

Violence of the Image

PART 1. RACIAL TIME

Equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it ... The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized.

Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition'
(Taylor 1994, p.36)

We forget the things that shape us and all those things that made us.

Stuart Hall, 'The Missing Chapter – Cultural Identity and the Photographic Archive' (S. Hall 2008)

Archival photographs are a message from the past. They open and adjust our understanding of the way we were. Photographic archives, such as those held at the Royal Anthropological Institute in London and the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt, when read from outside the dominant narratives of their making, offer different points of departure from which to translate the past. As we can only read the past, as it were, in our present, and as the present is never still, then it makes sense to read the past as always being in transition, constantly redefining us in the present as we learn more about the historical conditions of our existence back then.

As Stuart Hall suggested in 2008, trawling through the archive often means 'we have to take one step back and go through the imaginary to enter the domain of culture' (S. Hall 2008). Archives

are highly cultured spaces, making them rich and attractive places within which artists and curators of photography may make critical interventions, as was seen in the exhibition held in 2008 at the International Centre for Photography in New York, titled *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*. The press release states:

One of the most compelling issues explored by artists in recent years centers on the nature and meaning of the archive, that is, how we create, store, and circulate pictures and information. This widespread investigation examines the archive as both a conceptual and physical space in which memories are preserved and history decided. (International Centre for Photography in New York 2008)

The exhibition, which included works by Walid Raad, Thomas Ruff, Anri Sala, Fazal Sheikh, Lorna Simpson, Eyal Sivan, Vivan Sundaram, Nomedá and Gediminas Urbonas, Andy Warhol and many other internationally respected names, owed its title and curatorial framing to Jacques Derrida's book *Archive Fever* (Derrida & Prenowitz 1996).

The place of race in the archive is a highly contested area of investigation, one which W. E. B. Du Bois was at the forefront of articulating, through his work on the visual and race. In discussing the work of Du Bois, Shawn Michelle Smith states that, 'In Du Bois's early writings, the colour line represents not only the systematic inequity of racialized labour but also a visual field in which racial identities are inscribed and experienced through the lens of a "white supremacist gaze"' (Smith 2004, p.24). Archival photographs put to work in the present can now help us recall, rearticulate, manage and make visible the systems of visualisation that have brought the racialised body into focus and question how that focus has contributed to Western ideas on human progress and understanding.

Archival photographs constitute a place in which we can continuously engage with important cultural memory work, which helps us reread the actual making of the past and therefore reconfigure different historical narratives concerning the stories that make up history, race, rights and recognition: four vital stations

in our understanding of humanity that remind us of the power relationships between the 'observer and the observed' (Ribalta 2008, p.38).

Old photographs from colonised and oppressed regions of the world can influence our current sense of place. They have the potential to become key markers in understanding how colonisers have, in different temporalities and political conditions, chosen to engage, make visible, control or erase the colonised subjects' claims for recognition, reminding us that in many instances the political space of progress is nearly always framed as a modern space and that 'modern space is, as it were, space wiped clean' (Connerton 2009, p.121). Modern space often denies the racial spectres that live in museums and among the photographic archives. It is a space where time seems to start afresh and memories are suppressed. It is critical to consider that when archival photographs focusing on the black subject are set free to be read in the present they have the capacity to resist the pace and process of photography's and modernity's desire to forget. In using Derrida's seminal *Archive Fever* as a point of departure from which to discuss the distancing nature of archives, Ariella Azoulay highlights that 'in the archive constructed as ex-territorial and as a receptacle for the past, that which has been cruel and biting is supposed to appear, or so we expect it to appear, as dulled; a piece of history, its accusing finger cut off, blunted' (Azoulay 2015, p.195). Opening the archives concerning the making of race and unsettling the meanings made there in terms of knowledge produced around race equates to a burning down of the 'master's house' and using the remaining ashes to fertilise the soil so as to produce a liberated and fertile plot that grows out of its violent past to generate new meanings.

