

# Pan-African Thought and Practice

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At any moment, depending on internal and external factors determining the evolution of the society in question, cultural resistance (indestructible) may take on new forms (political, economic, armed) in order to fully contest foreign domination (Cabral 1973:40).

## **1 Introduction**

It was under the auspices of Pan-African thought and practice, which engulfed Africa and its people in the Diaspora early in the 1900s, that the situation of the socio-cultural, political and economic subjugation and domination of Africa by Europe was vehemently intellectually and politically challenged. Actually 'by the end of the nineteenth century the former slaves began to understand what had happened to them and from the Caribbean the concept of Pan-Africanism was born' (Clarke 1991:100). The fact that Africa, not because of its own doing, was not making progress and that its people continued to be amongst the wretched of the earth became a cause for concern amongst a nucleus of African intellectuals in Africa and the Diaspora (Pheko 1999:10).

For the total suppression and domination of the African personality in all its forms and content, European imperialists employed various strategies that were all intended to depersonalise and empty the former of its religious and cultural heritage. In the following definition Cabral (1973:40) aptly captures the significance of culture as a tool for self-definition and self-reliance when he notes that:

... culture is always in the life of a society (open or closed), the more or less conscious result of economic and political activities of that society, the more or less dynamic expression of the kinds of relationships which prevail in that society, on the one hand between man (considered individually and collectively) and nature, and, on the other hand, among individuals, groups of individuals, social strata or classes .... [It] is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence which it exerts on the evolution of relationships between man and his environment, among men or groups of men within a society, as well as among different societies.

What this implies is that, as part of the strategy to dominate the world-view and behaviour of the African personality, European cultural imperialism alienated and dislocated the people of African origin and descent from their own tools of self-expression as people in relation to others in the universe.

Therefore, the explicit purpose of this contribution is to record and analyse pro-African heritage strategies that can be identified from existing Pan-Africanity literature (since the late nineteenth century). The main objective here is not to deal with the detailed facts about the historical development of Pan-Africanism movement per se. Rather, it is to identify those crucial factors that actually contributed to the birth of the idea of Pan-Africanism as a socio-cultural movement, and to show how effectively the thought was utilised by the people of African origin and the Diaspora to respond to practices related to the slave trade, European imperialism of Africa and racism that accompanied the latter. In the main the objective is to capture the essence of Pan-African thought and practice, meaning its philosophical implications, and thus locate it within the discourses that represent the quest for self-determination, self-expression and self-definition by African communities. The aim is to establish how the thought provides better understanding of the concept of the African Renaissance and its significance for Africa's development in the twenty-first century.

What is important in this exercise, especially in the 'African Century' and its complexities of the global village, is to note the fact that Pan-African thought is '... but one instance of a universal phenomenon, which takes different forms according to time, place and historical setting' (Geiss1974:6).

## **2 A Brief Survey of Factors that Contributed to the Development of Pan-African Concepts**

In essence, as it is apparent from the writings of its first proponents, the idea of Pan-Africanism was intended to challenge the main activities of European imperialist domination, namely, the slave trade, European colonisation of Africa and racism (Thompson 1969:3). These activities were at their height in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In actual fact, as Prah (1997:24) indicates, one of the largest single factors that contributed to the ultimate task of the conceptualisation of the idea of Pan-Africanism by African intellectuals such as William Edward Burghardt DuBois (1940; 1963; 1964), Joseph Casely-Hayford (1911) George Padmore (1956), Alex Quason-Sackey (1963) and others, was the Berlin Conference of 1885, at which Africa was carved up and apportioned amongst European powers without her consent.

At this stage it needs to be mentioned that it is rather interesting to note that amongst factors that provided foundations that developed the meaning and content of Pan-Africanist thought was the education that Africans gained from the countries of their colonisers and exposure to ideals of equality and civil rights that some of the first exponents of the ideology experienced in Europe and North America. In this relation Geiss (1969:5) asserts,

Pan-Africanism is thus predominantly a modern movement. It is the reaction of the most advanced, most intensively Europeanised Africans and Afro-Americans to contact with the modern world. Its representatives have been African or Afro-Americans who in many cases have had an academic education in Europe, America or West Africa, or who were exposed for a long time to modern influences in their own country. They embraced the European and North-American principles of equality and democracy and on this basis elaborated their own ideology of emancipation from White supremacy.

From the preceding argument it can be concluded that theoretically the Pan-Africanist thought was intended to be a counterpoint to the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism and Western racism.

## 2.1 The Slave Trade and the Experience of Slavery

The idea of Pan-Africanism as a protest movement by people of African descent and the African Diaspora against European colonisation of Africa can also be understood clearly in terms of the practices of the slave trade and the abolitionist movement to which it gave rise (Geiss 1974:16).

As already indicated in the preceding chapter, the wars in Africa that emanated from slave trading due to the demand by European and American capitalists led to a state of instability. 'As the trade gathered momentum the instability grew'. As a result 'the West African scene down to Congo ... became a theatre of war for capturing slaves' (Thompson 1969:4). The reality of this barbaric and selfish activity was such that '... the slaves produced wealth for the European and American world – wealth which laid foundations of European economic prosperity', and 'Africa in turn received nothing that contributed to growth either economically, politically or culturally' (Thompson 1969:4). This marked the beginning of the exploitation and underdevelopment of Africa, which are still being felt today in the twenty-first century and its globalisation processes.

