilization. *The Cleveland Call and Post's* Randolph Dunbar described how “50 motion picture theatres in Ethiopia [were] already showing Fascist films as part of the propaganda drive to win native support” and that “Propaganda is having a considerable effect among the non-Amharic majority

⁵³³ Adam Clayton Powell. “Soapbox: Decline of a Great Leader,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, January 30, 1937.

⁵³⁴ “Selassie Fires Getoutchaou for Treason,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 5, 1936.

⁵³⁵ “Ridicule Gugsa as Puppet King of Ethiopians,” *The Chicago Defender*, November 2, 1935.

of the population, but very little among the genuine Ethiopians.”⁵³⁶ Despite this assertion, Italian colonial cinema did not significantly impact Italian cinematographers and did not subtitle the films they showed in the colonies. The uncomprehending native specter routinely misunderstood the context resulting in their disdain for the fascist rule.⁵³⁷ Italian columns continued to push westwards toward the Sudanese border, the Ethiopian capital at Gore, and southward toward the Kenya frontier. They hoped to extend their influence into western Ethiopia, which was reputed to be rich in mineral resources and fertile land.⁵³⁸

J. A. Rogers, an earlier staunch defender of Ethiopian unity, shifted his position in the face of reports of internal strife. When the war broke out, he expressed confidence in Ethiopian national unity. On June 13, 1936, *The Pittsburgh Courier* recounted that during a speech, “What I Saw in Ethiopia,” delivered at Bethel A. M. E. Church in Detroit, he acknowledged that different political factions threatened Ethiopia’s national unity. According to him, those individuals like Ras Gugsu and other Ethiopians plotting against the Ethiopian cause were examples of “that treacherous group who sell out their fellowmen for personal gain.”⁵³⁹ Rogers, stopping short of admitting defeat, asserted these types of acts of disloyalty demonstrated that “Italians did not really win the war. Rebellion among Ethiopians was the cause.”⁵⁴⁰ Though Rogers never expressed his sympathies with one specific faction, he pointed to how Ethiopian nationalists wanted an “Ethiopia for Ethiopians” to expel all white men from Ethiopia. The

⁵³⁶ Randolph Dunbar, “Reveals Mussolini’s Plans for African Empire,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, November 4, 1937.

⁵³⁷ Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism’s Empire Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015), 44.

⁵³⁸ “Italy Continues War against Ethiopians,” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1936.

⁵³⁹ S.T. Holland, “J.A. Rogers Thrills Capacity Crowd: Talks on What I Saw in Ethiopia,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 13, 1936.

⁵⁴⁰ “Italy Continues War against Ethiopians,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 13, 1936.

emperor and his supporters, on the other hand, continued to express their commitment to liberal values and his white advisors as he believed that they, along with the League of Nations, were "coming to the rescue sooner or later."⁵⁴¹ Amid these debates, on December 3, 1936, the Italian government announced the capture of Gore, the headquarters of Haile Selassie's new government."⁵⁴² Italian columns continued to push westwards toward the Sudanese border, to Gore, and southward toward the Kenya frontier. They hoped to extend their influence into western Ethiopia, which was reputed to be rich in mineral resources and fertile land.⁵⁴³

The Continuance of Pro-Ethiopia Organizing

Considering these reports, *The Courier* enlisted a fundraising campaign in conjunction with the Ethiopian Consul General John Shaw, responsible for sending the funds to the emperor. The newspaper printed the contributors' names as part of its "Honor Roll" to encourage readers to donate. Similarly, *The Amsterdam News*, on October 3, 1936, publicized that Dr. Maleku E. Bayen, the emperor's physician and unofficial representative in the United States, continued his mission of trying to maintain the bonds of solidarity between Ethiopia and Black Americans. Bayen routinely carried a signed letter from the emperor "expressing his profound greetings and gratitude to the Ethiopian people for the help given to them. In December 1936, he traveled to the United States on a speaking tour to win moral and financial support for continuing the Ethiopian liberation struggle."⁵⁴⁴ The emperor expressed that he needed his Black American allies to aid because Ethiopia needed medical supplies to help Ethiopian refugees wounded by the fascist campaign of terror. *The Amsterdam News* described Bayen dressed in his Ethiopian

⁵⁴¹ "Italy Continues War against Ethiopians."

⁵⁴² "Ridicule Gugsa."

⁵⁴³ "Italy Continues War against Ethiopians," *The New York Times*, November 8, 1936.

⁵⁴⁴ "Ethiopia Will Never Surrender Selassie's Cousin Declares Here as 2,000 Cheer Him," *The New York Amsterdam News*, October 3, 1936.

royal robes delivering his first public speech at Rockland Palace in Harlem before a cheering crowd of 2,000 people at a mass meeting sponsored by the United Aid of Ethiopia and Peoples of African Descent.⁵⁴⁵ On December 3, 1936, Haile Selassie's transatlantic radio speech from London kicked off the American Souvenir Stamp drive fundraising campaign in Harlem to aid Ethiopia. This event was the premier fundraising campaign initiated by Bayen as the Haile Selassie souvenir stamp drive. According to *The Amsterdam News*, these stamps were purchased by 1,600 merchants in Harlem merchants to be distributed to consumers who made purchases of ten cents or more.⁵⁴⁶ On December 26, 1936, the newspaper's columnist Vivian Thomas optimistically explained that if "men and women, of all walks of life.... could become stamp conscious and demand stamps with every purchase, Harlem alone could save Ethiopia."⁵⁴⁷

Bayen routinely used his speeches to celebrate Haile Selassie's martial leadership on the battlefield, excite Black American crowds and demonstrate how Selassie differed from Mussolini, who only dictated orders to his fascist troops from Rome. When he approached the podium, Bayen asserted, "We will never give up," as he related how he had:

Seen Haile Selassie at the front with his men actually fighting—burning up Italian airplanes. I have seen him side by side in the trenches operating machine guns. I myself have been in the trenches right behind His Majesty, kit in one hand and operating table at my side ready to give him first aid the moment he was shot.

Selassie was probably on the battlefield to galvanize Ethiopian soldiers; however, he may not have led them into battle or fought in the trenches. Selassie traveled around the country; he used a doppelganger to divert attention in battle and other public appearances. It is unlikely that the Black public was unaware of this. However, the description of the emperor's leadership on the

⁵⁴⁵ "Ethiopia Will Never Surrender."

⁵⁴⁶ "Aid from U. S. Helps Keep Battle Going, Selassie Asserts," *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 5, 1936.

⁵⁴⁷ "Get Ethiopia Stamps, Aid Campaign," *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 26, 1936.

battlefield inspired one man speaking from the floor to propose a resolution “that was unanimously passed that each person present should donate two days’ pay for the freedom of Ethiopia.” Bayen underscored Ethiopia’s need for money to continue its liberation struggle as he relied on Pan-African rhetoric speaking to black patriotic identification with Ethiopia as a homeland. He reminded Black Americans that “Ethiopia is not begging, She is proud” and that they “were not doing anything for [him] or Ethiopia when [they] fulfill their pledge” but were “only fulfilling an obligation.”⁵⁴⁸ On November 14, 1936, *The Amsterdam News* reported that Mrs. Marie Campbell organized the Ethiopian War Mothers to help Ethiopian refugees; she presented Bayen with her wedding bands.⁵⁴⁹ These efforts were too little too late for Ethiopia. By December 3, 1936, the Italian government announced the capture of Gore, the headquarters of Haile Selassie’s new government.

Critiques of Fascist Violence

Although the Black publicists and pro-Ethiopian organizations widely condemned fascist atrocities, they went unnoticed by the League of Nations. Black publicists expressed anti-fascist critiques in reaction to the escalating fighting and atrocities committed by Italian soldiers and Askari colonial soldiers. On September 6, 1936, *The Chicago Defender* reported that Italians were aware that their occupation of Ethiopia would not be easy. Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, Viceroy of Ethiopia, who was in supreme command of the Italian colonial forces in Ethiopia, was aware that "unless we are able to throw into affray all of the available forces and resources at our command the unsubdued natives will make it quite uncomfortable for us in this campaign." From September 1936 to December 1937, Black newspapers publicized how

⁵⁴⁸ “Ethiopia Will Never Surrender.”

⁵⁴⁹ “Gold Wedding Rings not too Much for Ethiopia, Donor Says: Mrs. Marie Campbell also Organizes War Mothers,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 14, 1936.

Graziani directed a deluge of atrocities during his attempt to pacify the Ethiopian natives who were in constant rebellion against the Fascist presence.⁵⁵⁰ On September 24, 1936, *The Amsterdam News* printed an interview with a Canadian and former resident of Addis Ababa, Miss Freda Collins. She described how the Italians were conducting a murderous reign of terror in Addis Ababa and other Ethiopian towns in the Italian-occupied territories. According to her, "All Abyssinians suspected of intrigues are put against a wall and shot;" however, she expressed that the Ethiopian resistance continued as "Fighting still goes on. Before the collapse of Addis Ababa, many Abyssinians buried arms and ammunition outside the town. They dug up and used [d] to attack."⁵⁵¹

Black publicists articulated an anti-fascist discourse criticizing the brutalities and mass murder of the fascists centered on the actions of Viceroy Rodolfo Graziani in the name of building the Italian empire. Graziani's brutalities were not widely reported in the white mainstream press, which relied on press reports from Italian news services that censored news reflecting negatively on the fascists. With that said, Graziani attempted to consolidate the fascist empire in Ethiopia through brutal force to counter Ethiopian resistance.⁵⁵² *The Plain Dealer's* Floyd J. Calvin provided graphic details of atrocities based on reports by London's *New Times and Ethiopia News* edited by the British anti-fascist Sylvia A. Pankhurst. He described that since the Italian invasion and fall of Addis Ababa, no Ethiopian woman was safe. Italian soldiers "indulged in abusing women and young girls... ten or twelve Italian soldiers would get hold of any Ethiopian woman and abuse her in turn in such a way that many maidens died as a result."

⁵⁵⁰ "Italian Forces Invade Western Ethiopia."

⁵⁵¹ "Terror Reign Strikes at Ethiopia," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 26, 1936.

⁵⁵² Alberto Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London: Zed Books, 1985), 74.

Additionally, the Italians attempted to prevent Ethiopian plots against their authority by asserting that "no two Ethiopians are allowed to walk in the streets together" and if "any two or three-person are seen together, the Italian Carabinieri go to their homes at nightfall and arrest them while they are sleep."⁵⁵³ *The Courier's* R. W. Merguson also exposed how Italian officials "found only two children and some old men in the village. They took these two children and nailed them to a tree by driving spikes through their heads!" Merguson sarcastically concluded that "this is Italian civilization in the 20th century."⁵⁵⁴

The brutal onslaught of fascist colonial violence during the Addis Ababa Massacre served as a prelude to World War II's martial confrontations and genocide.⁵⁵⁵ On February 19, 1937, two members of the Ethiopian urban resistance threw two grenades in an attempt to assassinate Graziani. However, Graziani was only wounded.⁵⁵⁶ This assassination attempt stemmed from how Graziani adopted brutalities such as "smashing down native towns and indiscriminately slaughtering the populace" to solidify his government and impose Italian civilization in Ethiopia.⁵⁵⁷ Mussolini used the attempt as an opportunity to execute a standing order for the mass liquidation of Ethiopian dissidents. Graziani, in turn, perpetrated genocide by issuing the order to "Avenge me! Kill them all!" and "Let no one of this cursed race escape!" Up to 30,000 troops, including Black shirt militia and Eritrean Askaris troops garrisoned in the capital,

⁵⁵³ "Atrocities in Ethiopia," *The Plaindealer*, December 18, 1936.

⁵⁵⁴ Merguson, "Ethiopia Still Fights!"

⁵⁵⁵ The Ethiopian calendar refers to the Addis Ababa Massacre as the Yekat 12 massacre.

⁵⁵⁶ "Ask Roosevelt to Halt Ethiopian Massacre: 1,400 Killed as Italy Hits at Patriots," *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 27, 1937; "More Blood Flows in Ethiopia," *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 4, 1937.

⁵⁵⁷ "Civilizing Ethiopia," *New York Herald Tribune*, February 25, 1937.

received the order.⁵⁵⁸ “Firing squads were thrown into action,” according to *The Defender*, as native colonial troops and Italian troops tore into various sections of the city during the bloody three-day blood purge in Addis Ababa. Up to 2,000 native suspects and all the Ethiopian intellectuals, the Italians could get their hands on, were rounded up and shot after perfunctory interrogations.⁵⁵⁹

The Addis Ababa Massacre marked the almost total liquidation of the intellectual component of the Resistance as well as large numbers of Ethiopian men, women, and children.⁵⁶⁰ Among the victims were the two English-trained sons of Dr. Warneh C. Martin, Ethiopian minister to London, who traveled to Ethiopia to fight for their country.⁵⁶¹ The Massacre also resulted in the death of 7,000 men, women, and children. *The Amsterdam News* related how “the streets were strewn with dead bodies” and that “one could see fascists chaining poor men to trucks and amusing themselves by dragging them along from one part of town to the other until their bodies fell to pieces.” According to the newspaper, other fascist soldiers entertained themselves by “setting fires to the houses” and then “waiting for the inhabitants to be driven out by the fire” so they could kill them with “daggers, bayonets, hand grenades, cudgels, stones and at times guns.”⁵⁶² Similarly, *The Courier* explained that when Ethiopian citizens tried to escape or hide from the brutalities, “the Italians brought flamethrowers and tins of gasoline into play, to

⁵⁵⁸ “Calvin’s Newspaper Service, Truth Revealed on Why Graziani Was Bombed!” *Wyandotte Echo*, May 14, 1937; “Il Duce Orders the Slaughter of All Uprising Suspects,” *The Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1937.

⁵⁵⁹ Bahru Zewde, “The Ethiopian Intelligentsia and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, no. 2 (1993): 282.

⁵⁶⁰ Zewde, “Ethiopian Intelligentsia.”

⁵⁶¹ “Italians Murdered Dr. Martin’s 2 Sons in Addis Ababa Massacre,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 3, 1937.

⁵⁶² “Blood Purge for Ethiopia was Hateful,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, April 24, 1937.

set fire to huts and murdered the inmates when they tried to flee from their burning homes.”⁵⁶³

According to *The Monitor*, Mussolini justified these atrocities as he felt "strongly that Italian rule over the recently conquered territory will never be firmly established if Italy gave signs of weakness and the natives were not sufficiently impressed by Italy's might."⁵⁶⁴ Faye Jackson, *The Courier's* London correspondent, reprinted excerpts of speeches from British workers' union leaders, Socialists and Communists "set much of the blame on Great Britain's shoulders for its non-intervention policy" that "left a trail of blood and vandalism worse than the Congo outrages." This policy observed by Great Britain and other imperialist nations was due to "the fear in the hearts of white imperialists that creates the brutalities against their black fellow men."⁵⁶⁵

Before the Nazi genocide, Graziani's reprisals and mass executions against Ethiopian Patriots and defenseless women and children led liberal anti-fascists to critique how the failure of Roosevelt to condemn the violence publicly would undermine America's democratic foundation. *The Amsterdam News* called on President Roosevelt to demonstrate his commitment to anti-fascism by coming out to protest the wholesale slaughtering of Ethiopian natives in revenge for the assassination attempt. On February 27, 1937, the newspaper publicized how the United Aid for People of African Descent (UAPAD) held a mass meeting where attendees agreed to petition Roosevelt to lend his aid in the protest. Reverend William Lloyd Imes, a pastor of St. James Presbyterian Church and president of the United Aid for People and *The Amsterdam News*'

⁵⁶³ "Italians Murder Thousands in Revenge for Wounding Graziani," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 13, 1937.

⁵⁶⁴ "Italy's Methods in Ethiopia: Economic Monopoly Planned: Stirring Trouble?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 5, 1937.

⁵⁶⁵ Fay M. Jackson, Trail of Blood, Vandalism In Wake of "Rape of Ethiopia," Britishers Told: European Rulers Blamed," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 17, 1937.

editor Dr. P.M.H Savory along with other officials of the organization, sent telegrams to President Roosevelt protesting the wholesale slaughter of more than 1,400 Ethiopians as reprisals for the bombing in Addis Ababa. *The Courier* also printed excerpts from the telegram sent to Roosevelt by officials of the UAPAD protesting, "The continued provocation of colored peoples is a menace to world peace."⁵⁶⁶ *The Amsterdam News* printed "A Litany for Ethiopia in Her Crucifixion," composed by Imes, who believed that the terrible atrocities committed against the loyal and patriotic citizens would be avenged, as he wrote:

Oh God of justice, who knowest the hypocrisies of many both at home and abroad, and who waitest until the cup of their iniquities shall be full if they still reject Thee and hate their fellowmen,
Though shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.⁵⁶⁷

R. W. Merguson continued to rally readers by emphasizing that Italian fascists were on the defensive and "it is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the war is NOT over; that Italy's victory is NOT complete; that the Fascist position in East Africa is NOT secure." Though Ethiopians were being slaughtered in mass by the fascists, he reminded readers that the Addis Ababa Massacre was an example of how the "Italians must indeed be jittery" because Italy has "tackled more than she can handle even though using the most modern and approved methods of gang murder and led by a black-shirted fanatic."⁵⁶⁸ On December 11, 1937, Italy withdrew from the League of Nations, which Mussolini considered a hindrance to his fascist revolution. Following this move, Mussolini also removed Marshal Rodolfo Graziani as Viceroy and replaced him with the Duke of Acosta, King Victor Emmanuel's cousin and not a member of the

⁵⁶⁶ "Mass Executions in Ethiopia are Protested" Telegrams Say Action Is Menace to World Peace," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 6, 1937.

⁵⁶⁷ William Lloyd Imes, "For Ethiopia in her Crucifixion," *The New York Amsterdam News*, March 6, 1937.

⁵⁶⁸ R. W. Merguson, "Ethiopia Down but not Out," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 20, 1937.

Fascist Party. Graziani's removal, according to *The Amsterdam News*, was the recognition that "the need in Ethiopia" was "for an administration that will pacify the natives without resort to bullets, and a policy of conciliation that will grant a larger measure of freedom to the natives without interference from Rome."⁵⁶⁹ Furthermore, an unsigned editorial in *The Courier* pointed to how, "Yes, Mr. Mussolini has hit a snag."⁵⁷⁰ *The Times*, on the other hand, interpreted Mussolini "to dispense with the services of the two-fisted colonial campaigner" as evidence that "the complete subjugation of Ethiopia is well on its way."⁵⁷¹

The Vatican's silence on Italy's brutal Fascist campaign led journalists to articulate a Christian internationalist discourse criticizing the Pope's promotion of fascist ideology at the expense of Christian morality. On March 20, 1937, Robert Abbott, editor of *The Defender*, penned an editorial titled, "Mussolini, An Outlaw?" It criticized how "The Pope at Rome has blessed this mass murder and robbery" that was authorized by "Mussolini, that savage monster and an international outlaw."⁵⁷² Pope Pius XI's failure to condemn Mussolini's barbarity in Ethiopia represents his policy of clerical fascism or support of Mussolini. On May 8, 1937, *The Amsterdam News* revealed how the Roman Catholic Church approved of Mussolini's occupation of Ethiopia and was "cashing in" since the fascist government approved the sending of Catholic missionaries to Ethiopia to facilitate the conversion of Ethiopian Christians to Roman Catholicism.⁵⁷³ The liberal anti-fascist and cleric Adam Clayton Powell denounced Mussolini's

⁵⁶⁹ "Fascists Find Plans Failing With Ethiopia," *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 4, 1937.

⁵⁷⁰ "A Snag in Ethiopia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, November 13, 1937.

⁵⁷¹ Arnaldo Cortesi, "Mussolini to Rule Colonial Affairs," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1937.

⁵⁷² Castine A. Davis, "What the People Say: Mussolini, an Outlaw?" *The Chicago Defender*, March 20, 1937.

⁵⁷³ "Catholicism Makes Grab at Ethiopia," *The New York Amsterdam News*, May 8, 1937.

fascist crusade as a brazen infringement on the freedom of religion, a core value of democracy. He advised “awakened Catholics” to follow the path of truth regardless of the voice of the Vatican while questioning, “What did the priests of the Church say at the confessional to the Italian citizens of Addis Ababa, who in cold bold, slaughtered 3,000 civilians of that capital three weeks ago?”⁵⁷⁴ *The Defender*’s Metz T. P. Lochard, reduced the Pope to a “hypocrite in a scarlet hat and black robe” and a “prince of morally and spiritually defunct church” since he was silent “when Mussolini ordered the slaughtering of six thousand men, women [,] and children as reprisal for a couple of ill-aimed hand grenades hurled at Graziani in Addis Ababa.”⁵⁷⁵

Black journalists scrutinized the Vatican’s politicization of religion and its espousal of clerical fascism shaping fascist colonial racism. The Pope's policy of clerical fascism and its "shameless support" of Mussolini stemmed from promises that the Roman Catholic Church would be given the exclusive right to proselytize in Ethiopia. The dictator relied on the Pope to whip up Catholic support for his regime, providing much-needed moral legitimacy.⁵⁷⁶ Mussolini and the Vatican also used the Ethiopian War to contest the influence of foreign resident Protestant missionaries in Ethiopia. Every Italian soldier bound for Ethiopia was given a collection of prayers known as "Soldier Pray" that included prayers directly to God and the Fatherland. *The Cleveland Call and Post*’s leftist journalist Frank Marshall expressed his condemnation of the Pope’s silence as “a continuation of the policy of non-interference with Mussolini’s banditry in East Africa which drew his praise after Addis Ababa had fallen.”⁵⁷⁷ The

⁵⁷⁴ “Catholicism Makes Grab.”

⁵⁷⁵ Lochard, “Panorama of World News,” October 24, 1936.

⁵⁷⁶ David I. Kertzer, *The Pope, and Mussolini: The Secret History of Pius XI and the Rise of Fascism in Europe* (New York: Random House, 2014), 550.

⁵⁷⁷ Frank Marshall, “The World in Review: Fascist Civilization Progresses,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, March 18, 1937.

Vatican forced the Swedish and Swiss missionaries, who spent more than fifty years in Ethiopia doing educational and mission work, to leave the country.⁵⁷⁸ Fascist officials replaced them with Catholic missionaries who taught in government-supervised schools for colonial subjects tasked with educating Ethiopian children to become obedient Italian subjects.⁵⁷⁹ After banishing Swedish, Swiss, and American missionaries, the Pope's "first move will be to destroy the Coptic Church and convert Ethiopians to Christianity although most of them are already Christians."⁵⁸⁰ *The Courier* told readers that this was a "perfect arrangement—except for the Ethiopians."⁵⁸¹

The Roman Catholic Church's endorsement of Mussolini's fascist imperial program was linked to a long-standing animosity towards Ethiopia when Menelik II defeated Italy at the Battle of Adowa in 1896 and took the Coptic Church out of Ethiopia's jurisdiction.⁵⁸² In other words, the Ethiopian Coptic Church, the oldest Christian Church in the world, represented the longstanding resistance of Ethiopia to Italian domination and the spiritual authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The Vatican avenged its earlier spiritual defeat in Ethiopia by taking advantage of how fascists wanted to dissolve the Ethiopian Coptic Church. Archbishop Castellani of Rhodes was named the Papal Nuncio in Addis Ababa and charged with directing all Italian missionaries and members of the Ethiopian College.⁵⁸³ The Pope's naming of Cardinal Castellani as head of the Ethiopian mission signifies how the destruction of Ethiopian religious and cultural

⁵⁷⁸ "Only Vatican Runs Ethiopian Missions," *New York Times*, April 7, 1937.

⁵⁷⁹ Richard Pankhurst, "Education in Ethiopia during the Italian Occupation," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5, no. 5 (1972): 362. The educational policy in fascist occupied Ethiopia was outlined on July 24, 1936, and reiterated a policy of creating a new generation of Ethiopians who studied Italian culture, Italian glories, and history to become conscious propagandists for fascist Italy. Two curricula were created. One was for Italians and the other for colonial subjects. See Pankhurst, "Education in Ethiopia," 365.

⁵⁸⁰ "3 U.S. Missionaries in Ethiopia Ousted," *The New York Times*, April 10, 1937.

⁵⁸¹ "Italy, Ethiopia, and the Vatican," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 24, 1937.

⁵⁸² "Pope Controls Missions in Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, May 1, 1937.

⁵⁸³ "Pope Controls Missions."

identity was integral to constructing a new fascist colonial social order. Additionally, those “Rebels hiding in the mountains [had] the assistance of priests” who redoubled their “efforts because of religious fervor.”⁵⁸⁴ Large bands of Ethiopians still operated against Italian forces, and they were led by the former mayor of Addis Ababa and the former Ethiopian minister who was now residing with the Ethiopian guerillas in the mountains.⁵⁸⁵ *The Herald-Tribune* described how “Italian troops with armed machine guns led a procession through the city with other troops bringing up the rear” to intimidate all dissidents. As Italian colonial authorities were determined to carry out the Vatican’s wishes and crush the Coptic Ethiopian Church, they directed a propaganda campaign as “Posters displayed throughout the city” warned that those failing to recognize the new church would be shot.⁵⁸⁶

Spain and Ethiopia

The escalation of open warfare in Spain dramatized a new comparative arena and oriented Black Americans toward anti-fascist developments within Europe, stressing that poverty, disenfranchisement, and racism were consequences of fascist influence. This conflict began when the Popular Front, a coalition of left-liberal groups, including the small Communist Party, won a bitterly fought election. In response, Nationalist army officers led by General Francisco Franco and backed by church leaders and wealthy landowners plotted a military rebellion beginning on July 18, 1936.⁵⁸⁷ Franco admired Mussolini’s government and hoped to create a government in Spain modeled on his fascist dictatorship. Approximately ninety Black

⁵⁸⁴ “Roman Catholics to Run All Missions in Ethiopia.”