Burning down the house as a concept becomes representative of some of the key critical moments in modern history in which oppressed peoples have taken action towards ending the conditions of their domination. Meetings, protests, strikes, rebellions, revolutions and civil wars mark the paths to freedom. Looking back at the role of photography in these moments helps to expose the conditions in which anti-colonial, liberation and civil-rights movements were born. Reading photographs gives insight into how our present understandings of oppressed peoples' making in history

have been constructed, often positioning them as victims of systems of state violence. For example, the photographs that Charles Moore took in 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama, that showed young civil rights protestors being attacked with police dogs and blasted with fire hoses, and the poignant archival retrieval work that Santu Mofokeng produced in building his 'Black Photo Album' project that redressed the lack of historical photographs of black middle-class South Africans from 1890 to 1950 (Mofokeng & Campbell 2013). Mofokeng used archival photographs as markers of absence of an indigenous black presence, locked out of civil society. As a photography slide show, the images helped Mofokeng and his audience to understand themselves differently. Photography, then, assists us in the continuous analyses of how these critical journeys towards freedom, modernity and equality for black people have been visualised, framed and represented. This is especially the case within the context of the global reconfigurations and the political failures that occurred throughout the first half of the twentieth century, which was devastated by imperialism, colonialism and wars. Reworking the history of photography explores the different temporalities of global conflicts that have European expansion at their core, and events such as the Second World War in particular may be understood as very different phenomena if read 'through the longer history of colonialism' and its visual regimes (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.174).

'Cultures do not exist outside of how they are represented' (S. Hall 2008), and in the hands of the coloniser, photography has dominated how the Other has been portrayed. Europeans' photographic acts have played a leading role in the theatre of cultural violence against non-Europeans and, in representing the colonised and subjugated peoples of the world, the European camera can be read as constituting a 'decidedly ideologically positioned tool on the side of incursion' (Oguibe 2002, p.566). Historical photographs from within the colonial world or regimes that supported racial violence, such as those made during South Africa's system of Apartheid, or from the far-flung corners of the British empire that celebrate white dominance over the Others, now help us identify possible new entry points into the ideologies that produced racism in the West. Part of the work they can do in the present is to throw different light onto the history of these dark human chapters. Through the European

dominance of photography, and the resulting massive overexposure of the Other, it could be argued that a condition in the West has been created within photography, where it has become difficult to see any photographs of black or subjugated people, let alone photographs of 'black people being abused (or caught in compromised circumstances such as famine, war or indeed the normal activities of their day-to-day life) as being wholly benign' (Berger 2011, p.52). The archive of the world image bank has built fortunes by trading in malign images of the Other.

The mass of photographs taken in Africa by Europeans, such as the one made in 1923 and sent back to England as a colonial Christmas card from the African Oil Nuts Company and Miller Brothers, based in Badagry, Nigeria, illustrates the debasing approach by colonials to taking photographs of Africans as a form of trophy image-making (Figure 5). The photograph's full caption reads:

Christmas photograph of staff at the African Oil Nuts Company and Miller Brothers. Three rows of bare-chested African workers pose for the camera, each man's chest painted with a letter to spell out '1923, Badagry, Merry Xmas'. Four Europeans dressed in white sit on a makeshift bench up front beside three African children, possibly domestic servants. Badagry, Nigeria, circa 1923. Badagry, Lagos, Nigeria, Western Africa, Africa (Bristol Archives).

This seminal photograph now forms part of a permanent exhibition at Liverpool's Slavery Museum. It is on continuous public display, because it highlights the colonial cultural arrogance that was at work in visualising the black body in the early part of the twentieth century. In this instance, the European colonials use their 'staff' as human blackboards to convey the company's Christmas greeting. The black workers are positioned as if posing for a team sports photograph, but instead of celebrating the men as achievers their bodies are merely used to spell out the greeting for the intended recipients at home. In other words, the marking of the African men with white paint constructs the workers as being wholly devoid of any authority over their own bodies. Each painted letter is an absolute mark of domination by the colonial rulers. The company owners join the frame, positioning themselves for the camera in front of the

marked black bodies that function as the backdrop to this colonial festive message. It is the complete objectification of the black men that makes the photograph so extreme.

Reading the photograph now allows us to connect the colonial mindset across space and time, observing how it creates a cultural affirmation of the racist attitudes that are so prevalent in the making of images of black subjects in Africa and within British imaginations. The colonisers are shown sitting dressed in their casual, bright white clothes. To add to the theatre of the image, two black children, also dressed in white, are positioned lying on the ground, pet-like, in front of the four seated Europeans. Additionally, a very small black boy, again dressed in white, sits centrally on the same bench as the Europeans. The caption informs us that the children are 'possibly domestic servants'. The smallest of the African boys is sandwiched in the middle of the four Europeans, between one of the men and the only woman in the photograph. The child folds his arms, mirroring the poses of the two men on the left. The placing of this African child visually constructs an abstracted colonial family, in which everything and everyone is owned. Despite the boy's position, it is not clear what his relationship was to the colonisers and at what age his induction into colonial service began. The presence of the small boy, although positioned on the same plane as the Europeans, can be seen as representing colonial infantilisation processes at work. Placing this child centre stage, and the other slightly older children on the ground in front of the Europeans, further emphasises the photograph's message of dominance; it communicates to the viewer the colonial pleasures of childlike African servitude and European rule.