From the very beginning of the operations of slave trade, resistance and protest against the degradation of Africa and its people took various forms. 'Africans transported across the Atlantic to Western plantations were unwilling victims of circumstances beyond their control' (Thompson 1969:4). Alluding to the same factor Geiss (1974:8f) points out,

along the same routes taken by 'goods' which made the slave trade profitable – in particular the slaves themselves, who were treated as chattels – there travelled ideas which from the late eighteenth century onwards were to make Pan-Africanism a political force – at first unconsciously, but later knowingly.

This denotes that the three points of transatlantic slave trade [Western Europe, (specifically England), Africa (specifically West Africa) and the New World [meaning West Indies and USA]] became the centres for the resistance and the intellectual development of the Pan-Africanism ideology. What Geiss (1974:8f) implies here is that from the earliest struggles against slave trade and the experience of slavery itself traditions developed that led to the Pan-Africanism ideology. The language of the abolitionist movements also formed the background to Pan-Africanism in its broader sense.

## **2.2 European Colonisation of Africa**

The forcible and dehumanising acts that characterised the occupation of Africa by Western European powers was not a walkover as it appears in some of the literature on the subject. As a matter of fact 'having partitioned Africa [at the Berlin Conference in 1885], the Western European powers found themselves confronted with the problem of pacifying the people whom they had brought, or attempted to bring, under control' (Thompson 1969:12). Here it needs to be mentioned that, 'before the period of colonial expansion ...Europeans were not concerned with territorial annexation'. Instead 'they only wanted cheap labour for their New World colonies, and as Africa provided a vast reservoir of slaves, the whites bought blacks and transported them to the Western Hemisphere' (Padmore 1956:76). What actually led to the interest in Africa, especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century, was the stiff economic competition among the Western powers, which in turn gave rise to imperialistic expansion (Padmore 1956:76).

The process of occupying Africa, which was formalised at the Berlin Conference, was humiliating to the people of Africa in that the continent was turned into '... a mere pawn in European diplomacy, and her people, the defenceless victims of unregulated exploitation' (Padmore 1956:76). This became unacceptable to people of Africa and the Diaspora, and resistance to European colonisation of Africa manifested itself '... in various forms: political, cultural, religious and even economic, including opposition to forced labour' (Thompson 1969:12). One of the examples of these acts of resistance against European colonisation of Africa became the rise of Ethiopianism in Southern Africa, which represented a religious resistance. In this relation Geiss 1974:134) notes that:

around 1900 an ecclesiastical emancipation movement termed 'Ethiopianism', got under way in Africa, in partial liaison with Afro-American churches in the USA and based upon Psalm 68:xxxii. Religious pathos reinforced the claim to political equality; for this reason Ethiopianism and the African churches form part of the historical background of Pan-Africanism and also comprise of its substance.

Quoting Psalm 68 verse 32 ('Ethiopia shall soon stretch her hand unto God')

and regarding Ethiopia as synonymous with Africa, Afro-American intellectuals and theologians, such as James W.C. Pennington and Henry Highland Garnet, argued that the passage is a biblical prophecy that Africa would ultimately be redeemed (Geiss 1974:132). The concept of Ethiopia had a liberating element in that amongst Pan-African exponents it was used as a symbol for the demand for equality.

### **2.3 Western Racism**

In an endeavour to address the demons of racialism and the destructive behaviour patterns (namely, inferiority complex for the victims and superiority complex for the perpetrators) that became its manifestation, Africans and persons of African descent developed a race consciousness which leaders of the Pan-Africanism movement employed to unite people together (Thompson 1969:18). A clear understanding of the meaning and the implications of racism in this context is necessary. Prah (1997:82) describes racism as:

A power relationship; a social and ideological construction which raises superficial biological attributes to objects and markers for social and economic domination or subordination.

The above-mentioned situation predetermined the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. A closer look at the processes of European imperialist colonial domination of Africa and its people in general reveals that colour has always been conveniently used as an instrument of subjugation and exploitation. In this regard Prah (1997:2) observes that,

while this exploitation and oppression has been primarily economic, the myth of race and colour has been the language for defining and justifying this practice.

### **3 The Meaning and Content of Pan-African Thought and Practice**

As a phenomenon that evolved out of a situation of anomaly – whereby African people were expected to derive their identity from being a negative

image of others – ‘it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to provide a clear and precise definition of Pan-Africanism’ (Geiss 1974:3). This can be ascribed to the fact that the Pan-Africanism movement as a vehicle of protest that accommodated diverse dehumanising experiences of people of African origin and descent it has no single founder or particular tenets that can be used as a definition (Ackah 1999:13).

However, from the notions that were advocated by the first proponents of the thought and from ideas that floated around in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in an attempt to capture what constituted the form and content of what represented the core of the meaning of the Pan-Africanism ideology, Geiss (1974:3) explains the thought as a complex phenomenon that was at that time understood as:

1. Intellectual and political movements among Africans and Afro-Americans who regard or have regarded Africans and people of Africa as homogenous. This outlook leads to a feeling of racial solidarity and a new self-awareness and causes Afro-Americans to look upon Africa as their real ‘homeland’, without necessarily thinking of a physical return to Africa.
2. All ideas which have stressed or sought the cultural unity and political independence of Africa, including the desire to modernize Africa on a basis of equality of rights. The key concepts here have been respectively the ‘redemption of Africa’ and ‘Africa for Africans’.
3. Ideas or political movements which have advocated, or advocate, the political unity of Africa or at least close political collaboration in one form or another.