⁵⁸⁵ “Only Vatican Runs Ethiopian Missions,” *New York Times*, April 7, 1937.

⁵⁸⁶ “New Ethiopian Church Is Protested by Egypt,” *New York Herald Tribune*, December 9, 1937.

⁵⁸⁷ Peter Carroll, *From Guernica to Human Rights: Essays on the Spanish Civil War* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2015), 21.

Americans, composed of CPUSA members or supporters, “motivated by a combined black nationalism and Pan-Africanism with a commitment to the Communists’ vision of internationalism” joined the multiracial Popular Front affiliated Abraham Lincoln Brigade in support of the Loyalist cause.⁵⁸⁸ This unit, which comprised the first integrated military unit in the history of the United States, represented an anti-fascist critique of America’s undemocratic Jim Crow military. They reflected “a diverse bunch that included Northerners and Southerners, the college-trained and semi-literate, unemployed workers and self-styled intellectuals.”⁵⁸⁹ Captain Oliver Law, a native of Chicago and active member of the CPUSA, was in full command of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and he was among the first Black American casualty of the war.⁵⁹⁰ Law became a legendary hero in the Black press because he was among the first Americans to leave for Spain to fight for democracy.

Black newspapers accentuated how The Brigade fighters perceived their intervention in Spain to avenge how the Italian fascists invaded Ethiopia.⁵⁹¹ *The Tribune* related that because Black journalists turned their attention to Spain, some said Ethiopia was a closed book. However, according to the newspaper, this was farther from the truth despite the “ghastly betrayal in Geneva.”⁵⁹² The newspaper linked how the international community’s lackadaisical attitude toward Ethiopia and its “bowing down to Mussolini” was “largely responsible for the

⁵⁸⁸ Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 124.

⁵⁸⁹ David Featherstone. “Black Internationalism: Subaltern Cosmopolitanism and the Spatial Politics of Anti-fascism.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103, no. 6 (2013): 1408.

⁵⁹⁰ “Volunteer Discharged Soon, Fighting for Loyalist Cause: *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 7, 1937. “Slain Defending Madrid,” *The Chicago Defender*, July 17, 1937.

⁵⁹¹ Cedric Robinson, “The African Diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis,” *Race and Class* 5, no. 2, (1985): 62.

⁵⁹² “Negroes To Spanish War Fighting For Royalists,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 13, 1936.

same ghastly state of things: that was “now in force in Spain.”⁵⁹³ Before joining the Brigade, James Yates explained he “had been ready to go to Ethiopia, but that was different. Ethiopia, a Black nation, was part of me. I was just beginning to learn about the reality of Spain and Europe but knew it was at stake.”⁵⁹⁴ Salaria Kea, the only African American volunteer nurse in the Brigade, encapsulated the feelings of many Black volunteers, declaring, “Spain was now the battlefield on which Italian fascism might be defeated. Moreover, perhaps, Italy defeated in Spain would be forced to withdraw from Ethiopia.”⁵⁹⁵

Since the Spanish Civil War took place in the context of a global economic depression, volunteers and some journalists framed it as a contest to combat the pernicious effects of capitalism, which had a complicated relationship with fascism. The solidarities and Communist internationalism expressed around the Spanish Civil War framed the conflict as a struggle between urban workers and Spain’s capitalists and landless peasants. “Class struggles in the country were inevitably at the heart of the matter. Peasants on the huge landed estates in the south fought fiercely for land reform, and agricultural workers demanded better wages.”⁵⁹⁶ The unsigned editorial, “Keep Straight on Spain,” in The N.A.A.C.P.’s journal, *The Crisis*, reminded Black readers that the Spanish fight against fascism should be vital to them because “the colored people who are poor, landless and disenfranchised,” could identify with the Spanish people who

⁵⁹³ “Negroes To Spanish War.”

⁵⁹⁴ Peter N. Carroll, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, *The Good Fight Continues World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York City: New York University Press, 2006), 31; Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 126.

⁵⁹⁵ Salaria Kea, “A Negro Nurse in Republican Spain,” in *The Good Fight Continues World War II Letters From The Abraham Lincoln Brigade* edited by Peter N. Carroll, Michael Nash, Melvin Small (New York: New York University Press, 2006) 27.

⁵⁹⁶ Robin D. G. Kelley, “This Ain’t Ethiopia, But It’ll Do,” in *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War: This Ain’t Ethiopia, But It’ll do* edited by Danny Duncan Collum (New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1992), 21.

are also “poor, landless and disenfranchised.”⁵⁹⁷ Writing in *The Amsterdam News*, the N.A.A.C.P.'s Roy Wilkins in his column "Watchtower," reasoned that Black Americans had a commonality with the Spanish working classes and should be interested in the events since "Negroes have been kicked around nearly all our lives" and that it was only natural that "We should be with the fellow who is being kicked. Nine times out of ten, he is just like we are."⁵⁹⁸ Furthermore, he concluded that Black Americans should identify with anti-fascism in Spain because Black Americans “have got to make a world where there will be less kicking around, where a man won't be lynched because he is black.”⁵⁹⁹

Summary

The occupation of Ethiopia coupled with the expansion of global fascism and the escalating war in Europe contributed to varied anti-fascist discourses recognizing that the world was at a crossroads between fascism and democracy. Antifascist political coalitions including pan-Africanists, liberals, and communists united and participated in political articulations of anti-fascism, reflecting their fear of fascism trampling on democracy. Their activism spoke to a desire to mitigate the dangers associated with the League's failure to check Italian fascism, which led to the expansion of global fascism. Like Germany, Italy, and Japan drew close, the abyss separating the dictatorships and democracies grew wider. Italy, Japan, and Germany's authoritarianism and militarism undermined democratic norms and values, and peace by using violence and intimidation in their actions that foreshadowed world war.

⁵⁹⁷ “Keep Straight on Spain,” *The Crisis* 43, no. 11 (November 1936): 337.

⁵⁹⁸ Roy Wilkins, “Watchtower: The Way of Imperialists of Color Plays but Small Part; Spain Important to Negro Our Place with Oppressed,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 28, 1936.

⁵⁹⁹ Wilkins, “Watchtower: The Way of Imperialists.”

CHAPTER VI: THE FLOODGATES OF FASCISM

Introduction

From January 1938 to May 1941, Ethiopia experienced a period of confusion and chaotic military conflict during the pacification of Ethiopia. Black American intellectuals, activists, journalists, and readers participated in revitalized activism, and they were unfaltering in their assertion that Ethiopia was *not* a lost cause. They critiqued how the League of Nations' failure to check Fascist Italy's genocidal violence against Ethiopians signaled that imperialism won out. This failure to intervene in Mussolini's rape of Ethiopia provided an opening for the expansion of Spanish and German Fascism in Europe, which threatened the survival of western democracy and the security of global Black people.

Representation of Campaign

Mussolini was aware that international recognition of Italy's conquest was necessary to cement his hold on Ethiopia. During the New Year, Haile Selassie remained exiled in Bath, England. King Victor Emanuel III was the Italian appointed Emperor of Italy but only nominally administered the East African country's colonial government. At this point, Mussolini shifted his attention to restructuring the colonial fascist administrative structure to foster his dream of creating a viable fascist colony. According to the *Cleveland Gazette*, Mussolini, "in action against the world's democracies," was pushing forward in his quest for his Fascist Empire in Ethiopia by announcing Italy's final withdrawal from the League of Nations. The newspaper optimistically predicted that Mussolini "is sure riding to an awful fall which will not be any too long materializing now."⁶⁰⁰ On January 8, 1938, *The Defender* interpreted that Italy's annexation of Ethiopia was threatened because the fascist colonial administration was in turmoil. Fascist

⁶⁰⁰ "Mussolini; Italy, Ethiopia," *Cleveland Gazette*, January 1, 1938.

extremists expressed their dislike for the peaceful penetration policy of Lessona. In the end, The Duke of Aosta's appointment "mark[ed] the victory of the extremists" led by Marshall de Bono.⁶⁰¹ Ethiopians refused to recognize fascist domination of their homeland, and they continued their resistance. Though the Italian fascists claimed they controlled Ethiopia, tribal chieftains valiantly stood against the Italian invaders. Continued resistance led the Fascists to amend their "blood and iron" policy.

The Duke of Aosta, the new Italian Viceroy, advocated for the policy of "peaceful penetration," which reflected his awareness that the chiefs were the bedrock of Ethiopian resistance since many warriors only recognized their authority. For instance, On March 26, 1938, *The Courier* revealed how the duke underestimated the Ethiopian chief's commitment to independence. The duke, according to the newspaper, sent 1,045 Ethiopian chieftains in Gojam letters asking them to travel to Addis Ababa to make peace with him by submitting to Fascist authority. According to reports, the chiefs refused overture, pledging to continue fighting the Fascists "until the last soldier is either buried under Ethiopian soil or driven out of the country."⁶⁰² Using the old colonial divide and rule tactic to salvage the negotiations, the duke resorted to bribery, offering money, titles, and posts in the Fascist colonial administration. Some low-ranking chiefs responded to the offer.

Revisiting Concerns about the Roosevelt Administration's Recognition of Italian Conquest

A significant concern among the Black public was that the United States would recognize the conquest of Ethiopia if Britain did. In the United States, the newspaper baron William

⁶⁰¹ "De Bono, Il Duce Break Over Ethiopia: Challenges Colonial Aid," *The Chicago Defender*, January 22, 1938.

⁶⁰² "Reveal 1,045 Ethiopian Chieftains Refused Viceroy's Appeal for Peace," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 5, 1938.

Randolph Hearst urged U.S. recognition of Italian conquest. Mussolini pushed for U.S. recognition of Italian conquest because of his desire to enter into a trade pact with the United States. *The Daily Worker*, which was highly critical of this Italo-American trade pact, interpreted it as a blatant attempt by Mussolini to secure American financing to support his imperial goals. The newspaper acknowledged, "He needs money from Wall Street badly to try to hold on to his African grab and exploit it. Recognition would pave the way from legal loans from America to the fascist dictator."⁶⁰³ This recognition of Italy's conquest of Italy was also tied to countries wanting to prevent Fascist Italy, Germany, and Spain from encroaching on their territory. *The Times* did not believe Roosevelt would recognize Italy's conquest because attitudes in the United States hardened against European fascism.⁶⁰⁴ The Black press was not as confident and appealed to the Roosevelt administration to not recognize Fascist authority in Ethiopia. *The Courier*, in an unsigned article appearing on February 12, 1938, reported how the National Negro Congress (NNC) at its Philadelphia convention opposed recognizing Italy's conquest. Attorney Benjamin Davis, national secretary of the organization, sent two letters to U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Roosevelt asking that the United States not recognize Italy's conquest.⁶⁰⁵ Likewise, the "Puppet States," editorial in *The Amsterdam News*, warned Roosevelt. The United States "must not enter into any crooked agreement with any country at the expense of other people" because "this country will add insult to injury of every person of African descent in the world if it follows suit." Mussolini's international jockeying for recognition of fascist conquest of

⁶⁰³ "A Rebuff to Mussolini Trade Pacts and Peace," *The Daily Worker*, January 13, 1938.

⁶⁰⁴ Clarence K. Street, "Council to Stress Fidelity to League," *The New York Times*, January 26, 1938.

⁶⁰⁵ "U. S. Urged Not to Act on Italian Conquest," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 12, 1938.

Ethiopia, according to the editorial, was likened to how Italy was "hard up for money and supplies" and needed a loan to help to rescue the crumbling empire.⁶⁰⁶

Revisiting the Idea of an Ethiopian and Japanese Alliance

Black publicists critiqued how the Japanese imperial government shattered the idea of the Colored Alliance in the name of furthering imperial ambitions. Japan was one of the earliest powers to recognize Italy's conquest of Ethiopia in early December 1936. The Japanese imperial government's recognition of Italy's conquest conflicted with the Japanese nationalist Black Dragon Society formed activist links with the Black nationalist Ethiopian Pacific Movement and the Peace Movement of Ethiopia. Japanese nationalists continued to promote the idea that Japan would come to the defense of Ethiopia. Black publicists critiqued how the Japanese imperial government shattered the idea of a Colored Alliance in the name of furthering imperial ambitions. *The Defender* reported that Japan recognized Italy's conquest of Ethiopia in exchange for recognizing the puppet state of Manchukuo that was established after they invaded Manchuria. This development, according to reports, came on the heels of the Tokyo government "concluding a war pact with Hitler against the Soviet Union."⁶⁰⁷ This agreement outlined that Germany, which already recognized Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia and Italy would, "recognize Japan's grab in Manchuria" and Japan would in return "recognize Italy's conquests in Ethiopia."⁶⁰⁸ In *The Tribune*, on January 20, 1938, Cyril Briggs derided Black Americans for believing that Japan would aid Ethiopia after Italy launched its invasion in 1935. Briggs recognizing that Japan was never the "champion" and the "defender" of darker people, believed that these early supporters of a Colored Alliance were "Negro dups" since Japanese imperialism

⁶⁰⁶ "Puppet States," *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 19, 1938.

⁶⁰⁷ "Japan To Recognize Italian Conquest," *The Chicago Defender*, December 5, 1936.

⁶⁰⁸ "Japan to Recognize Italian Conquest."

“did not lift a finger to help the Ethiopian people either materially or morally.”⁶⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the Japanese ruling class "sabotaged every move designed to penalize fascist Italy when the nation violated sanctions imposed by the League of Nations and sold war materials to Italy." According to Briggs, the outcome was "the self-proclaimed defender of the darker peoples was to weaken the struggle led by Haile Selassie to block Mussolini's efforts to have the powers and the League of Nations legalize the fascist rape of Ethiopia."⁶¹⁰ *The Defender* printed a Leftist-inspired critique of Japan's actions and how "the friends of Ethiopia" in Chicago condemned the imperial nation for "undermining the non-recognition principle of the nations towards Italy's robber conquests in Ethiopia."⁶¹¹

Continuing Critiques of Roosevelt's Neutrality Policy

Meanwhile, the ominous dark cloud of war loomed over Europe due to the rise of the German dictator Adolf Hitler's Nazi program of continental expansion. Hitler, along with Italy, cooperated with the Spanish Fascist dictator, Francisco Franco, by sending troops, armored units, and airplanes to Spain to aid in consolidating Fascist power. Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., cautioned that the policy of neutrality, which defined the United States' policy towards the Ethiopian war, was "the most dangerous philosophy that anyone can follow."⁶¹² Fascism, according to Powell, was winning out because of a "whirlpool of indecision" that provided space for "the wielders of the whip of oppression, the wearers of the iron heel of prejudice, the

⁶⁰⁹ Cyril Briggs, "China Proves Nippon has Joined with Europe' Imperialistic Nations Writer Cites Manner in Which Japs Approved Italy Conquest of Ethiopia," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, January 20, 1938.

⁶¹⁰ Briggs, "China Proves Nippon has joined with Europe."

⁶¹¹ "Japan Is Blamed For Weakening of Non-Recognition," *The Chicago Defender*, January 2, 1937.

⁶¹² Adam Clayton Powell, Jr, "Soapbox," *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 19, 1938.

followers of mailed fist of prejudice," to win out because of continued apathy. Apathy, according to Powell, "spells our doom" and that it "is imperative to rally around the pole of anti-Fascism" and aid China, Loyalist Spain, the Jew in Germany."⁶¹³ Black Americans needed to be concerned about these events as he cautioned readers of the dangers of appeasing Mussolini and Hitler because "the fascist international under Mussolini and Hitler was the greatest threat to civilization in our day."⁶¹⁴

Recognizing that "Nazism and Fascism are rightful bedfellows," Powell asserted, "these two exponents of cruelty and oppression stand together, so rapidly dictators and would-be dictators will flock to the standard."⁶¹⁵ Powell expressed that the "opportunity was the world's when Italy announced the beginning of the conquest of Ethiopia" and how this opportune moment compared the European powers not stopping Nazi checking Nazi aggression when "Hitler rearmed the Rhine." Powell believed that "civilization will not be able to withstand the force of Fascism unless its anti-Fascist forces consolidate" and "resist the common foe" by putting aside their ideological differences and "strike the blow together!"⁶¹⁶

On March 12, 1938, Hitler crossed the Austrian border and successfully absorbed the country into his German sphere of influence. The fact that Hitler was able to take control of Austria without firing a single shot spoke to how "the great democracies have made it easy for Hitler to attain his goal" of building a German continental empire. Metz T.P. Lochard, writing in his column "Panorama of World News," in *The Defender*, reacted to this by declaring that

⁶¹³ Adam Clayton Powell, "Soapbox," *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 19, 1938.

⁶¹⁴ Adam Clayton Powell, "Soapbox," *The New York Amsterdam News*, February 26, 1938.

⁶¹⁵ Powell, "Soap Box," February 26, 1938.

⁶¹⁶ Powell "Soap Box," February 26, 1938.

"Austria's independence is now a memory."⁶¹⁷ Lochard believed that "the only effective way of checking Fascism is the rigid application of the policy of collective security." He did not believe that democratic nations could effectively wage a global war against fascism until they began living up to the principle of collective security. He surmised that fascism expanded in Europe because nations such as Britain and France "created and maintained the conditions which bred Mussolini and Hitler." Furthermore, he accused France of sabotaging peace by trying to "prevent the application of sanctions against Mussolini in the Ethiopian conflict."⁶¹⁸

Shedding Light on American Fascism

Black activists observed a consensus regarding how Jim Crow or domestic fascism imperiled Black Americans' realization of democracy. Additionally, anti-Fascist discourse comparing Jim Crow racial discrimination in the United States to fascism increased in the Black press. The liberal activist and N.A.A.C.P official Robert W. Bagnall writing in *The Tribune* asserted that "Fascism is found right here in the United States concerning Negroes" because "Free speech and free assembly is denied all over the South." He pointed to how "in Birmingham, Ala. Nor meeting of the N. A. A. C. P. could I obtain it because freedom of assembly is denied."

Similarly, in the South, freedom of the Black press was nonexistent. The Black newspaper experienced editorial constraints as "there are certain subjects that no Negro in the South will publish a word about it is paper." Democratic liberalism also did not exist in the

⁶¹⁷ Metz T.P. Lochard, "Panorama of World News," *The Chicago Defender*, March 19, 1938.

⁶¹⁸ Metz T.P. Lochard, "Panorama of World News," *The Chicago Defender*, March 19, 1938.

South, and "it [was] notorious that the Negro in the South has no freedom of election."⁶¹⁹ *The Courier* echoed this assessment. It criticized political fascism, embodied by the staunch segregationist Southern Democrats U. S. Senator Allen Ellender of Louisiana and Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi. It illustrated "the callous determination of men in our country to tighten the chains of enslavement that bind us" because of their filibuster of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. *The Courier* reprinted excerpts from Dr. Rayford Logan, Atlanta University sociologist speech titled, "The Quest for Democracy." He asserted that Ellender and Bilbo's resistance was indicative of the retrograde nature of the South, which is "kin to fascism" since the white supremacist Southern Democrats exercised a political monopoly in the South.⁶²⁰ According to Logan, this reality was the definition of fascism since "fascism means, among other things, government by one party." As long as the South remained solidly Democratic and "as long as the U. S. Supreme Court is barring Negroes from the Democratic Party stands, the South is as politically fascist as Italy or Germany."⁶²¹

In an editorial in *The Defender*, Black American Communist William L. Patterson asserted that "Fascism is raising its murderous head in America." However, in contrast to Rayford, Logan and other Black leaders did not believe Black Americans had experienced fascism. They stated that "Negro Americans have never experienced fascist terror" despite how

⁶¹⁹ Robert Bagnall, "Negro Face Fascism Here," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, February 17, 1938.

⁶²⁰ "Youth Congress Endorses Courier Campaign: Organization to Fight for Army, Navy Equality Also Stress Need for Longer School Terms, Probe TVA Discrimination and Warns Against the Threat of Fascism," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 16, 1938.

⁶²¹ "Youth Congress Endorses Courier Campaign: Organization to Fight for Army, Navy Equality Also Stress Need for Longer School Terms, Probe TVA Discrimination and Warns Against the Threat of Fascism," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 16, 1938.

"the old court had consistently ignored basic rights of the black man and woman."⁶²² Although the Supreme Court "could never defend their constitutional rights because it was always too busy defending the rights of states to disenfranchise, segregate, lynch or otherwise terrorize Negroes." As undemocratic as these conditions were, he did not believe that "The executive branch of the National Government bad as it had never been openly endorsed lynching, mob violence and terror as a policy of government where Negroes are concerned." According to him, "This is fascism." Recognizing the power of a Black and white united front, he concluded that "In the fight against fascism that democratic white America will learn that the rights of one-tenth of America cannot be separate from its own."⁶²³

Black American anti-fascist discourse also disparaged President Franklin Roosevelt's hypocrisy and collusion with Dixicrats. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. attested to this as he ascertained that Western civilization was experiencing a significant setback in the Mississippi Delta because of the breakdown of law and order, which resulted in the undemocratic practice of lynching. He pointed to the hypocrisy of President Franklin Roosevelt, who reacted to the victimization of German Jews by issuing a statement condemning Nazi violence, asserting, he could not believe this could happen in the 20th century. Powell believed that Roosevelt's statement revealed his insincerity since he failed to pronounce lynching in the United States. Powell believed lynching entailed human suffering that should be acknowledged by asking "what [could have happened] if a Jew [was] lynched in Germany, Chinese slaughtered in Nanking, Ethiopian pillaged in Africa, three million in Loyalist Spain dying from the pellagra or a blackboy hanging from a tree in Mississippi." Persecuting Black Americans, Ethiopians, and

⁶²² William L. Patterson, "Views and Reviews: Do Our Leaders Understand?" *The Chicago Defender*, May 21, 1936.

⁶²³ Patterson, "Views and Reviews."

German Jews as "the international alibis of this century" and blaming them for the decay of Western culture rationalized their suffering. According to Powell, "the culture of the Anglo-Saxon, the proud Nordic, and Aryan are in its dying stages, and the noise we hear is but the death rattle."⁶²⁴

Representation of the Spanish Civil War

Black Americans realized that the fight against Italian aggression in Ethiopia and domestic fascism in the United States was tied up with the struggle against fascism in Spain. On March 15, 1938, the *Daily Worker* published excerpts from a letter written by Black American volunteers in Spain that were at the forefront of democracy on this front. The activities of Black American volunteers were not widely publicized in the white press. The letter addressed to Black Leftist John P. Davis sought to further galvanize the domestic anti-fascists by declaring, "a defeat of fascism in Spain is a blow against international fascism and will result in the liberation of Ethiopia." Moreover, they recognized that "A free Ethiopia shall be the symbol of freedom for the Negro Peoples of the World." Anti-fascists were concerned with the grassroots mobilization of Black Americans on the home front, in a similar fashion, as during the early years of the Ethiopian war by appealing to them to "have every Negro paper campaign, every people rind, and every Negro organization to activate to help send moral and material aid to the cause of Loyalists in Spain."⁶²⁵ *The Tribune and Cleveland Call and Post* publicized how Black Philadelphians answered the call by contributing funds to purchase an ambulance sent to the anti-Franco army in Spain.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁴ Powell, "Soapbox," December 3, 1938.

⁶²⁵ "Negroes In Spain Call on People to Spur Aid," *The Daily Worker*, March 15, 1938.

⁶²⁶ "American Negroes' Contribution to Spain," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 29, 1938.

In Chicago-based Negro People's Committee, composed of representatives of South Side citizens, organized a large benefit to raise funds to aid the starving civilian population of Spain and the homeless Spanish children.⁶²⁷ Though the N.A.A.C.P focused its financial and human resources on the fight against domestic racial discrimination, the organization remained involved in anti-fascism internationalism through William Pickens. Pickens, a national sponsor of the Negro Committee to Aid Spain, traveled to Spain aboard the American Relief Ship carrying credentials from the medical bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. In line with other Black Americans, Pickens connected how "the entire world has some of the same reasons to support the Loyalist government that they had to support Haile Selassie when Italy attacked Ethiopia. This fight is our fight."⁶²⁸

Most Black Americans who went to Spain were Black Leftists and anti-fascists, part of the multi-racial Abraham Lincoln Brigade soldiers. Black newspapers publicized the heroics of Black Americans that participated in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. On April 30, 1938, *The Courier* celebrated the valorous efforts of Robert Raven, a gunner with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, who was alleged: "one of the best gunners in the Spanish war." Like many Black Americans that deployed to Spain, Raven framed their efforts "to save Spain from fascism is the fight to save all racial and minority groups from extinction at the hands of fascist bandits."⁶²⁹ *The Defender* carried an article about the Abraham Lincoln and George Washington Battalion, noting that Black Americans were the "toughest men fighting in Spain."⁶³⁰ Salaria Kea, a nurse at

⁶²⁷ "So. Side Forms Committee to Assist Spain," *The Chicago Defender*, November 26, 1938.

⁶²⁸ "Dean Pickens Is Enroute to Loyalist Spain," *The Chicago Defender*, August 27, 1938.

⁶²⁹ "Boston Gunner 'Best in Spain'," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 30, 1938.

⁶³⁰ "U. S. Blacks in Spain Called Hard Fighters: Lincoln, Washington Brigades Show Bravery, Says Irish Volunteer," *The Chicago Defender*, May 21, 1938.

