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Pan-Africanism is a political, ideological, and cultural movement centered on the liberation of Africa and Africans both on the continent and in the diaspora. The primary tension in the history of the movement has been the precise nature and relative importance of race and class, and their relation, in this struggle (Allen 1969).

There are many definitions of Pan-Africanism, and even debate about when it began and what actors and actions constitute the movement. These different conceptions hinge largely on whether one is referring to an organized historical movement self-identified as “Pan-Africanism” that began in the late nineteenth century and continues into the twenty-first. The alternative is a “general sentiment of international black kinship” (Weisbord 1973, p. 7n), sometimes written with a lowercase *p* (i.e., “pan-Africanism”; cf. Shepperson 1962), identified as existing as far back as ancient Egypt (Nantambu 1998), including slave revolts and (inter)nationalist tendencies in the Caribbean and Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries associated with such names as Nat Turner, Paul Cuffee, Denmark Vesey, Toussaint-L’ouverture, Joseph Cinque, Martin Delaney, David Walker, Edward Blyden, and many others. The remainder of this entry focuses primarily on the first, the contemporary organized movement, though their predecessors have always been explicitly recognized and honored.

The first Pan-African conference, held in London in 1900, was organized by Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian barrister, and attended by W. E. B. Du Bois. The group had previously formed under the title of “African Association” but changed it to “Pan-African Association” and committed to a conference every two years, the next to be held in the United States (Esedebe 1994, p. 44). The movement, a response to racism and colonialism, promoted civil and political rights for and cooperative development among all those of African descent—on the continent and in Europe, the Caribbean, and the rest of the Americas (Legum 1962).

Du Bois organized and led the second conference, often regarded as the “first” Pan-African *Congress*, in 1919, Page 116 followed by congresses in 1921, 1923, and 1927. The nineteen years between the first and second meeting were not without activity, however. Debates between those who did and did not support repatriation, between those who saw the issue primarily in racial terms and those who gave more weight to economic considerations, and between conservative accommodationists and liberal or radical liberationists were all lively, and included not only Du Bois but Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington. But the period from the end of World War I to the end of World War II marked an important and intensive growth of the organized movement, with its concerns reflecting developments worldwide. This activity included, but was not limited to, a number of important publications by leading Pan-Africanists, such as C. L. R. James (*The Black Jacobins*), Jomo Kenyatta (*Facing Mount Kenya*), and George Padmore (*How Britain Rules Africa*).

Many participants and observers alike have remarked on the changes that came with the first post-World War II Congress, the Fifth Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester, England, in 1945. As Kwame Nkrumah emphasized, for example:

For the first time, there was strong worker and student participation, and most of the over two hundred delegates who attended came from Africa. They represented re-awakening African political consciousness; and it was no surprise when the Congress adopted socialism as its political philosophy.... Two declarations were addressed to the imperial powers, one written by Du Bois, and the other by myself. Both asserted the right and the determination of colonial peoples to be free, and condemned capitalism. (Nkrumah 1973, pp. 42–43)

At the same time, the interwar period had been one in which the Communist Party attacked Pan-Africanism as “petit bourgeois

nationalism,” while official U.S. and European governments and the media portrayed the movement as completely under the control of Moscow and the Communists. The Fifth Congress, then, was seen as the end of the “coming-of-age” period of Pan-Africanism, whose leaders and proponents were now consciously “seeking a way of achieving national liberation and economic emancipation without allying themselves with the Communists” (Padmore 1971, p. 130). The formation and mobilization of colonial liberation movements in the postwar period led to Ghana’s independence in 1957, when “Pan-Africanism moved to Africa, its real home, and Pan-African Conferences were held for the first time on the soil of a liberated African state” (Nkrumah 1973, p. 43).

In the period of decolonization that began with Ghanaian independence, a growing continental Pan-Africanism in which continental political and economic unity was envisioned was strongly promoted by Nkrumah (1963), Cheikh Anta Diop ([1960] 1978), and others. One of the issues hotly debated in this period regarded the relation of North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa. Continental Pan-Africans viewed the North as African, while “sub-Saharan” Pan-Africanists, concerned with Pan-Negroism versus Pan-Arabism, did not include the North in their proposals. This debate also overlaps with and touches on many issues relevant to cultural Pan-Africanism, in which all Africans—continental and diasporan—are seen as sharing many cultural and even linguistic characteristics that distinguish them from other non-Africans, especially Europeans (Marah 1998, p. 80). Some of the divisions were represented on the continent by the rivalry between the Brazzaville and Casablanca groups, which resulted in a “compromise” with the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. In the diaspora, these divisions were reflected in the debates between cultural nationalists (some who eventually embraced Afrocentricity) and political (or revolutionary) nationalists, including those coming out of the civil rights and Black Power movements, such as Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture).

But the tradition of continental and diasporan alliance was continued as Malcolm X, founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) attended the OAU’s Cairo Summit in 1964, where he spoke in favor of the inseparable connections between Africans “at home” and abroad that could not be ignored, and author Richard Wright attended the Bandung Conference in 1955. These developments were also played out in the rise of black studies courses and curricula in the 1960s, including the establishment of the Afro-Asian Institute at Temple University in Philadelphia in 1969, later reorganized and renamed the Department of Pan-African Studies (including its Pan-African Studies Community Education Program, or PASCEP) in 1972. Bandung, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Afro-Asian Institute are examples of what Mazrui identified as the growing “Global Pan-Africanism” uniting not only continental and diasporan Africans but other colonized or previously colonized peoples of ASIA and the Americas (Mazrui 1977). Malcolm X’s experiences in Mecca and elsewhere and Martin Luther King Jr.’s position on Vietnam later in life, even the haiku and tanka poetic forms of Richard Wright and Sonia Sanchez, were all manifestations of global Pan-Africanism.

In the twenty-first century, the Pan-African notions of African political unity and continued discussion of the relation and relevance of racism and capitalism remain alive. With the fall of the apartheid government in South Africa, political independence has been achieved, but neocolonialism remains alive and gives no indication of withering away on its own. In the diaspora, although there remains tremendous racial residential segregation and strong evidence of ongoing discrimination, those of African descent have obtained positions of authority and power in the political and economic spheres, resulting in what might be viewed as “domestic neocolonialism.” In the face of all these developments, Pan-Africanists such as Shivji are promoting “an alternative Pan-Africanism of the People, rooted in anti-imperialism and liberation. In other words, the nationalism of the twenty-first century is Pan-Africanism rooted in anti-imperialism” (Shivji 2006).

SEE ALSO *African Diaspora* ; *African Studies* ; *Anticolonial Movements* ; *Black Power* ; *Caribbean, The* ; *Civil Rights* ; *Civil Rights Movement, U.S.* ; *Diop, Cheikh Anta* ; *Du Bois, W. E. B.* ; *Garvey, Marcus* ; *Haitian Revolution* ; *James, C. L. R.* ; *Kenyatta, Jomo* ; *Malcolm X* ; *Nationalism and Nationality* ; *Nkrumah, Kwame* ; *Organization of African Unity (OAU)* ; *Pan-African Congresses* ; *Pan-Arabism* ; *Pan-Caribbeanism* ; *Rastafari* ; *Turner, Nat* ; *Vesey, Denmark*

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