According to Thompson (1969:38), considering the factors that led to its birth as a socio-cultural movement of a people who were fighting to assert themselves in a world that was hostile to their existence, Pan-Africanism may be seen as an idea that:

...was concerned not only with protest but also with fashioning of a coherent philosophy which would enable the African as well as ‘Negro’ man not only to enhance his material welfare but to elevate

him from the centuries of humiliation which has been his lot and thus enable him to re-establish his dignity in a world this has hitherto conceded him none.

From the quotation above it can be safely concluded that as an alternative vision to dominant European vision the aim of Pan-Africanism thought and practice was and still is '... to exalt African history and rediscover the African personality that had been subjugated under European domination' (Ackah 1999:12). From a radical position, which is identified with people such as Dr Motsoko Pheko in the South African context, Pan-Africanism thought can be understood as a '... movement by Africans for Africans in response to European ideas of superiority and acts of imperialism' (Ackah 1999:12).

Similarly, gleaning from the literature that evolved from the first conference in London in 1900 and the ones that followed, Prah (1997:81) describes Pan-African thought and practice as,

... an ideology for the emancipation of African people or people of African descent, on the continent and in the Diaspora. It has never been espoused as a credo for the domination or political exclusion of non-African peoples. In this respect, it differs radically from the Herrenvolk ideas of Hitlerian Germany, the Baaskap Philosophy of Apartheid, or sentiments which inform the myth 'Britannia Rules the Waves'.

In his analysis and description of the evolution of Pan-African thought and practice, Ackah (1999:13f) asserts that 'the experience which is understood as black and its political manifestation, in a broad sense ... is better understood in terms of a thematic approach'. He argues that these themes are what '... encapsulate the social and cultural aspects of black experiences over time as well as more widely known economic and political aspects of Pan-Africanism' (Ackah 1994:14). The four themes that can also be said to have contributed in the conceptualisation of Pan African thought and practice are:

- i. *Pan-Africanism: A Universal Expression of Black Pride and*



*Achievement:* In a process to subjugate and dominate people of African origin and descent European imperialism alienated and marginalized African cultural heritage. As a result, specifically during the epoch of transatlantic enslavement, people of African descent deemed it right to '... defend black culture and propagate the notion of a distinct black contribution to humanity and civilisation' (Ackah 1999:14). Two of the chief exponents of the notion of black pride are the Negritude poets, Aime Cesaire and Leopold S. Senghor. Around 1934 Cesaire and Senghor found a journal of their own, named *L'Étudiant Noir*, which they used as a vehicle to propagate their literary conception of Negritude – 'the stress on all African elements, especially the cult of Black womanhood, the rejection of modern civilization of the wild African landscape' (Geiss 1974:319). Senghor (1970:179) argued that, 'Negritude is nothing more or less than what some English-speaking Africans have called the African personality'. In South Africa the notion of Negritude was expressed through the Black Consciousness Movement that was led by Steven Bantu Biko (Ackah 1994:14). Biko (1978:91f) explained the Black Consciousness ideology as '... an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time', which in essence is about the '... realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers, around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin – as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.

- ii. *Pan-Africanism: A Return to Africa by people of African Descent Living in the Diaspora:* As a way of protest against the merciless shipment of people of Africa to Europe and the Americas Martin R. Delaney, who was '... no mulatto but the first full-blooded Negro among the Afro-American leaders in the USA', (Geiss 1974:87), started a movement that encouraged people of African descent in the Diaspora to return to Africa. What set Delaney apart was the fact that, 'in contrast to most of his coloured fellow-countrymen he was proud of his black complexion and for this reason he always rejected vehemently the doctrine of the inferiority of the coloured people' (Geiss 1974:87). Between 1831 and 1832 he visited Africa, which he referred to as 'the land of my ancestry', and 'two years later he published his call for Afro-Americans to emigrate from the USA' (Geiss 1974:88). Though the

National Emigration's re-emigration project was not a success it was of historical significance in that amongst other things, 'it also produced the clearest and politically best-founded statement of Pan-African ideas to be made during the nineteenth century'.

- iii. *Pan-Africanism: A Harbinger of Liberation:* The brutal occupation of Africa by European powers, especially after the Berlin Conference in 1885 became totally unacceptable to the people of African descent and a host of their intelligentsia. This epoch was characterised by activities of physical exploitation of Africa accompanied by the ideological torture of racism. 'It is no small wonder therefore that given a history of such awful treatment that the clarion cries of freedom and liberation have echoed throughout the recent history of black experience' (Ackah 1999:16). One of the chief exponents of this expression was Frantz Fanon whom Ackah (1999:16) describes as 'the revolutionary Pan-Africanist, from Martinique' - who took the liberation call personally to heart and to show his commitment he became physically involved in the struggle to end colonial rule by the French in Algeria just after the Second World War.
- iv. *Pan-Africanism: The Political Unification of the Continent:* Closely linked to the theme of the liberation of the African continent is the clarion call for the '... unity [of Africa] in the form of political and economic unification, [which] became the theme of Pan-Africanism' (Ackah 1999:17). Kwame Nkrumah became the chief exponent of this expression, 'he believed that the only way to resolve the problems of imperialism and neo-colonialism in Africa was the form of unitary socialist government' (Ackah 1999:17). This expression gave birth to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Ackah's (1999) thematic description of the Pan-African thought and practice shows that the meaning and content of the concept was shaped mostly by historical events that confronted the people of African origin and the Diaspora. This means the fight against European imperialism and racism was the propelling force in the evolution of the Pan-African movement.