Harlem Hospital, was the first Black woman to go to Spain and run the operating room at Villapaz Hospital.⁶³¹ Kea traveled to Spain because she saw that the conflict "was not simply a civil war, but in reality, it was an invasion of Mussolini and Hitler's fascist forces." Kee, who had been involved with pro-Ethiopia organizing, realized that it would not be good if these forces were victorious. He said it would be detrimental to his people "to my people if they came over here and so [she] felt that it was necessary for [her] to become involved in the Spanish people's fight for freedom."⁶³²

Selassie Appeals to the League of Nations

Emperor Haile Selassie carried his fight back to Geneva to appeal to the League of Nations for a second time since the invasion of his empire by the Italian Black shirts. According to *The Times*, the diplomatic Battle of the Year, when it opened its 101st meeting of the League Nations Council on the second anniversary of Italy's annexation of Ethiopia.⁶³³ Selassie, suffering from heart problems and influenza, appeared before the League Council on May 9, 1938, to fight against his ouster from the League and Italy's recognition of Italy's conquest. Though Selassie possessed all the facts and understanding of international law to support his case, the League Council voted to recognize Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, except for delegates from the Soviet Union, China, and New Zealand.⁶³⁴ Black newspapers expressed a consensus that Britain and France, the unofficial steering committee of the League, betrayed the principle of

⁶³¹ Nancy Cunard, "Akron Nurse Plays Heroic Role in Spain," *Cleveland Call and Post*, January 6, 1938.

⁶³² Marvel Cooke, "I Would Return to Spain If I Could: Nurse Says: Salaria Kee, Harlem Hospital Volunteer," *The New York Amsterdam News*, May 21, 1938.

⁶³³ P.J. Philip, "Ethiopian Questions Confronts Powers," *New York Times*, May 8, 1938.

⁶³⁴ "League Shut Door on Plea of Ethiopia," *The Daily Worker*, May 13, 1938.

collective security because “they [were] bidding for Italy’s friendship.”⁶³⁵ This development spoke to how both powers were once again “putting national interests and such newly acquired obligations as the Anglo-Italian accord above League resolutions and the covenant.”⁶³⁶ Writing for the *Washington Tribune*, the Leftist poet and educator M. Beaunorus Tolson related how Britain's sacrificing of Ethiopia spoke to how “the power of imperialism marches on!” and how “capitalist nations have always exploited weaker nations.” Accordingly, “Ethiopia was the victim of capitalism in the form of imperialism.”⁶³⁷

Great Britain and France’s Push for Recognition

Great Britain and France's push to recognize Italian conquest spoke to their policy of pacifying Mussolini to prevent war in Europe. *The Times* and several Black newspapers related how recognition was attributed to Britain and France fearfully watching a gathering storm form in Europe. These powers observed Adolf Hitler's ordering German troop movements against Czechoslovakia, which was now “caught in the pincers of the Third Reich,” and causing acute international anxiety due to the threat of continental war.⁶³⁸ In London and engaged in anti-fascist organizing with the Pan-African-affiliated International African Service Bureau (IASB), George Padmore continued his argumentation regarding the connection between colonialism and fascism. He wrote in *The Amsterdam News* asserting that Britain's recognition of Italy's conquest “was in the interest of appeasement” and reflected “its acceptance of the sacrifice of Abyssinian

⁶³⁵ “Haile Selassie Is Ditched by League of Nations; England Give Ethiopia to Italy,” *The Chicago Defender*, May 14, 1938.

⁶³⁶ “Geneva Sees Struggle between Two Systems,” *The New York Times*, May 15, 1938.

⁶³⁷ M. Beaumaris Tolson, “Cabbage and Caviar,” *Washington Tribune*, May 28, 1938.

⁶³⁸ “Two-Ply Tension: Spain and the Czechs; Czechoslovakia A Gathering Storm,” *New York Times*, May 22, 1938.

independence."⁶³⁹ According to *The Defender*, the League's sacrifice of Ethiopia was a "blow to international morality" and spoke to England's colonial history and how "she has robbed and defied Africa, and now she has elected to lie to Haile Selassie and betray Ethiopia."⁶⁴⁰ *The Courier*, in agreement with *The Defender*, concluded that this development led the "dark peoples of the world" to "look for a new savior and a new morality" as France and England were "chased up an alley by the tin-horn Caesar of modern Rome."⁶⁴¹ *The Amsterdam News*' Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., in his column "Soap Box," voiced that this inaction by the two nations marked the triumph of fascism as he asserted, "the League of Nations is dead and Fascism wins another victory." Powell observed how Ethiopia was the League's "guinea pig." He was one of the few journalists to criticize Selassie's continued faith in the League as he wrote, "if Ethiopia hadn't wasted so much time with the League of Nations," then "Mussolini would still be cooling his heels outside of Addis Ababa."⁶⁴² *The Defender*'s Metz T. P. Lochard concurred with Powell as he proclaimed that the League's actions indicated its "internal collapse of moral forces which had sustained it during the major stages of the East African conflict." Consequently, "the much talked about the covenant of the League is an idealistic dream which was never meant to be interpreted in terms of security for the smaller member nations."⁶⁴³

These proceedings at the League occasioned discussion in Black newspapers concerning the question of recognition by the international community signaled a closing of the Ethiopian

⁶³⁹ George Padmore, "Hale May Be Given Part of Ethiopia," *The New York Amsterdam News*, June 11, 1938.; The Pan-African International Service Bureau was founded in London in 1937 by George Padmore, C.L.R. James, T. Ras Makonnen, and Sierra Leone's labor Activist T.I Wallace-Johnson to inform the British public about grievances in the colonies.

⁶⁴⁰ "The Double-Crosser," *The Chicago Defender*, May 21, 1938.

⁶⁴¹ "British Trickery Dooms Ethiopia: 500,000,000 Members of Colored Race, Exploited By England," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 21, 1938.

⁶⁴² "Adam C. Powell. "Soap Box," *The New York Amsterdam News*, May 21, 1938.

⁶⁴³ Lochard, "Panorama of World News," May 29, 1937.

crisis. An unsigned editorial, "The End, Not Yet!" in the *Cleveland Gazette*, expressed optimism concerning the Ethiopian struggle against fascist bombardment. Italian martial difficulties prevented conquest. Accordingly, "the number of dead and wounded Italian soldiers continu[ed] to increase and prov[ed] beyond all question the fact that there has been no "conquest" of Ethiopia and will not be."⁶⁴⁴ *The Courier* maintained the editorial line as Ethiopia's stalwart advocate. The newspaper relied on reports from British and French correspondents since it no longer had a reporter at the Ethiopian front. According to a report provided by a British correspondent, who traveled to Ethiopia's interior, less than one-third of Selassie's kingdom was controlled by Italy.⁶⁴⁵ *The Courier*, in a separate edition, printed the bold headline: "ETHIOPIAN NATION IS STILL UNCONQUERED!"⁶⁴⁶ This report was based on the eyewitness report of Ethiopian conditions by J. R. Pecheral, a French reporter who slipped into Ethiopia and traveled around with a native chief. *The Courier* reprinted excerpts from his article originally published in the Chicago Tribune's white newspaper. Pecherel related how "troublesome guerilla warfare in the threatened pacified section of the country..." was "proving a serious drain on the Italian conquerors."⁶⁴⁷ He explained how Italian pacification remained incomplete because "there is still a bog area in the wild, southwest part of Ethiopia, which has not been pacified at all." Frequent raiding by Ethiopian guerillas continued, according to Pecherel, and "Their tactics [were] so successful that this year's cereal harvest is less than 3 percent..." and "The Italians are unable to live off the land."⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁴ "The End, Not Yet!" *Cleveland Gazette*, May 21, 1938.

⁶⁴⁵ "Ethiopia Has Just Started to Fight," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 21, 1938.

⁶⁴⁶ "Ethiopian Nation is Still Unconquered! Tribes United in Battles," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 21, 1938.

⁶⁴⁷ "Ethiopian Nation is Still Unconquered! Tribes United in Battles," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 21, 1938.

⁶⁴⁸ "Ethiopian Nation is Still Unconquered!"

Is The Ethiopian Cause Over?

Other newspapers were not as optimistic. Some observers expressed confidence that the Ethiopian cause was doomed due to the betrayal of England and France at the League Council. *The Times* in the editorial "Ethiopia's Farewell" expressed that the Ethiopian cause was over and that Haile Selassie "was pleading a lost cause, and he knew it."⁶⁴⁹ *The Defender* reprinted the editorial in its section "Other Papers Say."⁶⁵⁰ This assertion possibly pointed to the newspaper's belief that the Ethiopian cause was dead. Once a major proponent of the Ethiopian cause, Calvin Floyd contributed the editorial, "Ethiopia Lost!" in the *Cleveland Call and Post*. This editorial was reprinted in several Black newspapers, such as the *Negro Star*, *The Plain Dealer*, and *The Age*. Calvin presented a gloomy picture of the Ethiopian crisis as he alleged, "There is not much use in mourning the fate of Ethiopia. There is nothing that Negro peoples can do about its betrayal by England and France." He concluded that the lesson in this tragedy for individuals and governments was the value of self-reliance. He reasoned that Ethiopia failed to practice self-reliance as it "counted too heavily on others coming to her aid."⁶⁵¹ An unsigned editorial appearing on May 28 in *The Defender* followed up by saying that "the moral lesson that flows from this experience is that weak nations need not look to powerful states for moral or any other kind of support when aggression is committed against their sovereignty."⁶⁵²

Selassie Returning as a Puppet Emperor

Italy's position in Ethiopia was weakening daily as Ethiopian tribesmen increased their guerilla campaigns and took advantage of the rainy season. The Italians experienced significant

⁶⁴⁹ "Ethiopia's Farewell," *New York Times*, May 13, 1938.

⁶⁵⁰ "Other Papers Say: Ethiopia's Farewell," *The Chicago Defender*, June 4, 1938.

⁶⁵¹ "The Digest: Ethiopia Lost," *Cleveland Call and Post*, May 26, 1938.

⁶⁵² "Black History's Dark Page" *The Cleveland Call and Post*, May 28, 1938.

difficulties in their pacification campaign despite using modern scientific implements of human destruction to bully the Ethiopians into surrendering. Italian censorship remained an obstacle to obtaining information about the status of the war since the fascists dominated the radio and telegraph wires. The Black American and the white mainstream press failed to provide a clear picture of ground conditions in Ethiopia. However, *The Daily Worker's* Harry Gannes offered a glimpse into the ongoing fighting in his column "World Front" as he related how "All of the West of Ethiopia [was] still in possession of the Ethiopians."⁶⁵³ According to the newspaper, "Thousands of Ethiopia horsemen dominat[ed] the regions outside of the capital, Addis Ababa," to keep it "safe from aeroplane attack. Also, they [made] raids on Italian convoys coming in and out of the capital."⁶⁵⁴ To bring an end to these difficulties that hindered Mussolini's colonization plans, he devised the plan to bring the deposed Selassie back to Ethiopia as emperor because he knew he was the only person that could rule in Ethiopia. Lord Halifax, Britain's Foreign Secretary, extended the exiled emperor an invitation to return to his homeland as a puppet monarch over a newly created kingdom covering a quarter of the area of Ethiopia. Selassie would live in his palace in Addis Ababa and received an income from Mussolini of no less than \$50,000 a year.⁶⁵⁵ Haile Selassie turned down the proposal to rule as a puppet king under the aegis of Italian rule and vowed never to return to Ethiopia as long as it was under the yoke of foreign domination.⁶⁵⁶ The British House of Lords favored the plan to appease Mussolini to ensure that the Anglo-Italian trade agreement remained on track.

⁶⁵³ Harry Gannes, "The World Front," *The Daily Worker*, June 18, 1938.

⁶⁵⁴ Harry Gannes, "The World Front," *The Daily Worker*, June 18, 1938.

⁶⁵⁵ "New British Foreign Secretary Offers Throne to Haile Selassie; Abyssinia A Curse To Italy-A Corpse Bouy on the Back of The Killer," 1938, folder 17 J, Claude A. Barnett Papers, *ProQuest History Vault*, http://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg.edu/pdfs/252247/252247_0007/252247_171_0007_0001_From_1_to_50.pdf.

⁶⁵⁶ "Duce Wants Haile To Pacify Natives," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 12, 1938.

The Black American press interpreted these events as yet another example attesting to how Britain was never a friend of Ethiopian sovereignty and ceased being a voice of democracy, justice, and fairplay. *The Courier* and *The Defender* interpreted Britain's policy as another example that the country was morally and politically bankrupt because it compromised democratic principles in the name of preserving the balance of power in Europe. On June 18, 1938, George Padmore, writing in *The Defender*, expressed his contempt for the British ruling class, whose recognition of Italian conquest was at odds with the British Labour Party. Moreover, Padmore linked Britain's support of Selassie's return as a puppet emperor and acceptance of the sacrifice of Abyssinian independence" as "detrimental to the democratic government of Spain" because this policy "offers no certainty of any corresponding gain to the principles of peace and democracy."⁶⁵⁷ *The Courier's* Rudolph Dunbar, following Padmore, opined that this plan represented another "sinister" machination by Britain. The leading voice in this plan was the Archbishop of Canterbury, the principal leader of the Church of England, and Lord Halifax, the new British Foreign Secretary. Their underlying motive was to "try and get a scrap of consolation out of the Abyssinia tragedy" and ensure that "the British government's treaty with Italy go through, and that it involved no sacrifice of principle for expediency."⁶⁵⁸

Reporting on Black and Jewish Relations

The Black Americans and the American Jewish community in the United States had a comparable experience concerning recognition as legitimate parts of American society. However, American Jews lacked consensus on the Ethiopian situation's connection to the security of German Jews in Europe. American Jewish newspapers expressed an apathetic attitude

⁶⁵⁷ George Padmore, "Hale May Be Given Part of Ethiopia: Briton Favors Giving Limited Area To Negus," *The Chicago Defender*, June 11, 1938.

⁶⁵⁸ "Abyssinia is Discussed by House of Lords," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, June 18, 1938.

regarding Ethiopia's struggle against Italian fascist aggression. *The Jewish Exponent* expressed interest in the Biblical history, religious, and cultural customs of the Falasha or Ethiopia Jews, who numbered 50,000 in Ethiopia.⁶⁵⁹ Also, wealthy American Zionists supported Mussolini's rise to power, and anti-Semitism was not a part of Italian fascism before 1938 since Mussolini rejected biological racism and included Italian Jews in his fascist regime. After Mussolini rose to power in 1922, he met with Zionist leaders, who pledged their loyalty to the Italian state. Mussolini also met with Chaim Weismann, president of the World Zionist Organization, and discussed Palestine, Zionist dependency in Britain, and the mutual interests of Zionists and Fascists in the subversion of Muslim Power in the Mediterranean.⁶⁶⁰ During the 1920s, conservative Jewish leadership remained silent on the Fascist question. Later,

In the fall of 1933, editors of forty-three American Jewish publications took a poll to select twelve Christians who "have most vigorously supported Jewish political and civil rights and who have been the most outstanding in their opposition to anti-Semitism." As one of the twelve, Mussolini appeared to American Jews as a most welcome defender of the faith. Even after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.⁶⁶¹

The majority of American Jewry failed to recognize the destructive nature of Mussolini's government because of his early overtures to Italian Jews and his receptiveness to Zionism. When Mussolini shifted his racial position after entering the Rome-Berlin Axis, this influenced his passing of anti-Jewish Race Laws. These laws emphasized religion and culture over purely genetic factors and were aimed at separation rather than the immediate elimination of Italian

⁶⁵⁹ "Falashas: The Black Jews of Abyssinia," *The Jewish Exponent*, April 1, 1938.

⁶⁶⁰ Mussolini's long-term strategy was to employ Zionist organizations to "destabilize" the British mandate of Palestine and to enlist Jewish communities in Libya and East Africa (Italian Somalia and Later Ethiopia) in the "pacification of colonized populations. This notion was the design behind the policy, which allowed German Jews to seek refuge in Italy. See Cedric J. Robinson, *Fascism, and Intersections of Capitalism, Racialism, and Historical Consciousness*, 94.

⁶⁶¹ John Diggins, *Mussolini, and Fascism. The View from America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 202-03.

Jews.⁶⁶² They capped a series of racial edicts issued by the Italian occupying army in Ethiopia and anti-Jewish actions by the Pope.⁶⁶³ Even after the passage of these Laws, the white mainstream and American Jewish press publicized how Mussolini's pacification of Ethiopia might provide a space for an alternative Jewish homeland in Ethiopia. *The American Israelite* reported how Dr. Runes, editor, wrote about Mussolini's proposal for a Jewish homeland in Ethiopia.⁶⁶⁴ *The Amsterdam News*, *The Courier*, and *The Defender* criticized this plan as another attempt to colonize Ethiopia. On April 23, 1938, *Amsterdam News* criticized this plan as a type of colonial appeasement and economic exploitation to aid Mussolini in his colonization goals. Ironically, prospective Italian Jewish colonists, escaping Italian anti-Semitic discrimination, sought safety in Ethiopia. They buttressed the fascist regime as "an exploiter and colonizer on the stage of modern history" as it became a colonial managerial force that "needs not worry about getting corns in their palms doing heavy work."⁶⁶⁵ *The Defender* concurred with *The Courier* as it also lambasted that Dr. Rune's suggestion of a Jewish homeland for Italian Jews in Ethiopia was "a tacit approval of how Ethiopia was conquered by Italy and confers moral sanction on the march of Fascism."⁶⁶⁶ On the other hand, *The Times*' Arnaldo Cortesi, sympathetic to Italian colonization, voiced how the influx of Italian colonists to Ethiopia slowed because much work needed to be done to prepare the colony for large numbers of white settlers. The Jewish settlers, according to Cortesi, would aid in "hasten[ing] the process of colonization,

⁶⁶² Michael Livingston, *The Fascists and the Jews of Italy: Mussolini's Race Laws, 1938-1943* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 23).

⁶⁶³ "Italy Plans Racial Terror A La Nazi," *The Chicago Defender*, July 30, 1938.

⁶⁶⁴ "Anglo-Italian Treaty is Blow to Anti-Semitism," *The American Israelite*, May 12, 1938.

⁶⁶⁵ "Reveals Jews as Looking On Ethiopia as Promised Land," *The New York Amsterdam News*, April 21, 1938.

⁶⁶⁶ "Ignoring Facts," *The Chicago Defender*, May 7, 1938.

not so much because of the numerical strength of the contingent of Jews willing to rough it in the colony as because of the capital they might induce to pour into the place."⁶⁶⁷

A minority of American Jewry lambasted the complicity of the Jewish community in Mussolini's fascist aggression because of their silence regarding Italy's imperialism in Ethiopia. On September 7, 1938, Philip Baron writing in the *Jewish Advocate*, chastised Jewish Americans for approving Mussolini's imperial program. Baron attributed American Jewry's apathetic attitude towards Mussolini's aggression to how he "has slaughtered only blacks" while Hitler slaughtered Jews! He lambasted American Jews asking, "Did it have to take the racial policy of Mussolini to bring about a definite change in attitude toward Italian Fascism?" Moreover, he asserted, "Does any Jew who understands the meaning of Fascism, the moral implications of the merciless rape of Ethiopia, ever waver in his view of Italian Fascism?"⁶⁶⁸ *The Amsterdam News*'s A. M. Wendell Malliett provided the Black Jewish perspective represented by Harlem's Rabbi W. A. Matthew, spiritual leader of a Black Jewish congregation. Matthews expressed his sympathy with German Jews asserting, "I was a co-religionist of the Jewish people sincerely hope that every man and woman of African descent will maintain that spirit of brotherly kindness and sympathy towards the Jews." At the same time, he recognized that "After all the sufferings of German Jews cannot be compared with those of the Ethiopian Hebrews, for at least we the Ethiopian Jews...had nowhere to go." He criticized American white Jews asserting "some of our co-religionists said that the Ethiopians had the country for thousands of years and did not develop. Let the fascist dictator of Italy go in and civilize it." According to Matthew, "Only the

⁶⁶⁷ Arnaldo Cortesi, "Italy To Let Jews Settle in Ethiopia," *The New York Times*, September 6, 1938.

⁶⁶⁸ Philip Baron, "Italian Fascism Wears No Mask: In the Nature of a Reply to Rabbi Joseph Shubow," *Jewish Advocate*, September 2, 1938.

Jews of the Communist Party took the time and interest to protest, which they did in their newspaper *The Daily Worker*.”⁶⁶⁹

The Black press attempted to soothe tensions between the Black and Jewish communities in the United States by expressing its opposition to anti-Semitism in the Black community. The Urban League "assailing efforts to beset one oppressed group against another" issued a resolution condemning "open strife and bitter antagonism between two racial minority groups in the United States which for good and the preservation of democracy should at all times work in harmony and happy accord with the other." The Urban League expressed a paradoxical attitude as it was aware of Black Americans' frustrations regarding how some Jewish merchants were taking advantage of Black people by operating business in their neighborhoods while denying them employment. However, the organization pushed back against anti-Jewish sentiment as it reasoned that "such criticism and condemnation should be directed against the guilty individuals and not against the whole race."⁶⁷⁰ In his column "Views and Reviews," George Schuyler explored the roots of Black/Jewish antagonisms. He reasoned that these sentiments showed "Jewish proprietors [were] reluctant to employ Negro clerks and salesmen" and that Black Americans perceived Jewish storekeepers as not contributing to the economic development of the Black community. They argued that "many Jewish proprietors, living and having their social life outside the Negro ghetto, bring in nothing and take out everything." However, like the leaders of the Urban League, Schuyler did not see this as grounds for anti-Semitism. He framed that anti-Jewish hostility was comparable to how "at the height of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict,

⁶⁶⁹ A.M. Wendell Malliett, "Black Jews Bitterly Protest Nazi Inquisition under Hider: Harlem Rabbi in Interview," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 12, 1938.

⁶⁷⁰ "Lime Fight Anti Jew Decree in Windy City," *The New York Amsterdam News*, July 2, 1938.

considerable prejudice developed among the colored people against Italian merchants whose business were in Negro districts."⁶⁷¹ *The Tribune's* Floyd J. Calvin concurred with Schuyler in his column "Calvin's Digest." He expressed, "it was never right to sanction persecution..... Our differences with the Jews here can amicably be settled without condoning either Hitler or Mussolini's intolerance."⁶⁷²

The Black Press on the Future Survival of Democracy

The spread of fascism across Europe and the entrenchment of Italy within Ethiopia triggered the Black press' interrogation of the future survival of democracy. On November 12, 1938, *The Amsterdam News* celebrated the anniversary of the World War I armistice that made the world safe for democracy. This move was a very somber occasion since on November 16, 1938, Britain contributed to the world's peril by "completing the last phase of international double-crossing" by recognizing Italian sovereignty in Ethiopia in the name of preserving Britain's colonial economic interests in East Africa.⁶⁷³ During the year's celebration, the song "Aint Gone Be War No More" proved to be hypocritical as the international diplomatic community "prostituted their vow of peace on the altar of hatred." The newspaper critiqued how the League's failure to uphold its principle of collective security and come to the defense of Ethiopia indicated, "mankind has proven a sinner...when it comes to practicing what he preaches." This inaction enabled Mussolini to "rape Ethiopia thereby tearing limb from limb the world's most ancient Christian nation." Combined with the fact that "Hitler was still on the

⁶⁷¹ George Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 2, 1938.

⁶⁷² Floyd Calvin, "Calvin's Digest: Plight of Jews," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 15, 1938.

⁶⁷³ "England Hails King Emmanuel as Emperor of Ethiopia," *New York Amsterdam News*, November 26, 1938.

rampage across Europe, while fascist loving Britain looks at admiration at him,” proved that democracy was under siege in the Western world.⁶⁷⁴ George Padmore criticized how the League was “attempting to ignore what is going on in Abyssinia and the conspiracies among the democracies and the dictatorship powers in Europe to adjust their differences at the expense of the African peoples.”⁶⁷⁵

Britain and the democracies allowed Italian Fascists to trample on Ethiopia's sovereignty while mobilizing to safeguard Spain was the ultimate betrayal for Black Americans. Nonetheless, Black Americans continued to participate in anti-fascist organizing in the name of doing all they could to preserve democracy in the face of the global peril of fascism. On November 26, 1938, an unsigned editorial in *The Defender* reported how the Negro People's Committee, an anti-fascist organization composed of representatives from Chicago's Southside, organized a considerable funds drive to raise money for starving civilians and homeless children in Spain. The newspaper noted, "Negroes should always be concerned about the provision of democracy whenever such provisions are challenged or imperiled." In the publication, Pauline Reed, a committee member in the Negro People's Committee, believed that Black Americans should care about the current global crisis of the expansion of global fascism. Reasonably, the "dismemberment of Ethiopia, the final liquidation of Czechoslovakia and the indifference of England and France to the fate of agonized Republican Spain" was "a warning to those who would preserve the ideal of constitutional democracy."⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁴ “Armistice Day,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 12, 1938.

⁶⁷⁵ George Padmore, “Italian Rape of Abyssinia is Condone: England Betrays Black Empire in Effort to End Spanish War,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 19, 1938.

⁶⁷⁶ “So. Side Forms Committee to Assist Spain” *The Chicago Defender*, November 26, 1938.

The debate about Why Impending War in Europe is Relevant to Black People

Black Americans expressed that World War II was not just a "white man's war" but provided an opportune theater to fight for the preservation of democracy, which was under siege. In an article in *The Courier*, George Schuyler expressed that "if the United States entered the conflict, the economic and social advancement of Negroes would be as notable as it was following World War I." Additionally, he saw the war as an opportune moment because "if the white world begins mass suicide, the dark world has but to bide its time, scheme, and, at the opportune time, revolt." According to him, these revolts were necessary because "as long as the white world can keep the black world enslave[d], so long will white supremacy and everything flowing from it continue." When the war ended, Schuyler expectantly envisioned a major transformation in the global racial order as "the IDEA of white supremacy will have suffered a death blow."⁶⁷⁷ An unsigned editorial in *The Amsterdam News* titled "The Colored Man's Position" offered an analogous working-class perspective asserting "there is, in fact, no difference at all between British imperialism in South Africa, India, and the West Indies and Italian aggrandizement in Ethiopia."⁶⁷⁸ Furthermore, according to the editorial:

Black men slaving in coal mines in Birmingham and Pittsburgh to make machinery and gadgets to be sold by the Americas in Africa, China, and India are indeed playing a vital part in the present-day drive by the imperialist nations for power and wealth gained at the expense of black labor in Africa as well as the United States.⁶⁷⁹

Though recognizing that "Democracy in Europe and the United States has never meant democracy for the colored people anywhere in the world" because they have been "drawers of

⁶⁷⁷ George Schuyler, "European War Will Free Colored World," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 2, 1939.