Within this photograph, however, there is an engaging visual twist that emerges out of its 'oppressive' first reading. Time has fortunately diluted the colonial humour intended, especially when the photograph is read through the prism of a contemporary decolonial critique. The African man whose body was selected to carry the letter X in the Christmas message is head and shoulders above the rest of the men. Due to his large stature, the X is the most dominant sign in the photograph. He stands almost directly behind the European man seated on the right. The dominance of the letter X pulls the viewer's attention to it and marks, in a Barthesian sense,

a punctive fault-line in the relationship between the colonisers and colonised. The X becomes a symbol of rejection that distorts the original jovial message. The towering black figure marked with the white X announces in the present that something is profoundly wrong within the politics of this frame, even beyond the objectification of the black men and beyond the politics of the time of the photograph's making. Reading the photograph from a twenty-first-century perspective aligns the black painted subject to a more recent political application of the letter X. X as a sign was used by black radical activists such as Michael and Malcolm X, among others, to mark the rejection of their European slave names and as a symbol of their awakened consciousness as black people. In reading this photograph today, and with the knowledge of how the letter X was used in black radical political contexts, the black central figure is transformed through time and political cultural appropriation to emerge as having the potential to challenge, from within this photograph, the colonial authority that is so evident in the production of it.

To understand the depth of black objectification in the transatlantic European psyche, one only needs to take a quick glance through the pages of James Allen's critically acclaimed *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (2000). The book places on display visual reminders of the intensity of race hatred at work in the US during the first half of the twentieth century and indeed beyond. The photographs in the book represent a pathology of race hatred. This pathology seems now to be illogical or abnormal, and yet as photographs of lynching they provide damning testimony to the perversity of violence and conditions of hate that were recognised by so many in the United States as being the natural order of things. When they were made, many of the photographs were transformed into postcards produced as memorabilia and, as such, they work within the long tradition of violent commodification of the black body in pain (Figure 8).

The photographs of lynching collected together within the context of the *Without Sanctuary* project were never produced as evidential documents in a court of law, where they might have assisted in the prosecutions of the perpetrators of such crimes. They were generated for wider appreciation and cultural affirmation of Jim Crow white

violence, which was clearly sanctioned as normative evident from the fact that, although they portrayed graphic violence, they were allowed to be sent to family and friends through the US mail. What is shocking about these types of images, once we move beyond the obvious horrific depiction of the broken, brutalised and butchered black bodies, is the sheer sense of pleasure, cultural pride and excitement visible in many of the faces of the white participants at the lynching scenes. They gladly pose and in some instances jockey for the most prominent position in front of the camera, celebrating their presence or direct participation in a spectacle of unlawful human killing, confident in their knowledge that they would not be prosecuted. The photographs that make up the *Without Sanctuary* archive date from as late as the 1960s.

Representations of lynching in popular culture tend to locate it as a nineteenth-century practice, as seen in Steve McQueen's Oscar-winning 2013 film *12 Years a Slave* and subsequently the photograph he produced while scouting for locations for the film *Lynching Tree*, first displayed in Basel in 2013. As the title suggests, the latter focused on a large tree, which is located near New Orleans and was used for lynching slaves. The photograph, displayed as a colour transparency on a light-box, was shown as part of Tate Britain's *Fighting History* exhibition (2015). However, rather than being 'history', *Without Sanctuary* reminds us that, for many African Americans today, lynching forms part of living memory. Thus, some of the work that the photographs in *Without Sanctuary* do now is to close the temporal gap associated with race hate in the US, which, through the archive, is often represented as a phenomenon in the country's past. These photographs remind us that living with the threat of violence because of one's difference is real and potentially devastating, and that lynching remains, for many, a constant fact of life. This was highlighted by Isabel Wilkerson in her 2014 article for *The Guardian*: 'About twice a week, or every three or four days, an African American has been killed by a white police officer in the seven years ending in 2012'; this rate of killing black Americans 'is nearly the same as the rate of lynchings in the early decades of the twentieth century' (Wilkerson 2014).

Colonial and racist trophy photographs therefore serve as fragments and frames from within the grand narrative of white supremacist

visual ideologies. They allow us to enter the catastrophic frames of violent colonial and racist times, and they become important articulations that signify the dark cultural codes constructed against people of African descent or Others classified as inferior (Young 1995).