Due to its complexity as a thought that emerged as an emotional, political and intellectual response of the African to the European colonisation of Africa and racism that accompanied it, Pan-Africanism is/can

be defined in both a narrower and broader sense. In the narrower sense the definition of the ideology is limited to a political movement for the unification of the African continent, and 'the broader definition includes cultural and intellectual movements, even those that aim at a wider solidarity, i.e. anti-colonialism or Afro-Asianism' (Geiss 1974:7). 'In essence Pan-Africanism is a movement by Africans in response to European ideas of superiority and acts of imperialism' (Ackah 1999:12).

### **3.1 The Broader Meaning of Pan-African Thought and Practice**

In its broader sense the Pan-Africanism ideology can be traced as far back as the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – a period that is regarded as the pre-history of the movement. With the founding of the church that became known as the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816, an African-American by the name of Richard Allen and his followers in the city of Philadelphia, planted the first seeds that laid the foundations for Pan-Africanism thought (Geiss 1974:34). 'The name 'Africa' expressed the need to emphasise solidarity with Africa. It was an expression of Africanism' (Thompson 1969:8). The founding of the church represented an attempt at self-assertion by people of African descent in the Diaspora. Later the church spread as far as Africa. The preachers and bishops of churches that followed the African Methodist Episcopal church's example became the first Afro-American intellectuals who wrote polemical treatises against the defence arguments of racial inequalities that were purported by slave masters (Geiss 1974:34).

The idea was intended to eradicate negative notions about the African personality that existed and as such formed the foundations upon which strategies of socio-cultural and economic underdevelopment of Africa and European racism were and still continue to be based. European racism as an ideology was used as an excuse for the dehumanisation of the African people and the socio-economic underdevelopment of Africa as a continent. The following is an example of one of the depersonalising caricatures of the African personality that prompted African intellectuals to respond:

*The European was described as 'light, lively, and inventive' while Africans were considered to be 'cunning, slow, and negligent' [c.a.] (Prah 1997:77).*

Notions such as this, which are basically about socio-cultural power-relationships, were employed by some of the distinguished European philosophers as a means to perpetuate and rationalise the practice of slavery and colonial subjugation of Africa and its entire people in the world.

As an idea that 'stands for the economic, technological, social and political ... [development] ... of a whole continent' (Geiss 1974:5) the broader meaning of the Pan-Africanism ideology is crucial in this study in that it helps in the understanding of the meaning of the concept of the African Renaissance as another counter-hegemonic idea within the context of the continuing struggle against European colonial domination even in its new guises in the twenty-first century.

### **3.2 The Narrower Meaning of Pan-African Thought and Practice**

Pan-Africanism thought in the narrower sense can be specifically identified with both the first Pan-Africanism conference in 1900 and the two distinct conferences which were held both in Accra in 1958 (Thompson 1969:24; Pheko 1999:10). The latter were distinct in that they were the first conferences to be held on African soil and as such signified the Pan-Africanism movement's second phase in its historical and intellectual development. The meaning of this is that Pan-Africanism in the narrow sense can be categorized into two epochs: the period of the Western 'Negro' contribution that was marked by the London conference, and the period of African involvement that can be identified with the Accra conferences (Thompson 1969:27).

### **4 The first Pan-African Conference of 1900 and its Significance in the Ideological Development of Pan-African Thought and Practice**

The sitting of the Pan-African conference in London, from the 23 to 25 July 1900, was the first ever held to propagate these ideas, and it was attended by a small group of men and women who were '... Africans and Afro-Americans from the New World, who met to discuss the position of their respective groups and the defence of their interest' (Geiss 1974:176). The

idea of such a meeting was the brainchild of Henry Sylvester-Williams, who was a West Indian barrister. 'As a barrister in London he represented the interests of African tribal chiefs, mainly over land disputes' (Geiss 1974:176).

'This conference was the beginning of a structural, ideological concept of Pan-Africanism', precisely because 'at this conference [the people of African origin and descent] did not ask for freedom'. They actually '... asked for a means of preparing African people to enter the modern world' (Clarke 1991:105). Thus it is maintained that this conference marked the launching of the first phase of the Pan-Africanism movement in the broader sense – '... a period of nationalist gestation in Africa when ideas were being evolved by African, Afro-American and Afro-West Indian intellectuals' (Thompson 1969:27).

As Thompson (1969:24f) points out, amongst other things this conference aimed at the following:

1. to act as a forum of protest against the aggression of white colonisers;
2. to appeal to the 'missionary and abolitionist tradition of the British people to 'protect Africans from the depredations of Empire Builders';
3. to bring people of African descent throughout the world into closer touch with each other and to establish more friendly relations between the Caucasian and African races;
4. to start a movement looking forward to the securing of all African races living in civilized countries, their full rights and to promote their business interests.

It is clear from the above that the conference represented the first organised efforts outside of Africa to protest against Western European domination and degradation of the African people. The desire for the unity of Africans and peoples of African descent was clearly expressed. In essence 'the meeting put the term "Pan-African" into circulation and stressed the need for equity between the races' (Gann & Duignan 1967:91).