⁶⁷⁸ "The Colored Man's Position," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 9, 1939.

⁶⁷⁹ "The Colored Man's Position."

water and hewers of wood,” the writer believed that Black people could not afford to be passive since:

Freedom, liberty, opportunities to work, and share in the profits of their labor will come to colored people however, only through their own efforts to fight against all kinds of imperialism, be it British, American, French, German, Italian, or Russian.⁶⁸⁰

On September 1, 1939, Hitler's invasion of Poland's tiny nation resonated with Black publicists who drew parallels between Poland and Ethiopia's struggle for independence. An article on September 22, 1939, in *The Whip*, expressed "fascism at home and abroad is our cry" reminded Black readers that "The Polish people must have all possible support from the Negro people" since they "have common enemies in the Hitlers and Chamberlains and Dadliers." By providing the Polish people their "full moral support and aid those who help Poland defend its national independence." However, a significant question that remained was "who will aid Ethiopia?"⁶⁸¹ An unsigned article in *The Defender* on September 23, 1939, reaffirmed this position asserting that the struggle between democracy and Fascism was intertwined with the Polish struggle because "Help to the Ethiopian people can only come through the victory of the Polish people."⁶⁸²

Then again, other Black American people, recognizing the European conflict's gravity, interrogated if darker peoples should involve themselves in the war. Harlem Communist James W. Ford, in an editorial appearing in *The Amsterdam News* on September 23, 1939, praised the German-Soviet Pact on non-aggression, which cleared the way for the Nazi invasion of Poland and simultaneously enabled Russia to invade Finland.⁶⁸³ Ford established that this international

⁶⁸⁰ "The Colored Man's Position."

⁶⁸¹ Albert Marshall, "Polish War of Importance to All Negro Race," *The Kansas Whip*, September 22, 1939.

⁶⁸² "Our Stake in the European War," *The Chicago Defender*, September 23, 1939.

⁶⁸³ Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 152.

agreement was essential to global Black peoples because it is "a great step forward in promoting peace and democratic government" despite being interpreted in the press as a "sell-out to Hitler."⁶⁸⁴ He, like many Communists, maintained that the Soviet Union was a bulwark against fascism. It "has followed a consistent policy promoting joint action of the democracies against fascist aggression ever since it entered the League of Nations.... and befriending and supporting the victims of aggression such as Ethiopia, Spain, China, and Czechoslovakia and in exposing the pro-Fascist policies of Chamberlain and Daladier." Ford pleaded with readers to "Remember Ethiopia," as well as France and Britain's betrayal that "was prompted by the fear that an Ethiopian victory would undermine their own colonial empires and upset Fascism in Italy."⁶⁸⁵ He questioned the moral reasoning behind the European war. Recognizing that fascism was not a distinctly political philosophy from imperialism because of its emphasis on power, he asserted, "Whenever there is British imperialism, Fascism develops. German Fascism was nurtured by the British ruling class."⁶⁸⁶

Black Leftists recognized that Britain was not concerned with entering the war to preserve democracy and fight fascism but extended its national interests at the expense of Black people and small nations. On October 7, 1939, the Chicago trade union organizer Ishmael P. Floyd asserted that the war was a struggle between Hitler and Chamberlain-Daladier (French Prime Minister). They wanted to see who the master of the world's-colored enslaved people shall be and the struggle of the enslaved people themselves for liberation and self-determination. "Ethiopia still fights fascism." He believed that "The Negro people and the common people of

⁶⁸⁴ James W. Ford, "What the Pact Means," *The New York Amsterdam News*, September 23, 1939.

⁶⁸⁵ Ford, "What the Pact Means."

⁶⁸⁶ "Ford Urges Negroes to Keep Out of War," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 21, 1939.

the world will be the losers unless those who cry democracy and practice autocracy are removed from power." Therefore, the United States could "turn their hands to checking rising prices and the cost of living by curbing monopolists and war profiteers, let America turn her hands to increasing the purchasing power and improving the standards of living of the American people." This move would assist in countering forces.⁶⁸⁷

Writing in *The Defender*, Ben Davis, Jr. quoted the Communist-affiliated peace activist and entertainer Paul Robeson, who ridiculed the European war as "an imperialist war in which the Negro people have nothing to gain no matter which side wins." Questioning the commitment of Britain to democracy for small nations, Robeson asserted, "why did [the nation] hand so many others to Hitler and Mussolini?" The betrayal of Britain and other powerful nations in The League was unforgettable to him, determining "Negro people will not forget Spain, Czechoslovakia, Austria-and certainly not Ethiopia." Interpreting the European war impeded Black economic progress, he recognized how it is "now seriously threaten[ing] civil rights" and "the building of the labor movement based on Negro and white equality."⁶⁸⁸ Separately, George Padmore writing in *The Crisis* asserted the war "certainly is not one for Democracy." He explained how Britain told colonial darker peoples and Black Americans that the war was a noble cause to "save Poland, a Fascist state, from the big, bad Fascist wolf, Adolf Hitler. However, this is sheer humbug." Pointing out British insincerity, Padmore asserted that "it is not strange that Mr. Chamberlain denounces the wrongdoings of Hitler but remains silent about Mussolini's brute force, bad faith, injustice and oppression toward Abyssinians." This kind of

⁶⁸⁷ Ishmael P. Flory, "European Struggle is Merely Fight between Three Masters to Rule Colored Slaves," *The Chicago Defender*, October 7, 1939.

⁶⁸⁸ "Nothing in War for Negroes," Paul Robeson: Victory for Allies no Good for Race," *The Chicago Defender*, November 4, 1939.

duplicity, according to him, indicated that “British and French imperialists are no more concerned about the Poles” but what they “are concerned about is the preservation of their colonial empires and the monopoly which they enjoy in the exploitation of cheap colored labor.”⁶⁸⁹

When Italy declared war against England and France in June 1940, Ethiopia and other African people were dragged into the conflict on the side of the Allies in the name of fighting for freedom. The failure of France, Britain, and the rest of the western international world to prioritize Ethiopia and devote resources to its defense opened the flood gates for a Fascist deluge to engulf Europe. Edward Jordan, of Harlem, in *The Amsterdam News*, voiced, "But what a picture we now behold in Europe! So-called Christian civilization caught in the bloody and ruthless grips of its machinations of malice, hypocrisy, and fraud."⁶⁹⁰ George Padmore expressing a comparative perspective wrote how Ethiopia was now a "significant figure in the swift-moving drama" of World War II. British politicians were lobbying Selassie with hopes of "using him as a rallying force to appeal to the colored world to support the Democracies in their life and death struggle against the Fascist dictators." The former British ambassador in Addis Ababa and the British pro-Ethiopia group, the Abyssinia Association, reassured Selassie that he "would be restored to the throne with a view of unifying and stiffening Ethiopian resistance."⁶⁹¹ The moderate liberal Gordon Blaine Hancock writing in *The Philadelphia Tribune*, expressed his distrust of England's motives. He asserted the nation "is making Great promises which she will

⁶⁸⁹ George Padmore, “The Second World War and the Darker Races,” *The Crisis*, Vol. 46, No. 11, November 1939: 327.

⁶⁹⁰ Edward Jordan, “Views on Many Questions: God and History,” editorial, *New York Amsterdam News*, June 1, 1940.

⁶⁹¹ George Padmore, “Selassie May Get His Throne Back: Allies Make Overtures for Ethiopian Aid,” *The Chicago Defender*, June 8, 1940.

never fulfill" but "to proclaim as ally one recently betrayed by her is the height of international hypocrisy." He could not fathom how Ethiopia could consider coming to England's defense since when Selassie "cried unto God and Britain's League of Nations for help in her distresses," and she "found herself forsaken and her allies in federation with her enemies."⁶⁹²

Emperor Selassie's Vengeance

Emperor Haile Selassie had the opportunity to seek revenge on Italy's invasion of his sovereign empire. Britain revoked its recognition of Victor Emmanuel II as Emperor of Ethiopia and approved Selassie as its officially recognized legal head of Ethiopia on July 20, 1940.⁶⁹³ On July 27, 1940, an unsigned editorial in *The Defender* castigated Britain as an opportunist whose sole purpose was to now "use Haile Selassie to help" the "colonial enslavers pull their chestnuts out of the fire." This assertion reveals that the "difficulties of colonial robbers, lynchers and imperialists, everywhere offer those robbed, subjected to lynching and oppressed by imperialism" the opportunity to "better their conditions if not entirely free themselves."⁶⁹⁴ George Padmore expounded on this criticism. On September 21, 1940, in an article in the newspaper, he warned that "there is no assurance that the restoration of Abyssinia is among the official war aims of Britain." For this reason, he pushed the British government to clearly outline a declaration declaring that in the event of victory, "Abyssinia will be restored to the Abyssinians and not be put under some form of mandate or become a protectorate."⁶⁹⁵ After four years in Britain, the emperor arrived in Egyptian Sudan and consolidated his armies under his control,

⁶⁹² Dean Gordon Hancock, "Ethiopia As Ally Show Britain Up As Big Hypocrite," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 1, 1940.

⁶⁹³ "England Changes Mind; Selassie Ethiopia's King," *The Chicago Defender*, July 20, 1940.

⁶⁹⁴ "Haile Selassie," *The Chicago Defender*, July 27, 1940.

⁶⁹⁵ George Padmore, "Fear Great Britain May Hedge On Complete Freedom For Ethiopia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 21, 1940.

asserting that "the time has come... Italy has set the seal on her own door and has provided my people the moment to strike."⁶⁹⁶ During his time in Sudan, he helped plan two offensives from Khartoum and direct at the southwest, the British offensive at western Ethiopian. Ethiopian troops "nourish[ing] the hope of retrieving something of the lost Ethiopian patrimony" took advantage of the mountains, deep canyons, and waterfalls that made roads impassable.⁶⁹⁷ On August 3, 1940, Selassie, now recognized "as the rightful ruler of Ethiopia, thereby undoing ...the Chamberlain gang of international appeasers and traitors," arrived in Ethiopia and set about rallying Ethiopians.⁶⁹⁸ *The Courier*, clearly exalting in the reversal of Italian fortunes, reported that his arrival stimulated attacks of guerilla fighters on Italian columns and had caused "a hornet nest" to the Fascist invaders.⁶⁹⁹

As Selassie prepared his forces to strike Italy, the Black press publicized how Ethiopia still needed material and financial help to carry out its offensive against the Italian fascist invaders. William Pickens appealed to the Roosevelt Administration, which continued its neutrality policy, to aid Ethiopia in fighting for freedom. *The Defender* publicized Pickens' letter to Roosevelt concerning the possibility of sending Red Cross units composed of Black Americans, aviation pilots, and planes to Ethiopia. According to Pickens, this action made sense because the United States was the "only great nation that did not recognize the conquest of Ethiopia."⁷⁰⁰ E. Sylvia Pankhurst, the editor of the anti-fascist newspaper *New Times and*

⁶⁹⁶ "Selassie Rallies Warriors: To Fight Until Rights Prevails," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1940.

⁶⁹⁷ R. Walter Merguson, "England Launches Two Offensives to Oust Italians Form Ethiopia," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1940.

⁶⁹⁸ Philip Francis, "Ethiopia's Day," *The New York Amsterdam News*, August 3, 1940.

⁶⁹⁹ "Chieftains Rally to Selassie as Ethiopian Revolt Begins," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 3, 1940.

⁷⁰⁰ "Pickens Asks U.S. Aid for Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, August 10, 1940.

Ethiopia News, claimed that Ethiopia needed airplanes. She wanted to "enlist Negro fliers and get planes and funds for the Ethiopians."⁷⁰¹

The Amsterdam News printed an unsigned editorial, "Ethiopia Needs Help," referencing how Pankhurst urged "Americans of both races to come to the aid of Ethiopia." Pankhurst asked them to establish "an organization of a group of representative citizens of both races on a national basis and including all factions and faiths could be formed to extend aid to Ethiopia."⁷⁰² Finley Wilson, Exalted Ruler of the Elks and president of the EWF, echoed this call asserting, "All those who believe in Democracy are urged to rally to the aid of the courageous little country."⁷⁰³ On September 21, 1940, Lij Araya Abebe, Special Representative of Haile Selassie, authored an editorial in *The Amsterdam News*. He appealed for material relief including medical supplies, food, clothing, and contributions of money to the Ethiopian World Federation. In closing his appeal, he reminded readers that this relief means "the difference between victory and defeat."⁷⁰⁴ *The Tribune* relayed the response of the Committee to Defend Democracy by Aiding Ethiopia, an anti-fascist organization, to Ethiopia's plea by cabling fifty dollars to Haile Selassie to aid Ethiopian soldiers still fighting five years after the invasion.⁷⁰⁵

Correspondingly, the Black press continued to provide readers with reports about Selassie, Ethiopian chieftains, and their warriors' internecine campaign against the fascist invaders. On October 12, 1940, *The Defender* reported that Selassie directed a bombing

⁷⁰¹ "U. S. Negroes Asked to Assist Ethiopia," *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 9, 1940.

⁷⁰² "Ethiopia Needs Help," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 17, 1940.

⁷⁰³ "Finley Wilson Asks Help for Ethiopia," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 19, 1940.

⁷⁰⁴ Lij Araya Abebe, "Ethiopia Appeals for Help," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 21, 1940.

⁷⁰⁵ "Selassie Cabled \$50 for Medical Supplies," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, October 17, 1940.

expedition on an Italian military airfield in Addis Ababa.⁷⁰⁶ Ethiopian's incessant guerilla warfare wreaked havoc on the fascist forces because of the "sabotage of crops and other vital undertakings to Italian success." Henceforth, agricultural production was stalled, and "the Italians [were] forced to import articles of food usually grown in abundance in Ethiopia." Martin reiterated that these unexpected expenditures rendered Mussolini's "treasury almost bankrupt."⁷⁰⁷

Haile Selassie was now in Sudan directing organized native revolts. His return to Ethiopia stimulated fundraising efforts to help raise money to aid his forces. Once back in Ethiopia, he successfully rallied all tribesmen in a nationwide revolt against the Italians. George Padmore wrote that "Ethiopian rases (governors) and warriors have rallied from a thousand towns and villages to press a drive against the retreating Italians behind the red, green and gold colors of the Conquering Lion of Judah."⁷⁰⁸ Emperor Selassie's return to Ethiopia led the Black press to compare him to his famous relative, Emperor Menelik II, the warrior-king. The *Amsterdam Star-News* claimed Selassie was inspired by Menelik II, who led Ethiopians against the Italian invaders in 1896 and was successful.⁷⁰⁹

Walter L. Blair, a reader, interpreted Selassie's return as God's divine judgment against the Fascists and how "God has shown every indication that he wants to help our race." Like many other Black Americans, Blair believed that now more than ever, it was necessary to remain united behind Selassie because the "expected redemption of Ethiopia may be the stepping stone

⁷⁰⁶ "Selassie Directs Bombing of Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, October 12, 1940.

⁷⁰⁷ "Ethiop Revolt Rumored Near," *The New York Amsterdam News*, November 9, 1940

⁷⁰⁸ George Padmore, "Native Troops Rally Under Selassie's Command," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 1, 1941

⁷⁰⁹ "Selassie Inspired by Menelik's Victory," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, March 1, 1941.

to a new day for peoples of African descent throughout the world."⁷¹⁰ The *Amsterdam Star-News*'s A. M. Wendell Malliet interpreted the emperor's leadership to continue Haiti and Liberia's historical legacy. Ethiopia, like Haiti and Liberia, were symbols of Black self-determination and, according to the journalist:

Like the men of their race of the Liberian Republic and the Republic of Haiti, the Ethiopians have seldom, if ever, lost diplomatic battles with the great power. In their dealings with the black statesmen Europeans and Americans usually appeal to intimidation and force to attain their ends in their dealings with the Black statesmen.⁷¹¹

Earlier, Menelik II had successfully repelled the threat of Italian domination and led his nation out of feudalism. His descendant, Haile Selassie, was continuing his proud legacy by now reclaiming his birthright and leading Ethiopia out of the darkness of Italian Fascism.

The Role of Colonial Soldiers in Ethiopia's Liberation

Selassie avenged his forced exile and Fascist Italy's forced invasion of his empire when the British and Ethiopian troops captured Addis Ababa. Royal Air Force bombers "smacked at Italian airdromes in Addis Ababa" and "bombed and machine-gunned Italian transport lines" and were aided by South African forces.⁷¹² Ethiopian warriors were also accompanied by white South African soldiers who, according to *The Negro Star*, proved "War makes odd bedfellows." The paper reported that "white Africans from England's South African colony treat natives with the utmost cruelty, despoiling them of all the rights and justice."⁷¹³ The newspaper's critiques reflect an awareness of the contradictions of South Africa's involvement since it represented all of the negative aspects of white settler colonialism in Africa because of its segregation of Black

⁷¹⁰ Walter L. Blair, "Ethiopia, the Hope of the Negro," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, March 1, 1941.

⁷¹¹ A. M. Wendell Malliet, "Ethiopia's Role in Current International Affairs," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, April 5, 1941.

⁷¹² "Addis Ababa Hit By Royal Airforce Raiders—British Force Close Pincer on Eritrean City," *Cleveland Gazette*, March 8, 1941.

⁷¹³ "Ethiopians and South Africans Fight for Same Objective," *Negro Star*, April 4, 1941.

and whites.⁷¹⁴ Britain also trained Ethiopian warriors, who revolted against the Italian invaders by capturing strategic cities in northern Ethiopia. The RAF bombarded the fascist-controlled cities of Keren in Eritrea and Dessye in Ethiopia while Ethiopian troops marched towards Gondor and ambushed 2,000 Italian troops.⁷¹⁵ Britain's participation in the Ethiopian war relied on African troops from West Africa, who were provided with limited arms and equipment including light machine guns, mortars, and grenades.⁷¹⁶ The Kings African Rifles, a highly trained unit composed mostly of indigenous Kenyans formed the backbone of the army. This regiment together with other regiments from Ghana and Nigeria made up the 11th and 12th British African divisions.⁷¹⁷ *The Age* proclaimed, due to the war "the picture has changed" and that "Great Britain is in a hole and anything goes, even arming African natives, something which the British have studiously avoided for more than a century."⁷¹⁸ *The Washington Tribune* brought to readers' attention how the fighting to reclaim Ethiopia from the fascists had implications for the colonial system in Africa and how natives perceived European power. The newspaper remarked that "it is becoming increasingly apparent to the African Negroes that the sundry white overlords who have exploited and oppressed them for over half a century are NOT omnipotent and all-powerful."⁷¹⁹ The Ethiopia question also marked a watershed in the awakening of racial and

⁷¹⁴ Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, 6-12.

⁷¹⁵ "Backfire of Warring in Africa May Mean Freedom for Natives," *Washington Tribune*, March 1, 1941.

⁷¹⁶ Andrew Stewart, *The Second World War and the East African Campaign* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 48.

⁷¹⁷ Andrew Moll, *The Armed Forces of World War II* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1987), 133.

⁷¹⁸ "The War Is Changing the Status of Darker Races," *New York Age*, March 1, 1941.

⁷¹⁹ "Backfire of Warring."

political consciousness in many West Africans.⁷²⁰ As the war pulled in Africans from British colonies who fought against natives from Italian East Africa, this caused "dissension among various tribal chiefs against the further murdering of brother Africans to perpetuate a continuance of white domination." Consequently, the British and the Italians were sitting on a powder keg since "In enlisting native aid in their private wrangle for world spoils" they "laid the groundwork for the eventual loss of all the African territories they have stolen to date."⁷²¹ Rudolph Dunbar, now the London Editor of the Associated Negro Press, concurred as he predicted that "For colored peoples in the British Empire, this war will be the means of freeing them from most of the tyrannies of imperialism."⁷²²

The Return of Selassie

On April 12, 1941, *The Courier* announced the long-awaited fall of Addis Ababa, the capital that Menelik II built. British and South African troops were the first to enter the city. Selassie marked his victory by riding into Addis Ababa on a "milk-white horse" at the head of a small detachment of palace guard troops.⁷²³ The *Amsterdam Star-News* remarked that Addis Ababa's capture was the first step "by the moral forces of the world to the right a great wrong and put an end to outrageous aggression as an instrument of national policy." Ethiopia was "stretching for her hands unto God and the prayers of her children, scattered though there are,

⁷²⁰ S.K.B Asante, "Italo-Ethiopian Conflict: A Case Study in British West African Response to Crisis Diplomacy in the 1930s," *The Journal of African History* 15, no. 2 (1974): 300.

⁷²¹ "Backfire of Warring in Africa."

⁷²² "Writer See Brighter Day for African Colonies Praises British for Promising Reparations for Injustice to Selassie and Ethiopia." *Plaindealer*, March 14, 1941.

⁷²³ James Edmund Boyack, "Haile Selassie Returns to Addis Ababa as Italians Flee," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 12, 1941.

have been heard at Easter time 1941." For six years, Ethiopians and Black Americans were praying for the country's deliverance from the Fascists.⁷²⁴

Finally, on May 5, 1941, Ethiopia was delivered from the oppressive and tyrannical rule of the Italian Fascists. On the fifth anniversary of the day the fascists sacked Addis Ababa, Selassie entered his capital riding a white horse ahead of British and Ethiopian soldiers.⁷²⁵ The Black and mainstream white newspapers hailed Selassie's return with great jubilation. *The Times* signaled how the "pendulum swung back," as the British, who had once forsaken him at the League of Nations Council, aided him in his restoration to the throne.⁷²⁶ *The Tribune* described how Selassie was greeted with cheers by his loyal and devoted subjects, which hung from their windows and waved green, gold, and red native flags and shouted as the emperor rode through the streets of Addis Ababa.⁷²⁷ In Harlem, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church sponsored a parade and Thanksgiving service. Edwin H. Collins, Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, read an ecclesiastical edict issue from his 'See in Harlem.' He proclaimed that "the first Sunday of May

⁷²⁴ "Fall of Addis Ababa," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, April 12, 1941.

⁷²⁵ "Returns in Triumph," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 10, 1941; "Writer See Brighter Day for Injustice to Selassie and Ethiopia," *Plaindealer*, March 14, 1941; Yaw Twumasi, "Press Freedom and Nationalist Under Colonial Rule in the Gold Coast (Ghana)," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 3 (December 1974): 499-520; Harri Englund, "Anti Anti-Colonialism: Vernacular Press and Emergent Possibilities in Colonial Zambia," *Comparative Studies* 57, vol. (January 2015): 221-246; Stephanie Newell, "Articulating Empire: Newspaper Readerships in Colonial West Africa," *New Formations* 73, no. 1 (November 2011); Bodlil Folker Frederickson, "Print, Newspapers and Audiences in Colonial Kenya: African and Indian Improvement, Protest and Connections," *Africa* 81, Issue 1 (January 2011): 155-172; Fred I.A. Omu, "The Dilemma of Press Freedom in Colonial Africa: The West African Example," *Journal of African History* IX, NO. 2 (1968): 279-298; Leena Gadallah, "Ordinary Resistance: Nonviolent Anti-Colonialism in Africa," *The Undergraduate Research Journal* 6, article 4 (2018); B.F. Fredericksen, "Censorship as Negotiation: The State and Non-European Newspapers in Kenya, 1930-1954," *Itinerario* 44, Special Issue 2: Colonial Public Spheres and the Worlds of Print (August 2020): 291-411.

⁷²⁶ "An Exile Comes Home," *The New York Times*, May 7, 1941.

⁷²⁷ "Haile Selassie Gets Settled in Addis Ababa," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 15, 1941.

in each successive year be set aside as a day of general thanksgiving in commemoration of the return of His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I to Ethiopia and the restoration of his empire."⁷²⁸

Now that Selassie regained his throne with the aid of the British, he was determined that Ethiopia contributed to the ultimate defeat of global fascism. He remarked that he was now "prepared to attack both Fascism and Nazism" and "he had the earnest desire to organize a regular Ethiopian army."⁷²⁹

Summary

The Black Leftist and mainstream presses agreed that Selassie's re-enthronement marked his triumph against Italian fascism. His allying with the British spoke to how he constantly took the moral high ground in international diplomacy. Since the beginning of the war, the emperor expressed his belief in integrity and an ethical and moral code that powerful Western nations such as Britain and France failed to conform to. Though Selassie experienced betrayal by the international system, he maintained an enduring belief in reconciliation. Now that Ethiopia successfully liberated itself from the yoke of Italian fascism, it committed itself to attacking the deluge of global fascism threatening democratic institutions. While Selassie turned his attention to this noble cause, The Black press questioned what would be the cost of Selassie's reconciliation and the wartime alliance with the British while also wondering about Selassie's plans for restoring his war-ravaged country.

⁷²⁸ "Haile Victory is celebrated," *New York Amsterdam-Star News*, May 10, 1941.

⁷²⁹ "Stone Roman Eagle."

CHAPTER VII: THE AFTERMATH

Introduction

Haile Selassie's triumphant return to his capital of Addis Ababa in May 1941 signaled the collapse of violent Italian fascist rule in Ethiopia. However, the collapse of fascist rule did not mean that Italian demobilized Black shirts ceased their martial campaigns against Ethiopian guerillas. Demobilized Italian and colonial soldiers, many still in possession of their weapons, continued to engage in isolated fights disrupting the country's economy and creating problems for the newly liberated Ethiopia. May 1941 to December 1942 marked the third phase of the Ethiopian war defined by Emperor Selassie's cooperation with the British during the campaign to rid Ethiopia of the fascist nest of resistance. This cooperation would have significant repercussions for Ethiopia because Britain's military presence coupled with the British' adviser's influence in the post-reconstruction civil administration of Ethiopia appeared to be an attempt to recolonize the country.