In an attempt to bring the situation of the people of African origin and descent to the attention of the whole Western European world, Pan-

Africanism ideologists, such as the then President of the Pan-African Association, Bishop Alexander Walters, General Secretary, Henry Sylvester-Williams, and Chairperson of Resolutions Committee, W.E.B. Du Bois formulated a statement which stressed that:

In the metropolis of the modern world, in this the closing year of the nineteenth century, there has been assembled a congress of men and women of African blood, to deliberate solemnly upon the present situation and outlook of the darker races of mankind. *The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line, the question as to how far differences of race – which show them-selves chiefly in the colour of the skin and texture of the hair – will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilisation* (e.a.) (Thompson 1969:26).

Though this appeal is said to have not had any effect on European imperialists at the time (Thompson 1969:26) it is still echoing today, precisely because it addressed a practise and behaviour that continues to polarise the human world-view and relations along race and colour, rich and poor. From the above-mentioned statement it is clear why most of the problems of Africa that are related with underdevelopment are always linked to European advancement and prosperity.

## **5 The Role that W.E.B du Bois Played in Shaping Pan-African Thought and Practice after 1900**

In the list of names of African-American intellectuals who attended the first Pan-African conference in London in 1900 was that of Dr W.E.B du Bois, who was known and recognised as 'an Afro-American leader, journalist, historian and sociologist' (Geiss 1974:233). Earlier on, in 1897, he is reported to have made a statement to the effect that, 'if the Negro were to be a factor in the world's history it would be through a Pan-African movement' (Legum 1962:24). Considering this pronouncement it will be right to conclude that for Du Bois the first Pan-African conference meeting was a dream come true and a step-forward by people of African origin and descent

in their struggle against European colonialism and racism. At the first Pan-African conference he declared that:

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea (Legum 1962:25).

This statement has been echoing throughout the decades until today, in the twenty-first century. Personally, for Du Bois the conference had an immense influence on him to an extent that 'three years after attending the London conference, in 1903 he broke [ties] with the then hero of Negroes and of white Americans, Booker T. Washington' (Legum 1962:25). Du Bois is said to have differed fundamentally with Washington in that he had a problem with the leadership of the latter which in his eyes '... was based on counsels of moderation, patience, education and hard work which he offered as the recipe for Negro advancement' (Legum 1962:25f). As a person whose thinking was most of the time dominated by his colour, contrary to Washington's 'moderate' ideas, Du Bois '... preached the need for an open and vigorous struggle to win equality of rights' (Legum 1962:26). In this connection, Geiss (1974:211) writes that:

The modern civil rights movement in the USA developed out of this conflict between the moderate conservative wing [represented by Washington], which was ready to accept the long-term subjugation of Afro-Americans, and a militant wing [represented by Du Bois] which revolted against this prospect.

However, the difference in ideas and strategies between Washington and the Afro-American Du Bois was nothing compared to the strong and fierce opposition between the latter and the Afro-Jamaican Marcus Aurelius Garvey. Concerning the opposing personalities of these two leaders Thompson (1969:42) explains that:

The differences in their upbringing coloured their outlook. The one was a scholar and university don, the other a mass leader, largely self-taught; the one a retiring figure, the other a showman and great

orator; the one diplomatic in his approach to his people's problems, the other a vociferous and daring character.

The two leaders did not only differ in their personalities, they also radically stood opposed to one another in their objectives on how the colonised and oppressed should deal with their situation of suppression and domination by their colonisers and oppressors. On the one hand Du Bois:

limited his aim to securing for Africans the right of participation in the governments of their respective countries or the application of the mandatory or trusteeship system where the people were deemed unready for self-rule, he also advocated eventual self-rule (Thompson 1969:42).

On the other hand, standing radically opposed to Du Bois, Garvey in his objectives and programme of action is reported to have:

sought to unite all Africans the world over, to establish a bridgehead on the continent of Africa from which to fight colonialism and weld the whole of Africa into a united nation (Thompson 1969:42).

Among other things in his strategies Du Bois '... aimed, through appeals to the colonial powers and the nations of the world (represented in the League of Nations), to bring the plight of black folk everywhere under serious consideration' (Thompson 1969:44).

## **5.1 The Du Boisan Congresses between 1919 and 1927**

Following the first Pan-African conference in 1900, between 1919 and 1927, Du Bois organised four Pan-African Congresses that became known as the Du Boisan Congresses, and as such marked the First Phase of Pan-Africanism. The congresses are:

- i. The First Pan-African Congress: Paris (1919);
- ii. The Second Pan-African Congress: London, Brussels and Paris (1921);



- iii. The Third Pan-African Congress: London and Lisbon (1923);
- iv. The Fourth Pan-African Congress: New York (1927).

Thompson (1969:55) indicates that, the first and the second congresses showed promise for 'the growth of the Pan-African idea', but the following last two are reported to have been '... disappointing and revealed a diminution of its forces'. These congresses characterised the first Phase of the Pan-African thought and practice which had its shortcomings in as far as the chief objective of Pan-Africanism is concerned.

The first congress was held from the 19 to 21 February 1919, and on its conclusion it adopted a lengthy resolution which nowhere addressed itself to Africans' right to independence (Legum 1962:29). In addition, its notable shortcoming is that it failed to address the crucial question of holding subsequent congress as an aspect that was important for the life and work of the Pan-African movement as a movement that had as its programme the dismantling of colonialism (Geiss 1974:240).