These developments indicated that Ethiopia was not liberated but occupied by the British.⁷³⁰ During the post-colonial period, Britain projected a sincere desire to see that Ethiopia regained its sovereign status to mark the end of the war. In post-reconstruction Ethiopia, the British colonial administration wanted to keep Ethiopia under its control to satisfy its colonial interests. Britain planned to carry the burden of civilizing Ethiopia and raising it to a modern European political standard.⁷³¹ The British civilizing mission or responsibility to the country whose severely underdeveloped political, economic, and social institutions trumped Britain's commitment to Ethiopian self-determination. Black publicists were always skeptical about

⁷³⁰ Jacqueline Swansinger, "A Three-Legged Race: Ethiopian Reconstruction, 1940-1944," *Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 177.

⁷³¹ "A Three-Legged Race:" 178.

Britain's motives for aiding Ethiopia to expel the fascists. This skepticism was linked to Britain being an imperial power that had a long history of treating its African colonials in its territories in East and West Africa with contempt despite signing the Atlantic Charter, which emphasized the idea of self-determination. Journalists criticized Britain's hypocrisy as it employed African colonial soldiers to aid in its mopping-up campaign to secure Ethiopian independence while denying freedom to British colonials. At the same time, the British government and the colonial system came under intense scrutiny by Black journalists and readers, who believed that Britain was a potential source of recolonization in Ethiopia.

Lastly, during this period, pro-Ethiopian organizing underwent a transition in 1941. The Ethiopian World Federation, established in the United States in 1937, took the lead in mobilizing support for pro-Ethiopia organizing. Debates in the press focused on why Black people should continue to support Ethiopia despite the fascists being expelled. Also, debates focused on the support for Ethiopia were linked to debates in the press about how Black people should support American involvement in World War II because defeating the fascists in Europe would mean security for Ethiopia and Black people.

Editorial Shift in Reporting the 3rd Phase of the 2nd Italo-Ethiopian War

The tone of the Black press's pro-Ethiopian discourse changed. This conflict meant that national Black newspapers such as *The Courier*, *The Amsterdam Star-News*, *The Defender*, and others moderated and maintained their militancy with a "more coded message of racial militancy that censors could approve and readers could applaud."⁷³² Radical anti-fascist discourses were moderated in the name of the Roosevelt administration's policy of political unity in the global struggle against fascism. However, the Black press continued their tradition as "democratic

⁷³² Carroll, *Race News*, 77.

newspapers" that "searched for the truth." They refused to "suppress or bury information that runs counter to its coffers" since it had a responsibility to its readers to advocate for the exigencies of Black America.⁷³³ At this point, an estimated 3.5 million and 6 million Black Americans read the Black press every week for war news in Europe, information on the fight against Jim Crow in America, and Ethiopia's rebuilding effort during the post-liberation period.⁷³⁴ The Black press critiqued Haile Selassie's postwar development campaign to extend a distinct imperial Ethiopia modernity that balanced cultural continuity and tradition. It questioned the commitment of the United States and Britain to Ethiopia's complete independence and the global struggle for democratic freedom since they maintained systems that supported white supremacy and the exploitation and oppression of Black people. The intensification of the global struggle against fascism and the United States' eventual entrance into the war did not shroud the Black press' commitment to complete Ethiopian independence. Instead, the press articulated an anti-fascist discourse encouraging unity around the American war effort.

Pro-Ethiopian Organizing After Selassie Returns to the Throne

Selassie was the first emperor in exile to regain the throne of Solomon. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's government funded Selassie's lawful right to the Ethiopian throne.⁷³⁵ Selassie tried to reestablish an Ethiopian national government to aid in rehabilitating his war-torn empire. Once again, he stretched forth his hands to Black America. At this moment, Ethiopia stood at the crossroads of her destiny. On May 17, 1941, the *Amsterdam Star-News* in an unsigned editorial titled, "Duty and Obligation," narrated the emperor's expression of "hope

⁷³³ Marjorie McKenzie, "Purist of Democracy," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 12, 1942.

⁷³⁴ Paul Alkebulan, *The African American Press in World War II: Toward Victory at Home and Abroad* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 24.

⁷³⁵ Swansinger, "Three-Legged Race," 177.

that the Negro population of [the United States] [would] realize that their stake in the future of Ethiopia is subordinate only to their stake in the United States.” It was incumbent that “The American Negro should with a feeling of pride, urge the President and Congress to aid Ethiopia to the limit of our resources without delay.”⁷³⁶ *The Tribune* reported how the National Negro Congress (NCC) answered Ethiopia’s call by sending a letter to President Roosevelt asking the United States to apply the Lend-Lease policy that supplied Allied nations with food, oil, and other materials to Ethiopia. This request was related to Congress’ awareness that the Nazis were trying to take control of the African continent where “millions of [their] blood brothers live.” Nazi occupation was a threat to democracy and, therefore, Roosevelt should “send arms and munitions in quantities sufficient to equip in modern fashion a section of the Ethiopian army.”⁷³⁷ Additionally, Congress requested that Roosevelt allow "Negro pilots to aid in establishing an Ethiopian air force capable of combatting any threatened attacks" and "doctors, nurses, mechanics to aid Ethiopia the same way these services are being rendered to Great Britain."⁷³⁸ The NNC's appeal demonstrated that Black Americans had not lost interest in Ethiopia because of the European imbroglio but remained aware that Ethiopia was an essential front in the global struggle against the Nazism onslaught.

On June 21, 1941, *The Age* advertised that Miss Sadie Stockton, head of an amateur theatrical group in Harlem, was staging the play “The Hell Cat from Harlem” to raise money for Ethiopia.”⁷³⁹ Despite this activism, “The Ethiopian Patriot” in an editorial in *The Amsterdam*

⁷³⁶ “A Duty and Obligation,” *New York-Amsterdam Star-News*, May 17, 1941.

⁷³⁷ “NNC Wants Lend-Lease Aid Extended to Ethiopia: Declares Country in Danger Asks President to Send Colored Aviators; Doctors, Nurses,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, August 28, 1941.

⁷³⁸ “NNC Wants Lend-Lease Aid Extended.”

⁷³⁹ “Play on Harlem Life,” *New York Age*, June 21, 1941.

News chastised the “apparent indifference of the black race in the United States towards New Ethiopia, which arose from the degradation of the brutal “conquest” of the Fascist horde.”⁷⁴⁰ Since the war escalation in Europe, the writer alleged that there "is no interest in the Ethiopian people by their children in this country."⁷⁴¹ In light of this criticism, Ethiopian activism in the United States did not experience a denouement but rather a transition. By 1941, the Popular Front ended as the Comintern shifted from anti-fascism to advocating for peace with Germany. This move meant that Ethiopian organizing experienced a transition, and the organizing activities of the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) eclipsed the PCDE.

Ethiopian activism entered a new phase in 1941. The Ethiopian World Federation (EWF), established in the United States in 1937 to mobilize Black American support for Ethiopia during the Italian invasion, became a major pro-Ethiopian pressure group. On July 10, 1941, *The Tribune* announced that the third annual convention of the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) was held in New York. J. Finley Wilson, the grand exalted ruler of The Elks, was elected the organization's international president. His election "breathed new life into an organization, which was slowly growing in strength and numbers."⁷⁴² EWF was primarily concerned with the interests of Ethiopian refugees. On July 26, 1941, the *Amsterdam-Star News* publicized the launch of a fifty-thousand-dollar drive for the Ethiopian Refugee Fund at a banquet held in honor of Emperor Haile Selassie.⁷⁴³ In a different edition, *The Tribune* announced that the delegates in

⁷⁴⁰ Ethiopian Patriot, “Views on Many Questions: Ethiopia Lives Again,” *New York Amsterdam-Star News*, July 12, 1941.

⁷⁴¹ Ethiopian Patriot, "Views on Many Questions."

⁷⁴² Reverend William Lloyd Imes was elected international first vice-president, Wilfred E. Lewin, the executive secretary, Reverend G. M. Blackett, the chaplain, Angeline Blocker, Rosalind Jackson, and David A. Montague, the executive council members. See "Ethiop World Federation in 3rd Convention: Annual Meeting in New York This Year; Finley Wilson President," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, July 10, 1941.

⁷⁴³ “Ethiopian World Society to Meet,” *New York Amsterdam-Star News*, July 26, 1941.

the meeting were drawn from the eastern United States, Chicago, and Cuba. Other attendees were representatives from the American Society, the Ethiopian Welfare Federation, Inc., the Royal Order of Ethiopians, Odd Fellows, and UNIA.⁷⁴⁴ Ford reported the events of the July 23-27 Ethiopia World Federation (EWF) national convention in New York City. According to Ford, the EWF proclaimed, "The brutal rape of Ethiopia recently avenged... is a terrible sign of things that may still come to Black people of the world. The Nazi-Fascist beasts which tore at the living flesh of Ethiopia are bent upon spreading their barbarous creed and regime with the force of arms." Ford highlighted that "the outcome of these two front battles spreads over two continents depends on the freedom of the Ethiopian and African peoples."⁷⁴⁵ The *Amsterdam Star-News* further reported that during the closing session of the convention, Judge Jonah J. Goldstein of New York's Court of General Sessions delivered a speech asserting, "When the gangster Mussolini stepped into Ethiopia, many of us stood by and gave lip service. If that monster had been stopped at that time, London would not have been bombed after that."⁷⁴⁶ He called for "the extension of democracy to include members of every race, creed or color in the United States."⁷⁴⁷ Other speakers acknowledged, "The return of Emperor Haile Selassie to Ethiopia marked a turning point in world history." This turning point was defined by interracial unity, as he asserted, "Let us hang together, black and white, Jew and Christian." Echoing this sentiment, Dr. William Niederland of the Committee to Defend America urged the organization to exercise "a collective effort to end the brutalities and cruelties of the world" while demanding the

⁷⁴⁴ "Ethiopian Confab Re-Elects Wilson; Seeking \$50 000," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, July 31, 1941.

⁷⁴⁵ "Ethiopian Confab Re-Elects Wilson."

⁷⁴⁶ "Ethiopia World Group Meets: Prominent Speakers Appear Before Gatherings," *New York Amsterdam-News*, August 2, 1941.

⁷⁴⁷ "Ethiopia World Group Meets."

"extermination of those two criminals, Hitler and Mussolini."⁷⁴⁸ On August 21, 1941, *The Tribune* reported that Prince Weiser Assegedeuteck, wife of Lij Arayah Abebe, Emperor Selassie's representative in the United States, was the principal speaker of the EWF Convention. The Princess praised the race-conscious men and women in America who "worked unceasingly to aid their stricken homeland in every possible way during the Italo-Ethiopian war."⁷⁴⁹ Reflecting on Black America's pro-Ethiopian activism during the early phase of the war, she emphasized that "Ethiopia can never hope to repay in full measure the debt she owes Black America for its aid in her time of need." Despite the reportage of the EWF's confluence of pro-Ethiopia organizing, World War II monopolized the Black press, the Black public, and the United States' attention. Consequently, the Federation's membership declined, placing the organization on the brink of dissolution.⁷⁵⁰ The organization also experienced internal factional strife within its ranks by 1942. Notwithstanding these issues, the sense of African identity that it galvanized continued. However, it fueled African nationalist movements in later years and was instrumental in extending the process of Pan-African consciousness and cooperation.⁷⁵¹

The British and Ethiopian Mopping Up Campaign

During this transition in Addis Ababa, Selassie met, entered, or reclaimed a city racked by disorder and violence. From May to July 1941, the city experienced a crime wave as Ethiopian citizens committed crimes against other Ethiopians and Italians. Robberies took place in daylight on public roads. Ethiopians who had old scores to settle with the Italians committed these offenses. Italians living in the city did not bear the brunt of the crime since Abebe Arragai,

⁷⁴⁸ "Ethiopia World Group Meets."

⁷⁴⁹ "Ethiopia Can't Hope to Repay Debt to U. S., Princess Declares," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, August 21, 1941.

⁷⁵⁰ Harris, *African American Reactions*, 141.

⁷⁵¹ "Ethiopian World Federation."

leader of the Patriots and minister of war, ensured that Italians and their property were respected. He did this by posting guards in every Italian quarter and sentries outside the homes of prominent Italian civilians and officers.⁷⁵² After returning to Addis Ababa, Selassie did not summarily deport all Italians from Ethiopia. These surprising British authorities were concerned with evacuating the Italians from Ethiopia and along the borders of Italian Somaliland to ensure stability in Ethiopia and the surrounding area.⁷⁵³ Selassie's imperial policy conflicted with British military leaders in Addis Ababa since they wanted all Italians removed from Ethiopia to restore peace. Moved by humanitarian consideration, the British Government approached the Italian Government and proposed repatriating their citizens to Italy. Specifically, the proposal outlined that those Italian men, unfit for military service and women and children, would be moved to special camps near African embarkation points until they could board ocean liners bound for Italy.⁷⁵⁴ Similarly, older men incapable of fighting were sent to military camps in British East Africa.⁷⁵⁵ Selassie was concerned about the continuance of industrial development. He declared that “a certain number of trained Italian technicians will be allowed to remain temporarily until the Ethiopians can take over their work, or until British, American or other foreign experts can assume their jobs.”⁷⁵⁶ The Emperor allowed some Italians to remain because they knew about mechanized agriculture, and the country was experiencing a food shortage. Selassie eventually reversed his policy regarding Italian colonists in Ethiopia. On May 23, 1942, the *Amsterdam Star-News* reported that the emperor decided to expel all Italian Fascists settled in his country by Mussolini due to lands stolen from the natives. He turned them into plantations for the exclusive

⁷⁵² Sbaachi, “Haile Selassie and the Italians,” 29.

⁷⁵³ “British Restoring Ethiopia in Full.” *New York Times*, December 5, 1941.

⁷⁵⁴ “British Restoring Ethiopia in Full.”

⁷⁵⁵ “British Restoring Ethiopia in Full.”

⁷⁵⁶ “Italians to Stay.”

benefit of white colonizers. Selassie prioritized removing these Italian colonists because he recognized how the Axis powers Italy and Germany perceived Africa strategically during World War II. He wanted to "remove the danger of Fifth Column activities on the part of the Axis."⁷⁵⁷

The Conquering Lion of Judah to Addis Ababa in May 1941 and his restoration to the Ethiopian throne ushered in the third phase of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. The British mopping up campaign from May 15, 1941, to July 1941 to neutralize Italian nests of resistance characterized this phase of the Ethiopian war. Also, during this period, British officials demonstrated overbearing authority because the British colonial administrators in Ethiopia wanted to keep the small country under British control. The British Colonial Office's actions were a consequence of Britain's sense of responsibility to a country, whose political, economic, and social institutions were underdeveloped.⁷⁵⁸ Despite this circumstance, Selassie upheld his commitment to fighting against Fascism and Nazism by exhorting his people to continue their anti-fascist martial campaign of "Resist [ing] the dragon god of brutality which threatens the world."⁷⁵⁹ Ethiopian and British colonial troops focused on capturing and annihilating fascist threats to Ethiopian sovereignty and peace. By May 18, 1941, South African and Indian native troops defeated Italian troops commanded by the Duke of Aosta at the northern mountain fortress of Amba Alagi.⁷⁶⁰ When the Duke raised the white flag, 7, 000 Italian troops and high-ranking officers, according to the *Herald Tribune*, surrendered to the British East African Command and

⁷⁵⁷ "Selassie Expelling Italians from Soil," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942.

⁷⁵⁸ Swansinger, "Three-Legged Race," 178.

⁷⁵⁹ "Haile Selassie Gets Settled in Addis Ababa: Call on People to Resist Enemy," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 15, 1941.

⁷⁶⁰ Cary Longmire, "Churchill Jeers at Nazis' Boast of African Rule: Praises Victory in Ethiopia," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 21, 1941.

yielded a 400-mile area in southern Ethiopia.⁷⁶¹ At this point, the Ethiopian empire that Mussolini spent five years building was falling from his grasp. The only critical Ethiopian areas now held by the Italians and their native troops were Gondor in the northeast and Jimma in the southwest.⁷⁶² The final collapse of the Italian forces in the Amba Alagi sector left only isolated guerrilla bands of Italians and native colonial troops in the Jimma and Gondor areas, which were the Fascist's last strongholds.

Black and white mainstream newspapers illustrated how Italian and African colonial troops in Ethiopia resisted the remaining fascists. *The Defender* reported that 800 Italians were captured when British imperial forces occupied the eastern Ethiopian city of Dalle, a vital road junction point.⁷⁶³ During the cleanup operations in the north and west of Addis Ababa, the British pushed back against Italian resistance by capturing four Italian divisions and two Generals. On the same day, another British contingent captured 800 Italians in the Magdala area between Dessye and Gondar in northern Ethiopia.⁷⁶⁴ The *Amsterdam-Star News's* W. M. Wendell Malliett wrote an article on June 7, 1941, declaring that 50,000 Italian soldiers were captured while 25,000 regular troops and a "large number of stragglers" remained at large and capable of giving the British and Ethiopian armies much trouble.⁷⁶⁵ In light of these reports, fighting in Ethiopia was limited because high-ranking Italian officers quickly surrendered. Many

⁷⁶¹ Edward Amply, "Aosta Yields Trapped Army In Amba Alaji," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 20, 1941.

⁷⁶² "Aosta Yields Trapped Army in Amba Alagi"; Edward Angly, "Italian Army in Ethiopia Is Surrendering: Aosta Requests Terms of British," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 19, 1941.

⁷⁶³ "Seize 800 Italians When Dalle is Taken," *The Chicago Defender*, May 24, 1941.

⁷⁶⁴ "Africa: Four Italian Divisions Mopped Up in Ethiopia, British Take 8570 Prisoners Including Two Generals," *Daily Boston Globe*, May 27, 1941.

⁷⁶⁵ W. M. Wendell Malliet, "Invaders Must Step Warily in Ethiopia: African Nation's Terrain Protected Guerilla Defenders", *New York Amsterdam-News Star*, June 7, 1941.

officers and Italian troops surrendered primarily because of exhaustion from the war, and the Allied troops had better armament than them.⁷⁶⁶ For example, at Jimma in southwestern Ethiopia, the British captured 8,000 Italian prisoners 11 generals, a corps commander, two divisional commanders, and eight brigadiers. Moreover, the British troops had the great advantage of a free flow of reinforcements.⁷⁶⁷ The surrender of the Italian commander and 3,000 Italians and 1,200 African troops at Debra Tabor on July 6, 1941, one of the strongholds of Italian resistance in northern Ethiopia, was a decisive victory for the British and Ethiopians.⁷⁶⁸

African colonial troops played a significant role in Britain's final blow to Italian resistance in East Africa. Fragments of Italian divisions armed with machine gun tanks launched a last-ditch counteroffensive. Congolese soldiers of the notorious Force Public in the Belgian Congo, which one time supported the ruthless colonial regime, even assisted the British in the reconquest, taking 15,000 Italian prisoners, including nine generals.⁷⁶⁹ On June 14, 1941, on *The Cleveland Call and Post's*, Rudolph Dunbar declared, "When the chronicles of the Abyssinian campaign are to be written, historians will do well to emphasize the important part played in the operations by West African Negro troops."⁷⁷⁰ He recognized that "Negroes all over the world will view with no small satisfaction that for the first time in history, British and Negro troops are cooperating to rid Africa of the Fascists." According to Dunbar, these troops were motivated to

⁷⁶⁶ "British at Jimma Take 8,000 of Foe," *New York Times*, June 24, 1941.

⁷⁶⁷ Alberto Sbacchi, "Haile Selassie and the Italians," *African Studies Review* 22, No. 1 (April 1979), 26.

⁷⁶⁸ "Italians Resist in Ethiopia," *New York Times*, June 21, 1941.

⁷⁶⁹ "Henri Fast, Assistant Commissioner of Information for Belgium to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," October 29, 1942, NAACP Papers, Subject File Africa-Ethiopia, 1942-48, 1940-55, <https://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.uncg/pdf/001439>

⁷⁷⁰ Rudolph Dunbar, "African Troops Win Glory in East African Fighting: Have Own Transport," *Cleveland Call and Post*, June 14, 1941.

fight the Italians because they knew if Mussolini and Hitler succeeded in constructing their fascist empires in Africa, they "would be subjected to a rule of unprecedented and scientifically organized color prejudice." He further praised the King's African Rifles saying, "the cream of African civilization," proved superior to Italian and native troops by "operat[ing] their transport and signal sections." These soldiers disapproved "the theory that African troops would not stand up to modern warfare" by "smash[ing] many attacks by Italian armored cars" and "charg[ing] enemy machine guns across open country." Dunbar underscored that they distinguished themselves in the battle by capturing the Italian stronghold of Sciasciatmanna, 100 miles south of Addis Ababa.⁷⁷¹ Britain's imperial forces crushed fascist resistance estimated at 300,000 troops in less than six months, including 100,000 Italian regulars.⁷⁷² The surrender of General Pietro Bagdoglio, Italy's General since the Duke of Aosta's surrender, broke all effective resistance by the fascists.⁷⁷³ By June 1941, 750,000 Ethiopians were killed by the end of the war, 500,000 houses and other properties were burned down, 2,000 churches were ransacked or ruined, about 14 million cattle were devoured, and 75 % of the educated young men were killed in cold blood.⁷⁷⁴

Italy's war with Ethiopia and its declaration of war against Britain and France on June 10, 1940, was linked to Mussolini's desire to expand his African Empire. The continued war with Ethiopia overextended Italy's financial and human resources since the country was also at war during its North African Campaign, which began in June 1940. The North African military

⁷⁷¹ "African Troops Win Glory."

⁷⁷² "Last of Italy's Ethiopian Army Give Up," *The Daily Worker*, July 5, 1941.

⁷⁷³ "Another Italian General Surrenders in Ethiopia," *New York Amsterdam-Star News*, July 12, 1941.

⁷⁷⁴ Haile Sellasie I King of Kings of Ethiopia, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, Volume 2, edited and annotated by Harold Marcus with Zekial Gebissa and Tibebe Eashete (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1994), 169.

campaign was centered in western Egypt, eastern Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Mussolini and Hitler planned to deprive the Allies of valuable oil reserves in the Middle East. During the Libya Offensive in May 1941, the British Royal Air Force (R. A. F.) unleashed an intensive effort against German and Italian forces. The R. A. F. blew up grounded German planes while R.A.F. fighter planes shot thousands of bullets into Axis vehicles.⁷⁷⁵ On June 22, 1941, three Italian bombers were set on fire at the airfield at Misurata in Eastern Libya. In Ethiopia, British forces participating in the capture of Lakemti, 180 miles from Addis Ababa, chased Italian forces across the Dadessa River to northern Ethiopia.⁷⁷⁶ *The Daily Worker* reported that these defeats revealed that Mussolini's promises of an African empire that "would bring to Italy the bread that fascism could not provide have fallen apart" since "Italian fascism [was] being defeated badly in Ethiopia and Italy."⁷⁷⁷ By December 1941, Ethiopia was clear of her Italian invaders. However, Ethiopia's problems were not solved. The emperor presided over a country embroiled in internal division. Local chieftains took advantage of how there were "too many rifles and too much ammunition left by the Italian invaders," and they proceeded to use these resources to "retain their private armies and oppress their subjects whenever they chose."⁷⁷⁸ On June 28, 1941, *The Defender* reported Selassie's moves to rid his kingdom of those tribal chieftains who betrayed Ethiopia during the Italo-Ethiopian war by allying with the Italians. He ordered the arrest of tribal leaders who sold out to the Italians.⁷⁷⁹

Although the fascists were martially defeated in Ethiopia, the fight was still not over as the country's Ethiopian and Italian civilian population experienced dire suffering. Surprisingly,

⁷⁷⁵ "R. A. F. Pounds Nazis in Libya Offensive," May 23, 1941.

⁷⁷⁶ "R. A. F. Fires Italian Planes," *New York Times*, June 22, 1941.

⁷⁷⁷ "Italy Challenges Mussolini," *The Daily Worker*, December 14, 1941.

⁷⁷⁸ "The Fall of Gondor," *New York Times*, December 1, 1941.

⁷⁷⁹ "Selassie Begins Purge of Ethiop's Betrayers," *The Chicago Defender*, June 28, 1941.

famine, not the Fascists, was the biggest threat in Ethiopia. The *Amsterdam Star-News*' Wendell Malliet, in an article published on June 7, 1941, noted that "large tracts of the country have been laid waste" and agricultural strikes hindered food production during the occupation. This occurrence happened because "the natives refused to grow foodstuffs and even enough to feed the native populations."⁷⁸⁰ Additionally, Ethiopian soldiers in the countryside were starving. The fascists burned crops, economic activities were at a standstill, and many Ethiopians who earned their living by working for Italian colonists were jobless.⁷⁸¹ According to Malliet, this labor action "may go against people themselves."⁷⁸² The Red Cross responded to this crisis by sending 460 cases of dried milk and 30000 tons of foodstuffs to Ethiopians residing in territories seized from the Italians.⁷⁸³ On August 2, 1941, the *Amsterdam Star-News* reported that thousands of Italian civilians were "stranded and without means of support;" while starving due to the sabotage of the agricultural system, they were "fighting desperately to obtain food and other means of sustenance."⁷⁸⁴ Five years of struggle against Italian tyranny left the Ethiopian people destitute. Joel A. Rogers voiced that the Ethiopian people "cannot afford medical supplies in the dear Western markets." In response to his appeals, several prominent Black citizens in New York founded the relief organization Democracy in Action to raise funds for the cause. Additionally, the British-American Corps sent two ambulances to Ethiopia.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸⁰ Wendell Malliett, "Invaders Must Step."