In as far as the second congress is concerned Geiss (1974:242f) notes that it:

...met in several sessions, first in London and then in Brussels and Paris, the composition varied accordingly. In London Anglo-American and Afro-American elements predominated; in Brussels and Paris a francophone element was added, this led to acute tensions and eventually to virtual schisms.

Generally, linked to the Pan-African idea, among other things the congresses were held for the purpose of maintaining the continuity of the Pan-African movement, the unity of the people of African origin and descent. Unfortunately the congresses could not rise to these challenges. In addition, in terms of their chief objective, namely, self-determination of the people of African origin and descent, they achieved nothing substantial until 1945 (Thompson 1969:56). In fact, 'the tangible results of the congresses were meagre and their impact slight in every respect', and looking at their outcomes one thing certain is that 'they did not develop a clearly defined self-sufficient concept which might have helped to give Pan-Africanism greater intellectual discipline' (Geiss 1974:258). One of the factors that

contributed to the movement's failure to achieve its chief goal was the fact that it was mainly confined to intellectuals and this rendered its arguments rigidly rationalist (Gann & Duignan 1967:91).

Given the fact that the four congresses, of the First Phase of the Pan-African thought and practice, became associated personally with his name and somehow represented the vision that Du Bois had on the agenda of the Pan-Africanism movement Geiss (1974:25) writes that:

Du Bois missed his opportunity to give Pan-Africanism a rational basis ... He was fond of sentimental hyperbole and was almost obsessed with the racial problem – in part, it seems, because his personal pride had been hurt .... Thus Du Bois may be regarded as a typical product of the confrontation between the old and the new, between traditional Africa and the modern world, out of which Pan-Africanism, along with other movements sprang. In this respect, for all his personal weaknesses, he is nevertheless representative of Pan-Africanism and it is no coincidence that Padmore gave him the honorary name of 'Father of Pan-Africanism'.

Nevertheless, the Du Boisian congresses had something to be proud of in that they '... outlived the Garvey redemption movement. The collapse of the latter came on his deportation from the United States of America in 1929', and this meant an end to the Back to Africa movement (Thompson 1969:54).

## **6 The Fifth Pan-African Congress and the Role that George Padmore Played to Resuscitate the Pan-African Idea**

Though the period between the last of the Du Boisian Congresses in 1927 and 1944 – regarded as the actual meetings that prepared for the Manchester Congress in 1945 – have no known activities that marked continuity of the Pan-African idea, '... several gatherings were held which, viewed historically, have the appearance of preliminary conferences prior to the congress proper' (Geiss 1974:356). However, these gatherings could not in anyway be linked directly to the Pan-African congresses that had been held under the leadership of Du Bois between 1919 and 1927 (Geiss 1974:356).

Here two examples of such several gatherings mentioned above are considered. The first one is the Paris conference that was organised by Timeko Garan Kouyaute at the beginning of 1934 (Geiss 1974:356). Kouyaute, a West African and a friend of George Padmore, 'after his expulsion from the communist movement, organized a conference to work out a programme on which Africans and Afro-Americans could unite on a worldwide scale' (Geiss 1974:356). However, in terms of its goal of organizing a congress that will act to bring all Africans together, this conference did not achieve anything of significance, precisely because '... no congress of this kind took place either in 1935 or later' (Geiss 1974:357).

After Kouyaute's Paris conference, 'on 14 and 15 July 1934, another conference on Pan-African themes took place, this time in London' (Geiss 1974:357). The main aim of the conference was to address the racial discrimination that confronted coloured workers and students in Britain. This conference was attended by representatives of various and differing organizations that ranged from those that were conservative Pan-Africanists and those that were radical Pan-Africanists and somehow they could be identified with the views of either Du Bois or Garvey (Geiss 1974:357). Some of the organizations that attended were the West African Student's Union (WASU), the League against Imperialism, the Ceylon Students' Union, and the League of Coloured Peoples. Nothing of significance that could be linked to Pan-Africanism came forth in this gathering and in addition speeches of speakers had nothing tangent as '... they mainly served to impart information' on the situation of racial discrimination of people of African origin and descent (Geiss 1974:358).

After several attempts by the ageing 'Father of Pan-Africanism', Du Bois and other leaders such as, Dr Harold Moody, the Jamaican leader of the League of Coloured People that was described as the conservative component of Pan-Africanism, the Fifth Pan-African Congress assembled from the 15 – 19 October 1945 at the Charlton Town Hall, Manchester, and was attended by over two hundred delegates from all over the 'coloured world' (Thompson 1969:58).

Amongst those who attended, this significant congress that was soon to change the political landscape of colonised Africa, were Africa's young leaders, who were '... a collection of unknowns, soon to win fame, notoriety and power in their own countries' (Legum 1962:31), namely, Wallace

Johnson from Sierra Leone, Obafemi Awolowo and Namdi Azikiwe both from Nigeria, Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya, Hastings Banda from Malawi, Peter Abrahams from South Africa, Ako Adjei and Kwame Nkrumah both from Ghana and lastly, Jaja Wachukwu from Nigeria (Abdul-Raheem 1996:4).

It needs to be noted here that the meeting of the Fifth Pan-African Congress was in the main made possible by the collaboration of the Pan-African Federation (PAF), which was a federation of several groups that had emerged between 1927 and 1944, and George Padmore's International African Service Bureau (IASB). The leadership of Padmore was outstanding. He was '... Moody's counterpart on the radical-left wing of Pan-Africanism', and was actually born as Malcolm Ivan Meredith Nurse in Trinidad, in 1902 (Geiss 1974:350). From the look of the affairs that preceded this last congress to be held outside Africa, and as Geiss (1974:353) asserts, Padmore as a predominant leader of the Pan-African idea at the time managed to succeed in organising the gathering in that, he

personified several of the historic elements which played an essential role in the development of Pan-Africanism. His career extended to all terminal points of the classical 'triangle' of Pan-Africanism – the West Indies, the USA, Europe and Africa ... With his dynamism and his insistence on intellectual precision and political action he exerted a strong influence upon the young African and Afro-West intelligentsia between 1935 and 1958 – by the strength of his personality, and by means of articles and several books, lectures, contributions to discussions and a wide circle of personal contacts.

It is possible that it was through the advice of Padmore that the organisers of the congress were strategic in that 'with due deference to his earlier contribution to the Pan-African movement Du Bois was confirmed as Chairman during the rest of the conference' (Thompson 1969:58). In a nutshell, the deliberations of the congress,

centred on the grievances of the delegates which they regarded as the direct result of slavery and the colonial system, with their

concomitant racism and social insecurity (Thompson 1969).

### **6.1 The Results of the Fifth Pan-African Congress and their Implications for the Continental African's Quest**

A careful study of the discussions of the Fifth Pan-African Congress reveals that, from the radical resolutions that emerged from the congress floor, for the first time since the First Pan-African Congress in 1927, the distinction became clear between, on the one hand, 'African Diaspora's quest for identity', and on the other hand 'the continental African's quest for a sustainable lifestyle' (Ackah 1999:61). A new breed of African nationalists who attended the congress made it their business to clarify issues. 'They rejected assimilation, demanded independence outright, and tried to organize mass movements to secure these ends' (Gann & Duignan 1967:97). As a result, the aspirations of the continental African became clearly articulated in Kwame Nkrumah's *Declaration to the Colonial Workers, Farmers and Intellectuals*, which in brief emphatically declared that:

against imperialist exploitation the colonial peoples should concentrate upon winning political power, and for this an effective organization was essential. The tactics recommended were strikes and boycotts – non-violent methods of the struggle. The intellectuals in the colonies and the educated elite generally had to play their part in organizing the masses (Geiss 1974:407).

In terms of the main objective of the Pan-African idea, namely the combating of colonialism, one contributing factor that made the Fifth Pan-African Congress to be successful and a historical landmark was that,

in order that detailed discussion might be facilitated and adequate resolutions framed, the continent of Africa was divided into regions, and apart from broadly general resolutions on the conditions of 'coloured people', local resolutions, which emerged, reflected the peculiar problems of the various regions (Thompson 1969:58).

The above is an aspect that has been missing in previous congresses that were held between 1919 and 1927. The latter has always been clouded by

the 'African Diaspora's quest for identity'. The congress was unique in that when it finally concluded on the fifth day delegates had a feeling that they had participated in a historical event that was a landmark in the history of the Pan-Africanism movement. As Geiss (1974:408) notes,

it was the first evidence of vigorous self-assertion after an interval of almost two decades; at the same time it gave an impetus to efforts to achieve the immediate goal of national independence (Geiss 1974:408).

For the first time delegates from Africa went back home with a basic idea of both the philosophical and political framework for their programmes of struggle against continued European colonialism and racism in their various countries.

## **7 The Second Phase of the Pan-African Idea and the First Two Accra Conferences of 1958**

In addition to the resolutions of the Fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, which had a far-reaching political-will to tackle European racism and colonialism, a number of advantageous factors contributed to the launching of the Second Phase of the Pan-Africanism idea. Amongst these factors was the change in the world climate on the colonial question. As indicated by Thompson (1969:119),

... change in attitude generally, and especially, within the territories of the colonial powers, gave and added weight to the plea of the colonial peoples in Asia. A curious combination of factors emerged of this attitude. It marked a reversion from the attitude in the preceding era before the [Second World] war when colonialism was more defensible. The Atlantic Charter, by asserting the rights of all peoples to choose the governments under which they would live, prepared the ground for a more vehement anti-colonialism.

The attitude that is described above bore some fruits in that it was accompanied by granting of independence to colonies such as India, Pakistan

and Burma in the years 1947 and 1948, and these events became encouraging to African organizations that fought for nationhood and the unity of Africa (Thompson 1969:120).

The other favourable factor that became a bonus to the launching of the Second Phase of Pan-Africanism became the independence of Ghana in 1957 (Thompson 1969:119). With the attainment of sovereign status by this West African country, a message was sent throughout Africa that, 'what some had thought impossible had happened; a Negro-African government had come to being determined to assert that Africans could govern themselves' (Thompson 1969:124).

## **7.1 The transplantation of the Pan-Africanism movement in Africa**

After the Manchester Pan-African Congress of 1945 with its powerful resolutions that were intended to totally uproot European colonialism and its racist practices, Pan-Africanism remained in the realm of ideas (Thompson 1969:126). It was only thirteen years later that the Pan-African political movement landed in Africa in 1958 after Ghana's independence. The event of the independence of Ghana was of historical significance in that it

removed one of the disabilities under which the [Pan-African] movement had operated in the first phase, namely, the absence of a base from which propaganda and ideas could be disseminated (Thompson 1969:126).