⁷⁸¹ Sellassie, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, 169.

⁷⁸² Malliet, "Invaders Must Step."

⁷⁸³ "Ethiopia Gets Food from U. S." *New York Times*, July 31, 1941.

⁷⁸⁴ "Say Italian Civilians in Ethiopia Starving." *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, August 2, 1941.

⁷⁸⁵ J. A. Rogers. "Ethiopia Needs Medical Supplies," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 21, 1942.

Britain's Hypocrisy and the Atlantic Charter 1941

The Black and the white press alike publicized how British Prime Minister Winston Churchill supported Haile Selassie's right to the Ethiopian throne and his authority to rule the Ethiopian Empire. Though Black journalists praised British imperial operations, they did not forget how Britain and the rest of the international community failed to live up to its espousal of a belief in liberal democracy. The NAACP's Roy Wilkins, recounted in his column "Watchtower," in the *Amsterdam-Star News*, Britain extended Selassie's refuge for five years and aided Ethiopia in defeating the Italian fascists. However, Britain and the rest of the international community failed to aid Ethiopia during its 5-year struggle to maintain its independence. Wilkins' article included a reprint of Selassie's message to Roosevelt, asserting, "it was fitting that the first victim of Axis greed should be the first to be delivered."⁷⁸⁶ Though Selassie practiced the politics of reconciliation, he did not forget how Britain led the League of Nations in undermining its Covenant with its "cyclical disregard of the verdict of 52 assembled nations at The League of Nations should be first punished." He linked the "unprovoked aggression" of Italy in 1935 to be a "forerunner of all later aggressions- a herald to world war."⁷⁸⁷ Though the "stupid brutality" of fascism, which threatened Ethiopia's sovereignty, met decisive defeat in East Africa, it continued to "spread like a cancerous growth" in Europe.⁷⁸⁸ *The Defender* reported that since Britain aided Ethiopia militarily in its final hour and helped liberate the nation, the emperor adopted the position that "The enemies of Britain are my enemies." He proclaimed that he was "prepared to attack both Fascism and Nazism." Though Selassie asserted

⁷⁸⁶ Roy Wilkins "Watchtower," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, May 17, 1941.

⁷⁸⁷ "Watchtower."

⁷⁸⁸ "Watchtower."

that "it is my earnest desire to organize a regular army in Ethiopia," his debilitated country was only prepared to offer moral support to Britain during its battle against German Fascism.⁷⁸⁹

Criticism of the British and their Imperial Intentions in Ethiopia

Any gratitude Black Americans may have felt toward British contributions to the defeat was dampened considerably by British imperialism. *The Daily Worker* continued its criticism of Britain's actions in Ethiopia to expand its imperial domains in East Africa. The newspaper reported that though Britain was not committed to Black independence, which challenged its imperial prerogative, anyone "would be naive to think that the Churchill government would extend democracy and independence" to Ethiopia.⁷⁹⁰ The British-Ethiopian military alliance resulted in Ethiopia coming under the administrative control of Britain. This circumstance led to the questioning of Ethiopia's status as a full member of the international community of nations. *The Defender* reported that since the British were playing a significant role in pushing back the fascists, an influential conservative section of British public opinion was "cling[ing] to the view that the best safeguard is for Ethiopia to become a British protectorate."⁷⁹¹ According to the newspaper, some of the British were "translating Haile Selassie's request for assistance into a golden opportunity to do by connivance and treachery what Fascist Italy accomplished by force of arms."⁷⁹² Those advocating for this course of action posited that an independent Ethiopia would be a constant temptation for Italy, which might try to invade with the aid of Nazi Germany. The newspaper criticized this reasoning as symptomatic "in the minds of many Britain

⁷⁸⁹ "Nazis Our Foes, Selassie Tells Subjects: British Foes Our Enemies Says Selassie," *The Chicago Defender*, May 17, 1941.

⁷⁹⁰ "Fresh Look for the Empire," *The Daily Worker*, June 2, 1941.

⁷⁹¹ "The Status of Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, June 14, 1941.

⁷⁹² "The Status of Ethiopia."

to restore complete independence to Ethiopia would be offensive to white susceptibilities."⁷⁹³ This sentiment meant that though Ethiopia had broken the hold of the Italian Fascists, it was now forced to fight back against the aggression of British imperialism. *The Daily Worker* related that "while the British imperialists drove the Italians out," they did not do this "to free Ethiopia, but to improve the position of British imperialism."⁷⁹⁴ *The Amsterdam Star-News* reprinted excerpts from an issue of *The New Times and Ethiopia News* expressing that "there should be no delay in completely clarifying matters." Accordingly, the formal recognition of Ethiopia should formally expunge the "ill-fated Anglo-Italian agreement as an independent state."⁷⁹⁵ Until Britain took steps to rectify this situation, Ethiopia's independence remained analogous "to that of a landowner who lacks title deeds to protect his right against the machinations of dishonest persons."⁷⁹⁶ The fact that the British government failed to address Ethiopia's political status led the *Amsterdam News-Star* to question "whether Ethiopia would now be according the diplomatic status of an ally" especially since Britain was evading the issue.⁷⁹⁷ The newspaper expressed that "there should be no delay in completely clarifying matters and that the ill-fated Anglo-Italian agreement should be formerly expunged by the formal recognition of Ethiopia as an independent state."⁷⁹⁸ *The Defender*, in a similar fashion, in an unsigned editorial condemned Britain's failure to push for Ethiopia's recognition in the international community as an extension of its

⁷⁹³ "The Status of Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, June 14, 1941.

⁷⁹⁴ "Trying to Make Pawn of Ethiopia," *The Daily Worker*, May 14, 1936.

⁷⁹⁵ "Status of Ethiopia Among Anti-Axis Nations Are Not Yet Clarified," *New York Amsterdam-Star News*, July 19, 1941.

⁷⁹⁶ "Status of Ethiopia Among Anti-Axis Nations."

⁷⁹⁷ "Status of Ethiopia Among Anti-Axis Nations."

⁷⁹⁸ "Status of Ethiopia Among Anti-Axis Nations."

“damnable” and “ruthless imperialist practices that Britain pursu[ed] in her colonies, especially in Africa.”⁷⁹⁹

Britain’s questionable actions were due to the demand of South African Boers who believed they should be allowed to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia as a price for aiding Ethiopia in the war. This development was tied to South Africa’s belief that they were owed a right to share in the administrative control of Ethiopia because they helped Haile Selassie defeat Italian resistance. The newspaper judged South Africa's argument as erroneous, and "such a step would be like giving white Mississippi a protectorate over Chicago's South Side."⁸⁰⁰ *The Defender's* Metz T. P. Lochard weighed in on this issue, which he saw as the "strangest developments in this strange war."⁸⁰¹ He recognized South Africa's argument as specious since "the Ethiopians represented the largest single military unit that fought incessantly to restore Haile Selassie to the throne and the country's independence." According to him, this was another example of “imperialistic design” by South Africa to promote its interests at the expense of East Africa.⁸⁰² On December 27, 1941, George Padmore’s writing in *The Courier*, reprinted that "The British government is deliberately throwing away an admirable opportunity of showing that the Atlantic Charter and the declarations of our statements are honest." Professor Keith had earlier written this in the liberal British newspaper, *The Manchester Guardian*, asserting⁸⁰³ Great Britain’s treatment of Ethiopia as the legal sovereign of the nation while regarding themselves as occupying enemy territory “completely ignor[ed] the rights of the emperor, placing him on the

⁷⁹⁹ “The Defense of Democracy,” *The Chicago Defender*, November 15, 1941.

⁸⁰⁰ “Ethiopia: Out of the Frying Pan,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 13, 1941.

⁸⁰¹ Metz T.P. Lochard, “Now S. Africa Wants A Share of Ethiopia.” *The Chicago Defender*, September 13, 1941.

⁸⁰² “Now S. Africa Want.”

⁸⁰³ George Padmore, “Britain Denounces Attitude toward Haile Selassie in Bitter Tirade,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 27, 1941.

same footing as a rebel chief who has helped us drive out his lawful sovereign.” The professor concluded Britain’s plan “is a policy as dangerous as it is dishonorable.”⁸⁰⁴

Selassie was finally recognized as the lawful emperor of Ethiopia by the British on January 31, 1942, after Ethiopia and Britain signed the two-year Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty.⁸⁰⁵ The treaty provided Ethiopia with a 2,500,000-dollar grant to aid its post-war reconstruction. The British were given the right to use all immovable property belonging to the Italian state without payment in return for the grant of money. They had the authority to manage the Franco-Italian Ethiopian Railroad. After signing this agreement, Ethiopia became the first nation to restore its independence by Allied action.⁸⁰⁶ Also, British administrators were sent to Ethiopia, which provided Britain with determining influence in the country's internal affairs, which undermined Ethiopia's sovereignty. Publicists furiously attacked the treaty as a betrayal of Ethiopia and an example of British colonial domination. *The Courier's* George S. Schuyler criticized how Selassie "[gave] up everything except his white nightgown" by accepting this treaty where the British military mission and "advisers" to the Emperor would "pull the strings" of Selassie "like the British residents who pull the strings behind the rajah of every Indian state."⁸⁰⁷ This policy revealed how Britain's civilizing mission guided its foreign policy. It showed that "Ethiopia cannot accept the recent Anglo-Ethiopian treaty which makes Ethiopia a virtual British possession" since “it plac[ed] the foreign military and economic affairs of Ethiopia under the

⁸⁰⁴“Britain Denounces Attitude toward Haile Selassie.”

⁸⁰⁵ “Britain Signs Ethiopian Treaty. Recognizes Haile,” *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, December 20, 1941.

⁸⁰⁶Robert O. Post, “Britain, Ethiopia Sign 2- Year Pact,” *New York Times*, February 2, 1942.

⁸⁰⁷ George S. Schuyler, View, and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 21, 1942.

control of British advisers."⁸⁰⁸ An independent Ethiopia represented a bad example for Africa, and the British anti-fascist Sylvia Pankhurst asserted that "Ethiopia [was] being used" to "satisfy possible future demands of other nations with stakes in Africa."⁸⁰⁹

Criticism of British as Being Hypocrites

Different parties criticized Britain's official declaration of war against German fascism and its alliance with Ethiopia to resist Italian fascism. This criticism was evident in the wake of the Atlantic Charter or statement of principles between President Roosevelt and Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, during the wartime conference from August 9-12, 1941. Among the essential principles outlined in the Charter was supporting the restoration of the self-government countries occupied during the war.⁸¹⁰ It excluded colonial subjects because of the British government's view that they needed progressive evolution towards self-government.⁸¹¹ Franklin Roosevelt, on the other hand, argued that they should apply to all people. Accordingly, the Atlantic Charter became a central issue in Black American political discourse, and it, therefore, helped shape the subsequent politics of the African diaspora.⁸¹² The exposure of British hypocrisy included condemning Britain's discrimination and color bar against West African troops from the Gold Coast and Nigeria stationed in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya in British East

⁸⁰⁸ "Villiard Lauds Courageous Negro Leaders League for Industrial Democracy's Dinner," *New York Age*, May 16, 1942.

⁸⁰⁹ "Sylvia Pankhurst Fights Ethiopia' Cause," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942.

⁸¹⁰ Bonny Ibawahoh, "Testing the Atlantic Charter: Linking Anti-Colonialism, Self-Determination, and Universal Human Rights," *The International Journal of Human Rights* (2014): 1

⁸¹¹ Christopher Baxter and M.L. Dockrill and Kenneth Hamilton, eds., *Britain in Global Politics Vol 1: From Gladstone to Churchill* (Houndsmill: Palgrave MacMillan 2013),

⁸¹² Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 26; The same year the Atlantic Charter was passed a delegation of African journalists traveled to London with the intent of clarifying the application of the Atlantic Charter to European colonies in Africa. Their key interest was the third clause affirming the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live."

Africa. On November 22, 1941, the *Amsterdam Star-News* reported it was typical "to refuse natives admittance to cinemas patronized by white people. Neither are they allowed to see certain Hollywood films that may tend to lower the dignity and prestige of the white race."⁸¹³

Black internationalists issued criticism regarding Britain's evasion of its undemocratic and unfair treatment of people of African descent in its colonial territories. On August 30, 1941, Metz T. P. Lochard voiced that Britain "avoided any definitive reference to the African problem" and "with the partial settlement of the Ethiopian war, the issue has been raised several times in the House of Commons" yet "no categorical statement has been made."⁸¹⁴ Britain's recognition of India's claims for political independence during the post-war period led Lochard to question: "what of the African colonies... contributing men and money to the cause of democracy?"⁸¹⁵ Lochard believed Britain's failure to address the African issue revealed: "she does not regard it as one that requires attention and solution."⁸¹⁶ In a separate edition, Lochard criticized Britain's "suppression of political rights, the exploitation of native labor, abolition of a trade union, utilization of child labor, and together with inadequate school and housing facilities for Africans and West Indians." These practices, according to Lochard, could "scarcely be interpreted as attributes of freedom and democracy."⁸¹⁷ *The Courier* concluded that Whites' continued subjugation of Ethiopia and other African nations could end. However, there was a need to enact an "African Charter that would mean anything would guarantee the return of all expropriated

⁸¹³ "Expose British Rule in Africa," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, November 22, 1941.

⁸¹⁴ Metz T.P. Lochard, "Africa's Problems Seem of No Concern to Britain," *The Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1941.

⁸¹⁵ "Africa's Problems Seem."

⁸¹⁶ "Africa's Problems Seem."

⁸¹⁷ Metz T. P. Lochard, "British Colonial Policy, Hurts the Native Races," *The Chicago Defender*, September 19, 1941.

lands to their rightful owners" and provide compensation of African peoples for wealth taken out of their respective countries. Accordingly, the newspaper also concluded that the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement only amounted to "a long period of tutelage (and exploitation to prepare them for self-government)" though Ethiopia "was self-governing for centuries before the Europeans subdued them with superior firearms."⁸¹⁸ By September 1942, British troops departed from Addis Ababa. However, a unit of fifty men remained to Guard the British legation, and parts of Ethiopia territory adjacent to French Somaliland remained under the control of British forces.⁸¹⁹ *The Courier* saw this development positively as it declared, "it is becoming evident that England is sincere in the effort to restore Haile Selassie to his former position as independent sovereign of Ethiopia."⁸²⁰

Criticism of Continuance of Segregation in the U.S. Military

American anti-racism paralleled these criticisms but with a sharper edge as Black publicists participated in campaigns for reform in the military because of the continuation of Jim Crow racism in the American military. In 1941, Roosevelt delivered his "Four Freedoms" speech outlining the fundamental rights of all human beings in the world. *The Amsterdam Star-News* highlighted how "the colored people of the United States are still insisting upon the inclusive ideals set forth by the Atlantic Charter," which was influenced by Roosevelt's Four Freedoms.⁸²¹ In reaction, Black editors were guided by the suggestion of the ANP's Director Claude A. Barnett, who called for the activation of volunteer units of white and Black soldiers. Other editors, including E. Washington Rhodes of *The Tribune*, Roy Wilkins of *The Crisis*, A.C.

⁸¹⁸ "Wanted an African Charter," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 14, 1942.

⁸¹⁹ "British Quit Ethiopia in Convention Accord," *New York Times*, September 1, 1942.

⁸²⁰ "British Troops Leave Ethiopia!" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 12, 1942.

⁸²¹ Emmett J. Scott, Right to Fight," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, January 17, 1942.

Macneal of *The Defender*, convened a historic conference to "bring sharp focus on America's racial problem before the men who need to see it."⁸²² *The Crisis* questioned Roosevelt and the U.S. Department of War's failure to extend democracy to Black Americans at home while claiming to fight for its defense abroad. The editorial exposed Roosevelt's hypocrisy regarding his defense of liberal democracy, asserting, "America is marching to war to stop brutalities overseas." Meanwhile, "our government does not choose to stop lynching within its borders, or even make the borders of its army camps, which are under its jurisdiction."⁸²³ This comment spoke to Roosevelt's expression of the freedom from fear while failing to defend democracy by condemning the lynching of Black soldiers such as Private Felix Hall of the 24th United States Infantry Regiment. His body was found hanging in a tree in Ft. Benning, Ga.⁸²⁴ Despite the report of these brutalities, the War Department "[gave] no evidence of being disturbed over the brutal treatment of Negro soldiers" despite their being "defenseless loyal citizens" who "are being slaughtered for their patriotism."⁸²⁵

Racial tensions in the United States during World War II also led to race riots in the South and confrontations between whites and Black troops. This violence was attributed to how white Southerners shored up their power and this led to an increase in racial violence in cities where Black soldiers were stationed.⁸²⁶ Riots occurred at Army bases in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Gordon, Arkansas, and Alexandria, Louisiana in 1941. *The Philadelphia Tribune's* columnist Arthur Fauset asserted that if Roosevelt wanted to support a war for democracy, "let's

⁸²² P.L. Prattis, "The Horizon: Conference of Negro Editors Challenge to War Department Officials," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 20, 1941.

⁸²³ "War time Lynchings," *The Crisis* 48, no 6 (June 1941): 183.

⁸²⁴ "Wartime Lynchings."

⁸²⁵ "The War Department," *The Chicago Defender*, September 20, 1941.

⁸²⁶ Kevin M. Cruse, *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 72

begin it in Texas at Camp Dix, where I see by the Philadelphia Record." Private Edward Stephens Bey is being persecuted because of his religious beliefs. According to Fauset, Bey's Muslim faith outlined "that he must not shave, that he must wear the Fez and not partake of certain kinds of food." He was prevented from observing his religious tenets by being "clamped into an army jail" because he refused to "defer to Texas habits."⁸²⁷ An editorial appearing in *The Defender* on October 18, 1941, asserted that Roosevelt could demonstrate his commitment to saving the world from fascism and revitalizing the spirit of democracy by the "Complete integration of the Negro in the U. S. Army."⁸²⁸ The publication reports that "the time [was] ripe therefore to push through the U. S. Congress some legislative measures essential to our well-being."⁸²⁹ On September 20, 1941, the *Amsterdam Star-News* published a letter from "Scrutator," a reader commenting that Roosevelt's fight against fascism was a defense front "on the part of white American minorities to save their hides from the inevitable wrath of the outraged majority."⁸³⁰ Roosevelt's inaction regarding the abuse against Black soldiers spoke to America's maintenance of "the fiction of democracy" while "denying the Negro the very security that the government seeks to preserve."⁸³¹

Wendell L. Willkie, the Republican nominee for President of the United States in 1940, was one of the few journalists who made an explicit comparison between Jim Crow racism and imperialism during this phase of the war. He weighed in on how double victory was needed against imperialism in the United States and abroad. During his closing address at the

⁸²⁷ Arthur Fauset, "I Write as I See: Texas Battles For "Democracy," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 19, 1941.

⁸²⁸ "Our Jim Crow Army," *The Chicago Defender*, October 18, 1941.

⁸²⁹ "Our Jim Crow Army."

⁸³⁰ Scrutator, "Negro Under U. S. Fascism," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, September 20, 1941.

⁸³¹ "The War Department," *The Chicago Defender*, September 20, 1941.

N.A.A.C.P.'s national convention, well-meaning, he assured his audience that "Americans cannot fight the forces and ideas of imperialism abroad and maintain a form of fascism at home."

Willkie recognized that although the United States supported global anti-imperialism, it has "practiced within [its] own borders something that amounts to race imperialism."⁸³² He believed that there was "not a clash between races. It is rather a clash between concepts of government and life."⁸³³ This aspect was reflected by "the attitude of the white citizens of this country toward the Negroes" whose attitudes and actions [have] undeniably shown unlovely characteristics of an all on imperialism." Willkie observed that these characteristics were "a strong sense of racial superiority, a willingness to exploit unprotected people." This reality tended to be overlooked or played down by "a moral atmosphere" that "is identical with that in which well-meaning men coil talk of the white man's burden." He concluded that the United States needed to address its hypocrisy because "we cannot fight the forces and ideas of imperialism abroad and maintain a form of imperialism at home." This only "rendered our inequities self-evident."⁸³⁴

The Black press spotlighted that a minority of Black Americans engaged in the broader debate concerning Black people's participation in the war to gain American citizenship rights. Black isolationism took hold among some because of dissatisfaction with how Black Americans made many gains after World War I. Unfortunately, racism, unemployment, and underemployment remained significant issues. *The Amsterdam-News'* A. M. Wendell Malliet reported that one of the staff writers for the newspapers urged Roosevelt to bring Emperor Haile Selassie to the United States. This move would stimulate Black Americans' morale for the U.S. war effort since it was a "symbol of the struggle for freedom, liberty, justice, and democracy."

⁸³² "Wilkie Tells Nation Double Victory Needed," *People's Voice*, July 24, 1942.

⁸³³ "Wilkie Tells Nation Double."

⁸³⁴ "Willkie Tells Nation Double."

Though this did not produce a result, Malliet warned Roosevelt that "he ought to know that the colored peoples are very restive under white rule." Furthermore, he urged the publishers of prominent Black newspapers, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Committee on Africa, and the Council on African Americans, co-founded by leftist Max Yergen, to intervene and lobby Roosevelt.⁸³⁵

The Harlem activist Richard B. Moore considered the most radical Black activist in the United States and whose politics combined Black Nationalism and Marxism, concurred. However, Moore presented a more nuanced argument declaring that "Fascism is the most sinister and moral individual enemy of the Negro" and the Fascist rape of Ethiopia demonstrated "the horrible fate which Fascism has marked out for the African peoples and all people of African descent."⁸³⁶ Furthermore, *The Amsterdam News-Star's* reporter George W. Harris warned Black Americans that though Emperor Selassie regained his throne, they should be cautious of the geopolitical influence of the triumvirate of Japan, Germany, and Italy. They could not "lazily and prematurely ... [lay] Mussolini-the idolized preceptor of Hitler-away in mothballs." Black people needed to understand that "in the event of the fortune of the war turning disastrously against them for a spell," they would possibly "throw African overboard as too much ballast" in self-preservation.⁸³⁷ He observed that Black Americans should not become complacent in their anti-fascist activism against Mussolini because they had a colonial-like status in America. Like the Ethiopians, they were "isolated and exploited by surrounding, covetous, Caucasian, colonial

⁸³⁵ A. M. Wendell Malliet, World Fronts," *New York Amsterdam-Star News*, September 26, 1942.

⁸³⁶ Richard B. Moore Raps Hitler Article; Calls Fascism Negroes' 'Most Deadly Foe,'" *New York-Amsterdam Star-News*, November 1, 1941.

⁸³⁷ George W. Harris, "If Hitler Wins The War," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, February 14, 1942.

governments." Thus, Hitler's winning the war also spelled doom for Black Americans because the "butcher and inhuman destruction in Abyssinia" because of the inaction of the "cowardly court of the League of Nations" would be revisited upon them.⁸³⁸

The anti-fascist politics during World War II, coupled with Japan's joining the fascist Axis alliance, including Germany and Italy, led some Black Americans and Black publicists to shift their position regarding Japan's being a friend of Black people. Furthermore, the FBI's leader J. Edgar Hoover who demanded Espionage Act indictments of certain Black newspapers, led to the Black mainstream press shifting its position to display American patriotism.⁸³⁹ The editorial "Japan and The Negro," in *The Defender* refuted the "popular fallacy that Japan-by reason of its non-Nordic classification-is interested in the black races should be discarded by all those who entertain such sentimental bunkum."⁸⁴⁰ Furthermore, the editorial asserted that the Japanese Empire "looked upon Negroes as inferior people" like their German partners.⁸⁴¹ On December 7, 1941, the Japanese engaged in a surprise and "unprovoked attack upon the United States" when it bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.⁸⁴² The next day, the United States Congress declared war against the imperial Japanese government. An article in *The Defender* relayed that this "dastardly act... was one of the early links in that chain of aggressions by the bandit-nations, which led to that later aggression, the attack on Pearl Harbor."⁸⁴³ On December 20, 1941, *The Tribune's* Dean Gordon Hancock wrote an editorial in response to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, asserting if Germany won the war, "Japan [would] become a satrapy of

⁸³⁸ "If Hitler Wins."

⁸³⁹ Horne, *The Rise, and Fall of the Associated Negro Press*, 62.

⁸⁴⁰ "Japan and the Negro," *The Chicago Defender*, August 16, 1941.

⁸⁴¹ "Japan and the Negro."

⁸⁴² "Japan Opens War on U. S.," *The Daily Worker*, December 8, 1941.

⁸⁴³ Frank L. Haynes, "Writers in Freedom's Cause," *The Chicago Defender*, September 26, 1942.

Germany and the world will become slaves of Germans-Japs as well as Negroes.”⁸⁴⁴ By Late December 1941, Ethiopia declared war against the Empire of Japan.

A minority of Black internationalists continued to express their support for Japan despite the U.S. government’s increased surveillance of pro-Japanese enthusiasts and the imposition of censorship in the name of the American war effort. *The Afro-American’s* columnist and editor Ralph Matthews voiced that "it has always been a great mystery to many people because we insist on a Monroe Doctrine and deny Japan similar political leadership in Asia."⁸⁴⁵ Matthews also argued that as Japan moved forward with its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, it was using the same strategy that Western countries used for centuries. Japan was using the “language of force “which according to Matthews, was the “only language the white man understands.”⁸⁴⁶ However, the columnist did not consider the way Japanese force was directed towards the Chinese rather than "the white man."⁸⁴⁷ He believed that the West emphasized Japan's imperial activities to inspire "the black hordes of Africa" to overthrow their colonial masters.⁸⁴⁸ Matthews' explicit support for Japan is surprising since the Justice Department surveilled Black newspapers to weed out any supporters of Japan. From March to October 1942, *The Defender*, *Amsterdam-Star News*, and the *Times* reported on the indictment of pro-Japanese Black Nationalist groups. *The Amsterdam-Star News* played a crucial role in exposing the activities of The Ethiopian Pacific Movement, which was based in Harlem. It gained supporters in forty-six

⁸⁴⁴ Dean Hancock, “Between the Lines; Color vs. Country,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 20, 1941.