Legum (1962:38f) points out at the time of its transplantation the movement had in its possession a programme of ideas and action, which he summarises into nine points, namely:

1. Africa for the Africans: complete independence of the whole of Africa. Total rejection of colonialism in all its forms, including white domination.
2. United States of Africa: the ideal of a wholly unified continent through a series of inter-linking regional federations within which there would be a limitation on national sovereignty.

3. African renaissance of morale and culture: a quest for the 'African personality'; a determination to recast African society into its own forms, drawing from its own past what is valuable and desirable, and marrying it to modern ideas. Modernism is heavily accentuated.
4. African nationalism to replace the tribalism of the past: a concept of African loyalty wider than 'the nation' to transcend tribal and territorial affiliations.
5. African regeneration of economic enterprise to replace colonial economic methods: belief in non-exploiting socialist or communalistic types of socialism; International Communism is rejected outright.
6. Belief in democracy as the most desirable method of government based on the principle of 'one man one vote'.
7. Rejection of violence as a method of struggle, unless peaceful methods of struggle – Positive Action – are met with military repression.
8. Solidarity of black peoples everywhere, and a fraternal alliance of coloured peoples based on a mutual history of struggle against white domination and colonialism.
9. Positive neutrality (as it was then called): non-involvement as partisan in power politics, but neutral in nothing that affects African interests.

These nine points focused on the situation of colonial Africa and the strategies that could be utilised to dismantle European colonialism and the racism tendencies that accompanied the practice. In addition, the ideas that were expressed became the principles that later were used as ideological framework, by people such as Nkrumah in his concept of *African Personality and Consciences* (a philosophy and ideology for decolonization), in their struggles against colonialism, and their endeavours to build their nations.

As it shall be demonstrated in the next section of this study the idea of the African personality became one of the main pillars in the process of the revitalization of African cultural values that were eroded by European cultural domination. The first two Pan-African conferences to be held on the African soil were held in Ghana, Accra, in April and December 1958



(Thompson 1969:126). Eight African governments that were independent at that time, namely, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan and Ghana, attended the April conference. (Geiss 1974:420). These governments on behalf of Africa as a whole issued joint declarations condemning colonialism and the apartheid system in South Africa (Geiss 1974:420).

In December of the same year, 1958, the first All-African Peoples' Conference was held. It purposefully linked itself with the Pan-African tradition and as Geiss (1974:420) points out it was nearly declared the sixth Pan-African Congress.

The wider implications of the first two Accra Conferences of 1958 ushered Pan-Africanism into the realm of Realpolitik (Thompson 1969:126).

## **8 The Meaning of the Notion of the African Personality or Negritude Conception**

As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, in the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, Edward W. Blyden was the first to use the term 'African Personality' (Thompson 1969:7). In its modern connotation Dr Kwame Nkrumah, at the first Conference of Independent African States, first used the term in April 1958 (Quaison-Sackey 1975:75).

In his speech that was intended to prepare the Ghanaian nation for their country's hosting of the above-mentioned conference Dr Nkrumah declared that:

For too long in our history, Africa has spoken through the voices of others. Now what I have called an African Personality in international affairs will have a chance of making its proper impact and will let the world know it through the voices of Africa's own sons (Quaison-Sackey 1975:75).

In this relation the concept represented 'the cultural expression of what is common to all peoples whose home is on the continent of Africa' (Quaison-Sackey 1975:75). From the statement that was made by Nkrumah, Quaison-

Sackey (1975:75) maintains that the term African Personality may be understood as both 'a concept and a force',

not as a simple reaction to the colonial past, but as a complex and positive reaction to – indeed, a re-creation of – the distant past, too. For in attempting to rid his continent of foreign and colonial domination, the African is attempting nothing less than the ultimate recapture and reassertion of the dignity of the individual – a dignity which the colonial system attempted to reduce and, in some cases, to exterminate altogether.

What is obvious from the above-mentioned definition is the fact that the concept of the African Personality had as its main objective the decolonization of the mind of the new African in the era of the eradication of the European colonisation of Africa. In addition the concept challenged the practices of racism that accompanied colonisation.

## **9 Conclusion**

In this contribution a brief account was given of factors that led to the emergence and evolvment of Pan-African thought and practice, namely, the slave trade, European colonisation of Africa and the racism that accompanied the latter. The people of African origin and descent developed and used the Pan-African idea as a means to confront their situation of socio-cultural, political and economic subjugation and domination by European imperialism. Given the effects of European colonisation of Africa and racism, Pan-African thought and practice are understood here as a vehicle that was used to reclaim African history and rediscover the African Personality that had been subjugated under European cultural domination.

Furthermore, in the role that was played by African and Afro-American intellectuals such as Sylvester-Williams, Du Bois, Garvey and Padmore is noted. The Fifth Pan-African Congress that was held at Manchester in 1945 has been identified as a historical landmark on the road to decolonization. Kwame Nkrumah played a major role in the transplantation processes of the Pan-Africanism movement into Africa, by making Ghana a home for the movement.

It was only the post-colonial discourse that emanated from the Fifth Pan-African Congress and the first two Accra Conferences of 1958 that ushered Pan-Africanism into the realm of *Realpolitik* and provided an ideological framework for the decolonization process of Africa and its people.

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