⁸⁴⁵ Ralph Matthews, “Opinion: Fighting Japan Our Own Hands Are Not Clean,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, December 6, 1941.

⁸⁴⁶ “Opinion: Fighting Japan.”

⁸⁴⁷ “Opinion: Fighting Japan.”

⁸⁴⁸ “The Big Parade.”

states with a claimed membership of 4,000,000 to 6 million.⁸⁴⁹ Members of the Ethiopian Peace Movement led by Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, the Temple of Islam led by Elijah Muhammed, the Brotherhood for Liberty for the Black People of America founded by Stokely Carmichael galvanized their members and encouraged them to evade the draft.⁸⁵⁰ The newspaper exposed how members of the movement committed sedition by allying with Japan to create an African empire ruled by Black Americans and under the protection of Japan. *The Times* also related how pro-Japanese sympathies extended to Chicago. Their pro-Japanese support was an outgrowth of the Black Dragon Society, which organized a branch in Chicago in 1930 to foster a Black American and Japanese alliance. They were also told they would be furnished with firearms by the Japanese for use when the day should come” for the Japanese invasion of the United States.⁸⁵¹ These individuals whom *The Courier* referred to as “fools and fanatics” who were “duped and deceived into foolish ways as they “claimed they were citizens of Ethiopia under some mysterious treaty between [the United States] and the African country signed years ago.”⁸⁵²

The majority of Black journalists expressed disdain regarding those Black nationalists who put their hopes in an alliance with Japan. *The Courier*, *Defender*, and *Amsterdam Star-News* reported that members of the pro-Japanese movement were a "hysterical element" who "did not seem to understand that" the "average American Negro is American first, with less foreign ties than any other group in the country."⁸⁵³ *The Defender* reprinted a quote from A. Philip Randolph

⁸⁴⁹ “Woman Quizzed in Nazi Spy Ring Says: ‘I Love The Japs!,” *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, March 14, 1942.

⁸⁵⁰ “Seize 84 Negroes In Sedition Raids,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1942. “FBI Holds Negroes on Draft Dodging Charge,” *The Plain Dealer*, September 25, 1942.

⁸⁵¹ “Arrest Agent of Japanese Aid Society,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 8, 1942.

⁸⁵² Joseph D. Bibb, “Fools and Fanatics: Eighty-Five Negroes Accused of Sedition and Subversive Activities,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 3, 1942.

⁸⁵³ “The Pacific Movement,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942.

condemning these Black nationalists asserting, "Any Negro who thinks the Negro people have anything to gain by the victory in Japan in this war, is hopelessly dumb, ignorant, and ridiculous and is living in a fool's paradise." In the final analysis, Randolph asserted that Black pro-Japanese supporters were misguided since Japan would "oppress and exploit them as quickly and ruthlessly as the Chinese do."⁸⁵⁴ The *Amsterdam Star-News* spoke to "fake Ethiopians" who led the pro-Japanese organization and that "the only organization using the name Ethiopia that is bonafide on its record, its intention, and actions toward the name it bears, is the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF)." The newspaper lambasted the members of the Ethiopian Pacific Movement as "self-seeking, roguish individuals with ulterior motives" who did not speak to the politics of the majority of Black Americans who were "loyal, law-abiding Americans." According to the newspaper, these pro-Japanese movements were a hindrance to Black internationalism. *The Amsterdam-News* asserted members of the Ethiopian Pacific movement were "prostituting the fair name of Ethiopia" and "should be ridden out of town on rails" because their propaganda amounted to "pro-slavery propaganda."⁸⁵⁵

Why War in Europe Matters to Black Americans

Black Americans watched with great concern regarding the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Black leftist and liberal internationalists revered Russia as a bulwark of democracy and an ally in Black people's struggle for independence. *The Defender's* Metz T.P. Lochard voiced that Germany's attack of Russia demonstrated "the folly of trying to appease the mad man of Germany and proves beyond doubt that he is unalterably bent on world conquest."⁸⁵⁶ In an

⁸⁵⁴ "Randolph Hit Pro-Japanese," *The Chicago Defender*, October 3, 1942.

⁸⁵⁵ "The Fake Ethiopians," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, October 3, 1942.

⁸⁵⁶ Metz T. P. Lochard, "Russia, Democracy's Bulwark, Girds to Halt Onslaught of Nazi Menace," *The Chicago Defender*, June 28, 1941.

editorial in *The Defender*, Philip Francis, a reader, argued that “the Negro people should stand behind Russia against the Nazi beast” because Russia “stood firmly against the rape of Ethiopia.”⁸⁵⁷ After the invasion, the CPUSA reversed its ideological line regarding the world war. During the Soviet-Nazi nonaggression pact, the war was denounced as an “imperialist war.” The war became a formidable challenge between fascism and democracy as the CPUSA emphasized a “people’s front” or all American democratic forces against Hitler and fascism with the slogan “Defend America by giving full aid to the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and all nations who fight against Hitler.”⁸⁵⁸ Moreover, the CPUSA posited that the Soviet Union defended the civilized world from the Nazis, stating: “the Soviet Government is now waging a struggle not only in defense of its socialist land but also in defense of the most vital interests of the peoples of all countries.”⁸⁵⁹ On June 28, 1941, *The Daily Worker* publicized a speech by James W. Ford and was carefully analyzed the present international situation and how the forces of peace and freedom were battling those of war and oppression. He asserted, “The position of the Negro people cannot be elsewhere than on the side of world’s greatest proven friend of the oppressed everywhere, the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics.” He went on to declare, “The same could be said of every other person in the world under the heel of imperialism.”⁸⁶⁰

Pan-Africanism took a back seat to global anti-fascism as activists acknowledged the importance of Soviet success in securing Ethiopia’s complete independence. On July 25, 1941,

⁸⁵⁷ Philip Francis, “Stalin, Hitler and the Negro,” *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, July 5, 1941.

⁸⁵⁸ Evan Smith, “Against Fascism, for Racial Equality: Communists, Anti-Racism and the Road to the Second World War in Australia, South Africa, and the United States,” *Labor History*, 58, No. 5, (2017): 677.; Russell B. Porter, “Reds Here Shift In Stand On War,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1941.

⁸⁵⁹ W. Foster and R. Minor, “Support the USSR in Its Fights Against Nazi War!,” *The Communist* (July 1941): 579-580.

⁸⁶⁰ “Ford Warns of Plot on USSR at Harlem Rally,” *The Daily Worker*, June 28, 1941.

James W. Ford argued that “When the Italian Fascists invaded Ethiopia in 1935, that was the first act of aggression of the Nazi-fascist bandits against a small nation.”⁸⁶¹ By August 2, 1941, *The Defender* reported that the National Negro Congress (NNC) sent a telegram to the convention urging Black Americans to give their full support to the Ethiopian people. The Ethiopians had “taken their stand beside the courageous people of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and China in the struggle to strike the death blow to Hitlerism.” The NNC believed that Black Americans should continue to support the Ethiopian cause since “Advances made by the Ethiopian people toward freedom and independence give here and encouragement to the fight of the Negro people in America against oppression.”⁸⁶² On September 27, 1941, Joseph Black, a reader, expressed a comparative perspective in a letter to the editor published in *The Defender*. He observed that “the struggles here for the franchise, against lynching and Jim Crowism, are tied to the efforts now being made by the Soviet people to crush Hitler Fascism.”⁸⁶³ On July 25, 1941, James W. Ford argued that “When the Italian Fascists invaded Ethiopia in 1935 that was the first act of aggression of the Nazi-fascist bandits against a small nation.”⁸⁶⁴

Hitler's attack against the Soviet Union also stimulated a wave of Black and white working-class anti-fascist activism. Black and white Communists in South Southside Chicago rallied to protest the unprovoked attack.⁸⁶⁵ In the Bronx, New York, a series of rallies including Black and Jewish people were organized to support the Soviet Union.⁸⁶⁶ On August 16, 1941,

⁸⁶¹ James W. Ford, “The Cause of Ethiopia’s Inseparable from World Anti-Hitler Front,” *The Daily Worker*, July 25, 1941.

⁸⁶² “Ask U. S. Aid for Ethiopia and Allies,” *The Chicago Defender*, August 2, 1941.

⁸⁶³ Joseph Black, “Der Fuehrer Hitler,” *The Chicago Defender*, September 27, 1941.

⁸⁶⁴ James W. Ford, “The Cause of Ethiopia’s Inseparable from World Anti-Hitler Front,” *The Daily Worker*, July 25, 1941.

⁸⁶⁵ “Communist Call Chicago Rally to Support the USSR,” *The Daily Worker*, June 28, 1941.

⁸⁶⁶ “Bronx Rallies Tonight Spur Aid to USSR,” *The Daily Worker*, June 28, 1941.

The Daily Worker reported on the anti-Hitler program adopted by the 38th Convention of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers in Joplin, Missouri. It noted that "Just as organized labor supported the people of Ethiopia and Spain" in their struggles against fascist aggression, now they should be galvanized to support the Soviet Union. They recognized that "Victory of Hitler over the Soviet Union would give fascism in one bite control of one-sixth of the earth's surface" and access to ample supplies of natural resources.⁸⁶⁷ On December 6, 1941, the *Amsterdam Star-News* publicized nationwide conference plans by Edward White, executive secretary of the Harlem Division of the Fight for Freedom Committee. It reported to combat "the menace of Hitlerism," expressing that "all brands of fascism must be destroyed;" he explained that "the purpose of this conference [was] to give substance to this conviction and to put words into action."⁸⁶⁸

British Involvement in the Post-Colonial Government

Selassie's most significant task was to transition from the medieval absolute monarchy to a modern centralized government to replace the outmoded feudal structure.⁸⁶⁹ A bicameral system of government was instituted under a new constitution. The authoritarian brutality of fascism coupled with other internal dysfunctions in Ethiopia and his desire to project himself as an intellectual and sovereign of a modern state encouraged him to enact this reform. This new Ethiopian government provided for establishing a senate nominated by the emperor from among the races, other rulers of the provinces, and a House of Commons chosen by the nobles and local

⁸⁶⁷ "CIO Smelters Issue 6- Point Plan of Action to Wipe Out Hitlerism," *The Daily Worker*, August 15, 1941.

⁸⁶⁸ "Plans Fight On Hitlerism: Edward White Schedules Nation Wide Conference Soon," *The New York Amsterdam Star-News*, December 6, 1941.

⁸⁶⁹ "Haile Selassie Keeps His Promise...Retakes Empire," *Cleveland Call and Post*, July 12, 1941. Bereket Habte Selassie, *Emperor Haile Selassie* (Ohio University Press, 2014), 37.

chiefs from among the people. In addition, a cabinet system was introduced; it was composed of young Ethiopians with Western education from America and European universities.⁸⁷⁰ On December 19, 1942, George Padmore, in an article in *The Defender*, celebrated Selassie's announcement of the adoption of a new constitution following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the British Government and Ethiopia's admission into the council of the United Nations. In response to this legislative act, Padmore posited, "Thousands of natives dressed in their Sunday best crowded in the street of Addis Ababa and cheered the emperor as he drove through the capital from his palace to the Parliament building."⁸⁷¹ According to him, the constitution "embodi[ed] Roosevelt's Four Freedoms. No Ethiopian subject can be arrested, tried, or imprisoned except following the law of the land." Additionally, "all have the right of free movement. Except in public interest and accordance with the law, no one has the right to be deprived of his property, movable or unmovable."⁸⁷²

When Haile Selassie returned to the throne, he continued the reform program that he began before his kingdom was threatened by Italian fascist aggression. The emperor recognized that Ethiopia faced a new political crisis. He accepted an administration under a British agent that had authority over the capital and other British administrators in Addis Ababa. Selassie struggled to rebuild Ethiopia's institutions along native lines with the help of British advisors. One small act of resistance was Selassie's appointment of his ministers without consulting the British. Britain did not object to this act of Ethiopian sovereignty. Also, the emperor challenged British influence by creating an Ethiopian National Bank responsible for Ethiopia's financial

⁸⁷⁰ "Selassie Frames New Ethiopian Constitution," *The Chicago Defender*, July 19, 1941.

⁸⁷¹ George Padmore, "Ethiopia Gets Entirely New Constitution: Selassie Cheered as He Opens Parliament," *The Chicago Defender*, December 19, 1942.

⁸⁷² Padmore, "Ethiopia Gets Entirely New Constitution."

reordering.⁸⁷³ Black newspapers did not comment on this act of rebellion against British influence. However, *The Defender* published an article on July 19, 1941, highlighting Selassie's reforms that sought to further the peaceful development of Ethiopia. Selassie's modernizing project also included creating a national army and police force and a new tax system to relieve the citizens of onerous tax burdens exacted by the greedy local landlords.⁸⁷⁴

According to *The Defender*, Britain loaned the Ethiopian government funds to build up the central and provincial administrative systems.⁸⁷⁵ This agreement also outlined that Ethiopia would give complete authority over the air facilities of Ethiopia, including permission to fly over and into the country at will while barring other foreign countries from this privilege.⁸⁷⁶ The *Cleveland Gazette* reported that the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement meant that now “Abyssinia [was] facing a new political crisis” as “Pressure [was] being brought upon the Emperor to accept a British administration under an agent with compulsory power in the capital and European administrators in the province.” The newspaper reported how the agreement intended to “raise new armies in Ethiopia, not under the auspices of the emperor, but the British agent.”⁸⁷⁷ The *Ethiopian Times and News* criticized how the agreement disbanded the Ethiopian patriotic troops who fought for five years against the Italians under Selassie's leadership.

During the post-reconstruction period, Britain undermined Ethiopia's sovereignty by refusing Ethiopian officials to prosecute Italian war criminals and deal with Italian civilians. This

⁸⁷³ Jacqueline Swansinger, “A Three-Legged Race: Ethiopian Reconstruction, 1940-1944,” *Journal of World History* 2, No. 2 (Fall 1991): 180.

⁸⁷⁴ Bereket Habte Selassie, *Emperor Selassie* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), 39.

⁸⁷⁵ “Selassie's Rule of Ethiopia Made Secure by Cash from Great Britain,” *The Chicago Defender*, December 20, 1941.

⁸⁷⁶ “Haile Loses Shirt, Pants to England,” *People's Voice*, February 21, 1942.

⁸⁷⁷ “First, Italy, Next Great Britain. To Take Ethiopia's Liberty, It Is Said--Places Judge,” *Cleveland Gazette*, November 29, 1941.

perspective resulted from a provision of the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement outlining that the Ethiopian government would leave the treatment of all Italian military prisoners and civilians to Britain.⁸⁷⁸ Britain's bureaucratic influence spoke to its belief in its civilizing mission to foster development for Ethiopia so that it was on par with modern Western standards.

During March and April 1942, the British government pushed forward to repatriate Italian civilians to Italy. *The Plain Dealer* reported how "25,000 were from Addis Ababa" and how "camps near the coast" were in "preparation for their removal to [British] East Africa." The newspaper reported how "Ethiopians [had] differing reactions to this evacuation." While "Some lik[ed] the idea and want all white men to leave the country," others "[held] that the white man, and particularly Italians, have been in Ethiopia so long that the country is economically dependent on their trade."⁸⁷⁹ In light of this, *The Amsterdam Star-News* reported how Selassie decided to expel all Italian Fascists in Ethiopia who settled "upon lands stolen from the natives and turned into plantations for the exclusive benefit of the white colonizers."⁸⁸⁰ In response, British authorities intervened to protect the Italians. *The Amsterdam-Star News* stressed how "Great alarm was expressed in London by certain sections of the press, which displayed strong ant-Abyssinian sentiments" during the war and were more concerned "over the safety and welfare of the white women."⁸⁸¹ Commentators in the British press labeled as "former friends and admirers of the dictator [Mussolini] even went to alleging that unless the British military authorities in Abyssinia protected the Italians, the natives would assault white women."⁸⁸² *The*

⁸⁷⁸ Post, "Britain, Ethiopia Sign."

⁸⁷⁹ "Italians Being Removed from Ethiopia: Unfit Males, Women, and Children to Be Transferred to Holland," *Plaindealer*, March 20, 1942.

⁸⁸⁰ "Haile Selassie Chasing Out."

⁸⁸¹ "Haile Selassie Chasing Our."

⁸⁸² "Haile Selassie Chasing Out."

Courier supported Ethiopia's claim for justice as British actions revealed the color bar was firmly in place and that Britain did not observe the equality of the two nations. In an editorial, *The Courier* inquired if "this just and logical step is being held because the Ethiopians are colored, and the war criminals are white?"⁸⁸³

Selassie Regaining His Full Sovereignty

Though Britain aided Emperor Selassie in regaining his empire, their presence amounted to Ethiopia having a status of a quasi-independent nation. *The People's Voice*, which was critical of Britain's actions "printed excerpts from *The New Times and Ethiopia News* acknowledging that Ethiopians... have no illusions about the designs of certain powers, the Atlantic Charter notwithstanding, on Ethiopia's sovereignty" and know they "are only waiting the opportune moment."⁸⁸⁴ Ethiopia reached a milestone for itself and the war when Britain withdrew troops from Addis Ababa on September 8, 1942. Ethiopia was the first test case of how a small nation was dealt with after the war. The newspaper related the significance of this moment as it reflected on how "Ethiopia-first victim of authoritarian fascist aggression" was not "the first country to be freed of its invaders by the democracies and can now enjoy virtually complete peace."⁸⁸⁵ Britain's withdrawal solved this problem and gave Selassie the space to wield more independent rule. *The Courier* expressed excitement regarding this development, which proved that "England [was] sincere in the effort to restore Haile Selassie to his former position as independent sovereign of Ethiopia."⁸⁸⁶ At this point, Selassie faced a completely sovereign

⁸⁸³ "Ethiopia List Wars Criminals," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 10, 1945.

⁸⁸⁴ "Imperialists Powers Lurking to Grab Post War Ethiopia," *People's Voice*, June 27, 1942.

⁸⁸⁵ Mallory Brown, "Ethiopia Under Own Rule as British Troops Depart," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 1, 1942.

⁸⁸⁶ "British Troops Leave Ethiopia!" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 12, 1942.

Ethiopia beset by economic difficulties caused by the war. The British government offered to help him, but he desired to solve his problems.

The emperor concerned himself with organizing the public education system to prepare Ethiopians for the post-war future. *The Age* expressed its excitement regarding the emperor's plans while advising that "While we have opposed the domination of this country by any European nations, we think that Emperor Haile Selassie would be wise to welcome trained European and American technicians."⁸⁸⁷ The newspaper also expressed that "the Emperor's bitter experience during his exile must have opened his eyes to the backwardness of his country and should have strengthened his determination to put the Ethiopian nation on a more modern basis." It concluded that "If such a course is followed, then the Italo-Ethiopian war would not have been in vain."⁸⁸⁸ On January 3, 1942, *The Chicago Defender* announced Emperor Selassie and Makonnen Desta, his 29-year-old American-educated minister of education, were planning to institute a reformed Ethiopian educational system based on the American model. Desta studied at Howard University from 1930-31 and Harvard College from 1932 to 1934; he desired to "build an education system for Ethiopians" that would "provide refuge for boys mutilated by Italian soldiers." The Ethiopian War devastated Ethiopia's children, who were left sick and homeless in the streets of Addis Ababa and other towns. Most of these children were no more than eight years old. Italians had lured most of them to the towns; others came searching for help after the death of their parents or homes destroyed.⁸⁸⁹ According to Desta, "these children number about 1, 200" and "their lives have been ruined almost beyond repair by this frightful mutilation."⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁷ "Ethiopia Restored," *New York Age*, December 13, 1941.

⁸⁸⁸ "Ethiopia Restored."

⁸⁸⁹ Sellassie, *My Life and Ethiopia*, 169.

⁸⁹⁰ "Plan Schools U. S. A. Style in Ethiopia: Desta Gives Details of Educational Project," *The Chicago Defender*, January 3, 1942.

By December 1942, Albertha Thomas, one of the Ethiopian settlers who ventured to the country during Arnold Josiah Ford's Ethiopian Mission, founded the Beit Ouriel School for Ethiopian boys and girls as the first co-educational school in the country.⁸⁹¹

The existence of slavery and the slave trade in the borders of Ethiopia during the early 20th century almost led to its exclusion from the Western international community. Selassie agreed to abolish slavery during the post-war reconstruction period due to his mutual agreement with the British. During the early 1920s and 1930s, *The Defender* led in the news coverage on Ethiopian slavery. October 25, 1941, the newspaper announced that Selassie issued an edict abolishing domestic slavery in his realm. This measure elevated the emperor to a "great emancipator like Lincoln and Wilberforce."⁸⁹² Selassie also used the edict to abolish serfdom or the Gabor system. Under the system, an old established part of the feudal social structure handed down from the Middle Ages, men and women were unpaid for cultivating the land.⁸⁹³ In the future, those existing under this system were to be paid. However, the enslaved worked for the masters first without financial payment but as an appreciation part of the crop.⁸⁹⁴ *The Age* reported that Selassie's abolition decree resulted from "his recent experience with the Italians" that "seems to have caused him to change his ideas about human bondage."⁸⁹⁵ Furthermore, the

⁸⁹¹ Harris, *African American Reactions*, 351.

⁸⁹² Our London Correspondent, "Selassie Edict Frees Slaves," *The Chicago Defender*, October 25, 1941.

⁸⁹³ The term Gabbar refers to a single cultivator; more correctly, though, it should be used to refer to a unit, specifically a tax or tribute-paying unit. Under this system, individual taxation was collected and retained instead of government-paid salary. The Gabbar unit consisted of a small number of households and related families, often sharing the same land. See Charles McClellan, "Perspectives on the Neftenya-Gabbar System; *The Darasa, Ethiopia*," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale de Studi e Documentazione dell' Instituto Italiano per L' Africa e l' Oriente* 33, no. 3 (September 1978): 430.

⁸⁹⁴ "Haile Selassie Issues Decree Abolishing Slavery in Ethiopia," *New York Amsterdam-Star News*, February 7, 1942.

⁸⁹⁵ "Slaves in Ethiopia Emancipated," *New York Age*, November 1, 1941.

newspaper voiced that the "four years of exile in the British Isles" could have changed him considerably to realize that "slavery is degrading not alone to those who are enslaved but also to all who are part of such a system, the masters as well."⁸⁹⁶ *The Defender*, which had been one of the harshest critics of Ethiopia's slave system, noted it "was a remnant of medievalism which no enlightened head of a modern state should allow to darken his reign."⁸⁹⁷ The newspaper also saw his move to end this institution as inevitable since "in a world today fighting for the preservation of human freedom as essential to the processes of civilization, Haile Selassie could scarcely have followed any other course than the freeing of the slaves." The newspaper also asserted that Selassie could not have followed any other course because "How else could he justify the sacrifices made by his people in defense of their native soil?"⁸⁹⁸

The Black press publicized Emperor Haile Selassie's struggle to enter the United Nations despite its tragic experience with the League of Nations. On June 20, 1942, *The People's Voice*, founded by Adam Clayton Powell Jr., *criticized* the United Nations Council for denying Ethiopia representation at the United Nations Council. It reported that "the kingdom is not yet officially represented by an ambassador or minister in London and that his Majesty's government has not yet invited Ethiopia to join the council of the United Nations under the Atlantic Charter."⁸⁹⁹ On August 1, 1942, *The Tribune* reported that attendees at the fifth Ethiopia World Federation Convention expressed support for Ethiopia in her fight for victory and entrance as a free and equal member of the United Nations alliance.⁹⁰⁰ Ethiopia's acceptance into the United Nations

⁸⁹⁶ "Slaves in Ethiopia Emancipated. "

⁸⁹⁷ "Ethiopia's Greatest Hours," *The Chicago Defender*, November 22, 1941.

⁸⁹⁸ "Ethiopia's Greatest Hour."

⁸⁹⁹ "Ethiopia Ignored by Nations Council." *People's Voice*, June 21, 1942.

⁹⁰⁰ "Urges Ethiopia to be Included in United Nations," *The Philadelphia Tribune*, August 1, 1942.

was one of the most significant moves signaling its post-war recovery. On October 9, 1942, Ethiopia gained membership in the United Nations. On October 12, 1942, *The Courier* remarked that “The action of President Roosevelt in welcoming the ancient empire of Ethiopia into the ranks of the United Nations was hailed as a move of deep significance to the colored races of the world.”⁹⁰¹ This step did not reflect Roosevelt's sympathy toward the Ethiopian cause but his exercise of realpolitik. He recognized that he needed to acquire allies to fight against global fascism.⁹⁰² In an editorial in the *Amsterdam Star-News*, Fernand Dennis, Minister of Haiti, asserted, “Ethiopia was the first of the family of civilized nations to feel the ruthless heel of the Axis Powers. It was the first to be rescued and restored to its rightful place in the community of Nations.”⁹⁰³ The minister recognized that the re-entry of Ethiopia into the international community and “its official recognition by the government does more than presaging the inevitable expulsion of the Axis hordes wherever they have encroached.”⁹⁰⁴ The raising of Ethiopia's flag at the United Nations building in New York City by John H. Shaw, honorary consul-general of Ethiopia, symbolized Ethiopia's membership in the international community.⁹⁰⁵ *The Tribune* highlighted that an Ethiopian delegation attended the celebration.⁹⁰⁶

By December 1942, the Roosevelt administration answered the call for Ethiopian aid under the Lend-Lease plan. America's extension of aid was different from Britain's.

Washington's Extension of Lend-Lease to Ethiopia was not couched in a pragmatic foreign

⁹⁰¹ “Ethiopia Joins the United Nations,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 17, 1942.

⁹⁰² “Ethiopia Admitted to the United Nations,” *The People's Voice*, October 17, 1942.

⁹⁰³ “Ethiopia Admitted to the United Nations.”

⁹⁰⁴ “Ethiopia's Entrance into United Nations Brings Diplomat's, Lawmakers Comments,” *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, October 17, 1942.

⁹⁰⁵ “Ethiopian Flag Raised in New York,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 31, 1942.

⁹⁰⁶ “Selassie's Kin Take Part in Celebration,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, November 7, 1941.

policy. Instead, the U.S. State Department adopted language to help the oppressed Ethiopians. On December 19, 1942, *The Amsterdam Star-News* publicized that Roosevelt declared that "the defense of Ethiopia is vital to the safety and security of the United States" and how he ordered a lend-lease extended to Ethiopia.⁹⁰⁷ He welcomed Ethiopia to the United Nations as "the first state to regain its territory" while being under the "occupation by an Axis aggressor."⁹⁰⁸ At this point, Black isolationism ended. *The Courier*, amid its Double V Campaign to win democracy at home and abroad, linked the hope for colonial liberation with Black Americans winning democracy at home.⁹⁰⁹ The newspaper reported that "friends and supporters of Abyssinia all over the world especially those colored people who since the war with Italy, have come to look on Ethiopia as a symbol of the hopes and aspirations of the darker races- have been heartened by the news of President Roosevelt's latest pro-Ethiopia gesture." This move illustrated Black internationalism.⁹¹⁰ George Padmore echoed this sentiment as he hoped that admission to the United Nations meant "Abyssinia will also be able to voice the political aspirations and demands of Africans and peoples of African descent."⁹¹¹ In December 1942, Ethiopia declared war against the governments of Italy, Germany, and Japan. Now the tiny country was fighting for freedom on three war fronts. According to *The Defender*, this declaration accompanied Selassie's fielding of a new Ethiopian army that would "soon take the field under the command of the Crown Prince"

⁹⁰⁷ "President Orders Lend-Lease Aid for Ethiopia: Its Defense Vital to U.S.; FDR Informs," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, December 19, 1942.

⁹⁰⁸ "President Orders Lend-Lease."

⁹⁰⁹ "Poll Proves Negro Isolationism Eradicated," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 5, 1942.

⁹¹⁰ Ethiopia Declares War on Axis," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 19, 1942.

⁹¹¹ George Padmore, "British Troops Quit Capital Ethiopia," *The Chicago Defender*, September 26, 1942.

side by side with the Allied forces. At the same time, the emperor continued with the reorganization of his new administration.⁹¹²

Summary

The final liberation of Ethiopia occurred after five years due to the mobilization of the Ethiopian Patriots and the British military's colonial troops. It became apparent that Britain used the post-war period to expand its colonial control in East Africa to counter threats from Germany and Italy. Publicists pointed to Britain's hypocrisy as it expressed a commitment to fighting for democracy against the Axis powers' fascism while attempting to recolonize Ethiopia. Though Black journalists did not make consistent comparisons concerning the experience of Black Americans, Ethiopians, and British colonial troops, they fostered an awareness regarding how their struggle for democracy at home was linked to the broader struggle against the forces that undermined Black self-determination. The Ethiopian liberation campaign was a significant juncture in the drama of World War II. This campaign pulled Ethiopia out of one war into another, fought between the Axis power and the Allies as Ethiopia entered a new phase in its struggle against the peril of global fascism, which threatened the self-determination of all peoples.

⁹¹² "Ethiopia Declares War on Nazis, Japs," *The Chicago Defender*, December 26, 1942.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Initially, Black Americans and Emperor Haile Selassie believed that because Britain and France were two nations with a recognized tradition of advocating for liberalism and justice, they would come to the aid of Ethiopia. The failure of The League of Nations and the western international community to immediately intervene to halt Mussolini's aggression on Ethiopia's behalf signaled how the League carried on the old diplomacy where basic human rights did not reign supreme as democratic principles were sidelined to satisfy the demands of imperialism, racism and the preservation of European peace. *The Courier* interpreted that the two democratic imperialists, England and France as well as the rest of the Western international community, "would rather see weak Ethiopia ravished" than to "incur Il Duce's enmity at this time."⁹¹³ This disappointment stirred Black Americans to participate in intellectual debates in the press interrogating the cooperation of Western empire and democratic institutions with the expansion of global fascism during the twentieth century.

The continued existence of domestic slavery in Ethiopia permeated debates in the Black mainstream press. Before the war, *The Defender* took the editorial lead in interrogating the slavery issue. After the invasion, the Black press refrained from critiquing the endurance of domestic slavery. Instead, *The Defender* criticized Mussolini's attempt to use abolitionist discourse to frame his invasion as a humanitarian action. *The Defender* and the NAACP criticized the Hearst press for employing pro-Mussolini journalists who disregarded the existence of the domestic barbarity of lynching in the Southern United States while supporting Mussolini's invasion as a civilizing force. Throughout the occupation and pacification period, discourse in

⁹¹³ "Is England Sincere?" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 17, 1935.

the Black mainstream press recoiled from slavery. When Selassie reclaimed his throne in May 1941, Black newspapers revisited the issue of abolishing slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopian borders. The Black mainstream press expressed excitement regarding Selassie's issuance of an edict abolishing domestic slavery in October 1941. Discourse connected how Selassie's positioning himself as a protector of human freedom and head of a modern state meant that he had to move forward with abolishing slavery, which was the antithesis of modernity and democratic traditions.

Italy's brutal invasion led to numerous war atrocities, from the bombing of Red Cross hospitals to the massacre of civilians using bombs dropped from Italian airplanes to poison gas. These atrocities were in open defiance of international law. Black publicists and readers critiqued how Mussolini and his fascist associates murdered thousands of Ethiopian civilians in the name of spreading fascist civilization and culture. *The Defender*, *The Amsterdam News*, Garvey's newspaper, the *Black Man*, and others critiqued Mussolini's discourse of civilization. It concluded that he lacked civilization and only used the concept of "civilization" to commit brutal acts to justify his imperialist domination. Black publicists pointed to the contradictory nature of Italian fascism because of its violent and aggressive expansionism in Ethiopia that conflicted with the institutionalization of civilization by the League and its members. After the invasion and during the occupation, the Black publicists expressed a consensus that the fascists were only able to ensconce themselves in Ethiopia and reinforce their power through the use of colonial Askari troops who were used as cannon fodder on the front lines by fascist commanders. These troops were not only victims of Italian fascism since they were promised food, clothes, and money for their service, but they were also victimizers who projected Italian power. For example, during the occupation, *The Courier*, *The Amsterdam News*, and other newspapers critiqued the brutality

of the Addis Ababa Massacre in February 1937. They pointed to the centrality of colonial troops in carrying out the massacre, which evidenced the uncivilized nature of Italian fascism and the desperation of Italian colonizers who continually remained on the defensive. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope were attacked as willing accomplices to fascist barbarity. Liberal anti-fascist internationalist discourse disparaged the Pope's silence how he approved of Mussolini's banditry because of the Vatican's desire to crush the Ethiopian Coptic Church.

After the annexation and during the occupation and brutal pacification, Black publicists emphasized the existence of distinctive fascism in the United States. During the annexation, A. Philip Randolph expressing Socialist internationalism critiqued how racial discrimination in the AFL undermined democracy and threatened Black workers' economic security in the United States. Randolph, expressing a pacifist perspective, condemned the negative impact of war on the working-class because they would suffer increased taxation by the government. Anti-fascist discourse also parallels militarized policing in Harlem and Chicago and how municipal authorities were agents of fascism since they endorsed this aggression against anti-fascist activists. The fascist pacification of Ethiopia occasioned the intensification of critiques and warnings in the press expressing similarities between Italian fascism and the American South's Jim Crow segregation, which thrived on racial hierarchy and denied Black people full citizenship and the exercise of democratic rights such as free speech and the freedom of assembly. Black publicists castigated how Southern Democrats were agents of liberal political fascism because they wielded local, state, and national power to further their interests. After Selassie's re-enthronement in May 1941, which overlapped with the escalation of the war in Europe, these debates criticized Roosevelt's hypocrisy of condemning the fascist onslaught of Ethiopia and waging a global war against fascism while the War Department remained silent about the racial

abuses committed by white civilians against Black soldiers stationed at army bases in the South. Furthermore, anti-fascist critiques isolated how the Hearst-Landon political campaign reflected how homegrown fascism undermined American democratic politics. Black Americans should be vigilant about protecting their democracy from this political ticket, especially since Hearst sided with Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.

Black publicists scrutinized how U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's foreign policy of neutrality during the war sustained the racial status quo while threatening America's moral authority in the international community. *The Cleveland Gazette*, one of the few papers to provide extensive commentary of how the American embargo reflected Roosevelt's inconsistent foreign policy and how the real power was laid with U.S. businessmen, who showed themselves as fascist ideologues since they were enabling fascist aggression by purchasing Italian bonds at the detriment of the Ethiopian people. The Communists critiqued that Roosevelt should not capitulate American capitalists who wanted to exploit Ethiopia's natural resources. During the occupation, Black publicists continued to remain watchful of Roosevelt's foreign policy, expressing that American recognition of fascist conquest of Ethiopia undermined American democratic values by legitimizing the political doctrine of fascism. Liberal anti-fascists writing in *The Courier* and *The Amsterdam News* concluded that Roosevelt's failure to take a public stand against Rodolfo Graziani's brutal reprisals against Ethiopians signaled Roosevelt's lack of commitment anti-fascism. Furthermore, Roosevelt's oscillating foreign policy concerned anti-fascists who expressed that American recognition would only confirm that Roosevelt was a friend to fascism.

Roosevelt's closeness to the fascistic Southern Democrats and his delegitimization as an authentic anti-fascist crusader remained a constant discourse in the Black press up until

America's involvement in World War II. Roosevelt failed to publicly condemn fascist violence during the occupation period after the Addis Ababa Massacre in February 1937. During the pacification period, liberal anti-fascist discourse critiqued how "American civilization experienced a setback" since Roosevelt appeased Southern Democrats, who directed domestic fascism that resulted in the "break down of law and order" in the form of the lynching of Black Americans. Adam Clayton Powell critiqued how Roosevelt's silence regarding the undemocratic practice of lynching coupled with his failure to take a solid stance on Ethiopia while condemning Nazi violence against Jews spoke to his insincere and hypocritical foreign policy. All forms of brutality committed by domestic and European fascists in Ethiopia, Spain, Germany, and the United States were "types of human suffering that should be acknowledged."⁹¹⁴ Furthermore, Black publicists questioned how Roosevelt could endorse the Atlantic Charter in August 1941 and support the fight against global fascism while ignoring the cancer of fascism in the U.S. military. By 1942, Roosevelt did an about-face regarding his foreign policy by welcoming Ethiopia into the United Nations. *The Courier*, *The People's Voice*, and *The Amsterdam News* recognized that this "has deep significance to the colored races of the world." This step did not reflect Roosevelt's sympathy toward the Ethiopian cause but his exercise of realpolitik. He recognized that he needed to acquire allies to fight against global fascism. In December 1942, Roosevelt continued his pragmatic foreign policy by extending Lend-Lease aid to Ethiopia. According to *The Amsterdam Star-News*, this was in the interest of American national defense since "the defense of Ethiopia is vital to the safety and security of the United States."⁹¹⁵

⁹¹⁴ Powell, "Soapbox," *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 3, 1938.

⁹¹⁵ "President Orders Lend-Lease Aid for Ethiopia," *Amsterdam Star-News*, December 19, 1942.

Remarkably, Black journalists did not provide critical commentary of his rationale nor did they compare it to Britain's rationale for intervening in the Ethiopian crisis to aid in restoring Selassie to his throne.

The beginning of the Spanish Civil War in June 1936 meant Spain became another anti-fascist front that overlapped with the continuing Ethiopian war. The majority of Black American fascists saw the Spanish Civil War as an extension of the unfinished "business" of the Ethiopian war. Black publicists critiqued how Spain resulted from the League of Nations' lackadaisical attitude towards Mussolini's aggression in Ethiopia. Communist anti-fascist internationalism and liberal anti-fascism coalesced in a critique of the Spanish Civil War as a conflict between workers and capitalists or the landless and the landed elites. The NAACP's Roy Wilkins, a liberal anti-fascist, blurred political lines by articulating a leftist-inspired discourse comparing Black Americans. This conflict brought together anti-fascist liberals and anti-fascist leftists compared how Spanish peasants like Black people in the South were poverty-stricken and disenfranchised because capitalist elites controlled the land. This commonality, according to Wilkins, meant that Black Americans had a moral duty to intervene in Spain to check fascism because of their own experience of being oppressed by Jim Crow.

Black publicists' discourse during the occupation and pacification of Ethiopia critiqued how Italian fascists' desire to create a settler colony in Ethiopia had disastrous consequences for Ethiopians. Immediately after the fascist annexation, J. A. Rogers pointed to how Italian colonization would have deadly consequences for Ethiopians. During the occupation, he critiqued how the fascists implemented a racial system that intensified the racism of Jim Crow to separate the Italian colonist from the Ethiopian colonized. *The Defender*, *Courier*, and *Tribune* scrutinized how Italian fascist administrators created a bureaucratic organization obsessed with

reinstating Italian national character by mandating Italian racial purity and prohibiting interracial sex because they did not want to repeat it; the colonial catastrophe in Eritrea yielded mixed marriages and interracial relationships. Furthermore, discourse pointed to how fascists were obsessed with excluding Ethiopians from lucrative colonial economic activities to prevent competition between Italian colonists and natives. Anti-fascist discourse pointed to the folly of fascist colonization since they could never fully exploit Ethiopia because of the continued resistance of Ethiopian patriots. During the pacification period, discourse critiqued how Mussolini's dream of colonization became a nightmare as Ethiopia became an economic liability for Italy.

Ethiopian national unity also occupied space in the Black mainstream press. During the invasion and after the annexation, the Black press messaged readers that Ethiopians were united behind Emperor Haile Selassie in his resistance to the Italian invaders. After the annexation, J. A. Rogers articulated that Ethiopians remained united and never gave up their sovereignty to the fascists. Rogers' argumentation regarding Ethiopian unity shifted as he excoriated how tribal chieftains who resented Selassie's authority allied with the fascists during the occupation period. Also, Rogers explained how factionalism threatened Ethiopians' ability to defeat the fascists as Ethiopian nationalists, who wanted an Ethiopia for Ethiopians, clashed with Selassie supporters over the emperor's continued reliance on white advisors. Rogers remained adamant that the fascist had not won the war while he concluded that fascists could make inroads because of this internal discord.

The Ethiopian war accentuated Black intellectuals' complex relationship with the Japanese empire. George Padmore and J. A. Rogers, W. E. B Du Bois, Wilson James, and Ralph Matthews were among some of the earliest supporters of the alliance. Their discourse

underscored that Japan's imperialism in China worked as a counterbalance to relieve Japan of Western imports from France and Great Britain. Additionally, Padmore and James were hopeful that an alliance would spark anti-colonial revolt in Africa. During the occupation, Rogers and most Black publicists in the mainstream press quickly reevaluated their political loyalties and terminated their pro-Japanese discourse as Japan recognized Italian conquest. Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor dealt the final blow to the Black mainstream press' pro-Japanese sentiment as *The Defender*, *The Amsterdam-Star News*, and *The Courier* now interpreted Japanese aggression as part of the chain reaction of Italian fascism Ethiopia. When Roosevelt declared war against Japan on December 7, 1941, Black publicists branded pro-Japanese sympathizers as impediments to Black internationalism and un-American. Du Bois and *The Afro-American*'s Ralph Matthews was among the few intellectuals who continued articulating a discourse celebrating Japan as an exemplar of a non-white nation that counteracted Western economic hegemony through its aggressive militarism. Communists, on the other hand, remained critical of the Japanese empire's motives for concerning itself with the Ethiopian issue as they articulated an antifascist discourse condemning Japan as a greedy capitalist rogue nation. For example, Cyril Briggs, Loren Miller, and Benjamin Davis, Jr. distrusted Japanese militarists and their intentions towards Ethiopia due to their brutal expansion in China. Thus, they determined that the Japanese were indistinguishable from Italy and other Western imperialists who thrived on exploiting natural and human resources to further their interests.

These Black publicists, at times, voiced disagreement vis-à-vis political ideology and the fate of Ethiopia. For example, during the occupation on January 21, 1937, Marcus Garvey, in an article in *The Tribune*, pronounced that Ethiopia was a lost cause and that "suggesting that the

war is still going on for the reconquest should not be accepted as a truth."⁹¹⁶ His opinion remained in the minority, and his criticism of Selassie turned him into a political pariah and persona non grata among liberal anti-fascists, who interpreted his Black nationalist political discourse as self-aggrandizing and counterproductive to the Ethiopian cause. Moreover, the Black press represented Garvey and his politics as expressions of fascistic imperialism and an enemy to liberal democratic values because of its emphasis on the Black empire. *The Amsterdam News'* Floyd J. Calvin retorted that "It is disheartening to read that the founder of the Black Star Line now feels that Ethiopia is a "Lost Cause." "Mr. Garvey would take Africa when it was occupied; now he would give up Ethiopia where there is still a virtue in resistance."⁹¹⁷ Consequently, Garvey remained on the editorial periphery of pro-Ethiopia discourse for the remainder of the war. Thus, the occupation constituted a period of ideological transition where Black publicists such as Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and George Schuyler engaged in deeper debates about how interracial internationalism rather than Black Nationalism presented a road to Black freedom.

During the Ethiopian war, anti-Semitism among the Black community occurred because of Black Americans' anger regarding their economic exploitation from Jewish merchants operating in Harlem neighborhoods. Black liberals in the NAACP and the Urban League articulated a discourse condemning Black nationalists for stoking anti-Jewish sentiment excoriating how Black Jewish merchants exploited Black consumers while denying them employment in their stores. Anti-Jewish hostility in the Black communities in Harlem mirrored

⁹¹⁶ Marcus Garvey, "Why Support a Lost Cause?" *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 27, 1937.

⁹¹⁷ Floyd J. Calvin, "Around the World," *The New York Amsterdam News*, January 20, 1937.

the same hostility that Black people expressed against Italians during the war. Black anti-Semitism was not only due to Black animosity regarding Jewish merchants as well as Hitler's rise to power in Germany. Black anti-Semitism was also a reaction to American Jewry's apathetic attitude toward Mussolini's aggression against Ethiopia. During the pacification period, American Zionists and the Jewish press demonstrated their callous attitude toward Ethiopia by observing the fascist conquest as an opportunity to create Jewish colonization in Ethiopia. The Black press criticized American Jews as an agent of Italian fascism. *The Defender*, *The Amsterdam News*, and *The Courier* concurred that a Jewish homeland in Ethiopia represented another form of fascism meant to undermine Ethiopian sovereignty.

From May 1941 to December 1942, Black publicists also issued sharp critiques focusing on the political economy of war and how Britain's government permitted Mussolini's occupation. *The Amsterdam News*, *The Tribune*, *The Defender*, and *The Courier* expressed a consensus that Great Britain surrendered Ethiopia to Italy in the name of protecting British imperial interests in East Africa. Black publicists recognized that Britain's inaction to protect Ethiopia was due to Britain's prioritization of European continental politics interrupted by German aggression and the threat of European war. Britain's intervention in Ethiopia to assist Emperor Haile Selassie in reclaiming his throne led Black publicists to interrogate Britain's hypocrisy since its leadership in the League and failure to enforce the principle of collective security encouraged Italian aggression. The Black and white Communist press expressed distrust for Great Britain's intentions towards Ethiopia after Selassie regained his throne. Black publicists critiqued how British hegemony in Ethiopia threatened Ethiopian independence since British administrators sought to recolonize Ethiopia as they controlled Ethiopian domestic affairs and treated Selassie as an inferior rather than an ally.

Black publicists also scrutinized how Britain's reliance on African colonial troops in the early days of Britain's martial campaign to aid Selassie in April 1941 had major implications for the British colonial system. *The Tribune* critiqued how the Ethiopian war exposed how white people who oppressed them had weaknesses and were not all-powerful. Britain's enlisting of native troops in the East African Campaign contributed to a powder keg since the British "laid the groundwork for the eventual loss of all the African territories they have stolen to date."⁹¹⁸ After Selassie reclaimed his throne, anti-fascist discourse appraised how Britain's issuance of the Atlantic Charter exposed the hypocrisy and pale commitment to democracy while continuing to discriminate against West African colonial troops, who fought against fascism in Ethiopia.

Britain's martial campaign in Ethiopia also used white South African troops. This aspect signified one of the central ironies of the war since white South Africans expressed disdain for Black Africans "despoiling all their rights for justice."⁹¹⁹ After Selassie regained his throne, Black publicists critiqued how South African nationalists threatened Ethiopia's sovereignty by arguing for the extension of a protectorate over as a prize for them aiding in the war effort. The Black press interpreted this as another dishonorable attempt by Great Britain to undermine Ethiopian sovereignty to expand the British Empire in East Africa. George Padmore issued an indirect critique of British imperial policy as dangerous and ignominious because it undermined Selassie's position as the legal sovereign of Ethiopia.

The war resulted in the Black Americans from all strata of society and political affiliation becoming more international-minded as they expressed solidarity around the Ethiopian cause. After the annexation of Ethiopia, political discourse in the Black mainstream press evolved from

⁹¹⁸ "Backfire of Warring in Africa."

⁹¹⁹ "Ethiopians and South African Fight For Same Objective."

a racially nationalist discourse to that of a liberal anti-fascist internationalist discourse of power. This discourse centered on race, the exercise of democratic liberalism, and the relationship between modernity and civilization. After the annexation of Ethiopia, anti-fascist discourse united broad political coalitions that came to a consensus that the Ethiopian crisis and the expansion of fascism in Europe presented questions about how the international community defined liberal democracy as compared to anti-fascists. The Ethiopian War also challenged Roosevelt's administration's commitment to anti-fascism and the extension of democratic rights to Black Americans. The war also revealed that Roosevelt, as the international community, continued to use Ethiopia as a chess piece because of its strategic importance in East Africa, which became a major front during World War II in the fight against fascism in Africa.

The diasporic politics and political discourse articulated in the Black and white mainstream press and the alternative presses concerned themselves with the exercise of power and unequal relationships. Bearing in mind, the Black mainstream and alternative press were a counter-public that disseminated a persuasive counter narrative intended to excite a public dialogue about the Ethiopia war, contesting white power, imperialism, fascism, and the inequalities they caused in domestic and international society.

The Second Italo-Ethiopian War was a defining moment in the discursive expression of Black political consciousness and internationalism. This study was an exercise in discovering and mapping the various expressions of anti-fascist discourse and organization aiding in sustaining agitation from the invasion in October 1935 to Ethiopia becoming a member of the United Nations in December 1942. This study revealed the voices of Black publicists and readers to deduce the varied discursive argumentation they employed as they articulated their viewpoint regarding fascist imperialism in Ethiopia. Publicists such as J.A. Rogers, Reverend Adam

Clayton Powell, Jr. A Philip Randolph, Floyd Calvin, James W. Ford, George Padmore, Metz T.P. Lochard, George Schuyler, Roi Otley, Loren Miller, Colonel John C. Robinson articulated a political analysis that steered the discussion in the Black press. Furthermore, Claude Barnett's Associated Negro Press (ANP) directed the flow of information in the Black mainstream press by supporting a network of publicists, who provided the Black public with news coverage representing varied political perspectives reflecting the language of resistance to global fascism oppression. Its criticisms of fascism and imperialism bound this network as activists articulated different oppositional discourses that humanized Black resistance to Western imperialism and white oppression. *The Defender* existed on the periphery of the ANP community as it articulated a toned-down anti-fascist political discourse reflecting the newspaper's commitment to racial justice but wariness concerning the circulation of a radical leftist Black politics. The Communist Affiliated Crusader News Service (CNS) as well as the white Communist press, on the other hand, continued with the dissemination of a political discourse embracing the Black-white unity in the struggle against the evils of capitalism, militarism, imperialism, and fascism, which undermined the struggle of the working class. In the end, all of these discourses underwrote the politicization of the Black public, thus, corroborating John Hope Franklin's claims that "even the most provincial Negro American became international-minded."⁹²⁰

Though they were divided into these different communities, they all recognized that citizenship in the larger anti-fascist community meant full support of Haile Selassie, a continued belief in Ethiopian independence, and resistance to imperialism of any type. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that Black mainstream publishers' awareness determined the content of the newspapers that their readers desired a militant narrative. Those who consumed the discourse in

⁹²⁰ Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 385.

the Black community exhibited what the historian Nico Slate observed as a "colored cosmopolitanism" as they argued why and how to best come to the aid of Ethiopia because it was "the living symbol and incarnation of African independence."⁹²¹ As Black people developed a cosmopolitanism, their participation in the war "would inevitably be mediated by the flow of information and ideas through print."⁹²²

Analyzing the content of various newspapers is of value because they constituted their political community with clear editorial boundaries determining the paper's mission of fighting against fascism, imperialism, and capitalism. This study showed an analysis of content in the pages of the Black press revealing that the imagined community tended to segment into smaller activist communities advocating their distinct political objectives and political discourses concerning Ethiopia.

⁹²¹ Robert G. Weisbord, "The British West Indian Reaction to the Italo-Ethiopian War: An Episode in Pan-Africanism," *Caribbean Studies* 10, no. 1 (April 1970): 35.

⁹²² Alexander M. Bain, "Shocks Americana! George Schuyler Serializes Black Internationalism," *American Literary History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 942.

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