Photographs such as the 1923 Christmas message from Nigeria haunt the old imperialists and segregationist regimes and, as images working on the present, they reanimate and reunite us with the violence of colonial time, a time when European values considered ‘force ... a universal, simple, rapid, and easily understood method of communication’, and a time when:

cultural difference not only made the use of force helpful to the accomplishment of European objectives, but also made it easy for its employers to assume that the usual conventions of human relations could be partially abrogated in contact with members of alien and inferior cultures. (Cairns 1965, p.42)

Time also does its ‘reconstruction work’ on the *Without Sanctuary* lynching images (S. Hall 1984, p.106). Racist trophy photographs, like all photographs, have the capacity through time to mutate in meaning away from their original intended purpose. In the case of these images, they have become culturally recoded by their display as objects of shame that reveal the horror in the spectacle of lynching. This recoding becomes possible only through different modes of articulation, such as the museum, the gallery, publication and the internet, and by allowing a number of cultural perspectives into the archives. Reimagining the cultural work performed by violent images of black people has, in the case of the *Without Sanctuary* project, encouraged a recognition of the racist pleasure that was derived from lynching black people in the US. Photographs made from within the racist culture of Jim Crow-ism or colonialism now provide the space in which new articulations and political awareness of representations of the black subject in the Western world can emerge. If we look at photographic representations of acts of violence where race is the critical driver for their production, we can track back over time and ask pertinent questions about photography as an ideological tool concerning race, violence, Western visual pleasures and photography’s role in the making of whiteness.

It is in the space and time of culture and politics that black trophy photographs such as the *Without Sanctuary* project and the 1923 'Merry Xmas' photograph can become transformative objects; they are referent, fragmented moments that evoke and invite a reworking of old formations and understandings of photography's work in racial time. With reference to Johannes Fabian's 1983 book *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, I suggest that racial time is different from the linear progression of dominant time. Instead, racial time is a phenomenon where waiting forms the majority of the everyday. It is a time where progress is not charted through the prism of Western epistemologies. In racial time, slavery does not end, it merely evolves, changes shape and oppresses through different but equally violent regimes. Racial time also has its critical periods where progress is produced and reproduced through tangible events. For example, in the Second World War, racial time for the subaltern became the backdrop or opportunity for mounting a significant challenge against political dominance and the constructed time lags that framed it. The upheavals in Europe that were produced by war and conflict for the subaltern were moments in which the time for change could be seized, appropriated and sped up, in favour of liberation. Racial time is therefore not always slow. But as far as justice is concerned, racial time is probably the slowest of all and is best recognisable today in the US through the disproportionate amount of black men locked up in prisons and on death row. 'Time appropriation in racial politics', remarks Dilip Gaonkar:

mostly occurs during periods of social upheaval and transformation, whether locally, nationally, or transnationally. Sometimes starting in relative isolation, as in the Montgomery bus boycott, time appropriation can launch a series of events, propelling a single act into a series of acts, within the same location or well beyond its geographical realm. (Gaonkar 2001, p.285)

Racial time does not tick along in a fashion that produces seconds, minutes, hours and days. It works more like a cultural pulse in which the political conditions around it cause it to quicken or slow down.

New formations of photography's previously orthodox history are indeed possible if we read photography through different polit-

ical temporalities and cultural perspectives within the constructs of race and time. Race is a construct and photography has been mostly applied to aid the creation of a dominant Eurocentric symbolic order in which the subaltern has been condemned as an object, rendered and processed as a mute and inferior being. Given this, creating openings in which photographic epistemologies can surface from below allows different cultural readings and interpretations of photography to emerge. This resurfacing of the medium's history enables us to 'trace a larger journey of translation, from the disempowered to the empowered' (Young 2010, p.8). This was evidenced in the exhibition *Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life*, which opened at New York's International Center of Photography in January 2013. The organisers state in the accompanying media release that:

A central premise of this exhibition is that South African photography, as we know it today, was essentially invented in 1948. The exhibition argues that the rise of the National Party to political power and the introduction of apartheid as the legal foundation of governance changed the pictorial perception of the country from a purely colonial space based on racial segregation to a highly contested space based on the ideals of equality, democracy, and civil rights. Photography was almost instantaneously aware of this change and responded by transforming its own visual language from a purely anthropological tool to a social instrument, and because of this, no one else photographed South Africa and the struggle against apartheid better, more critically and incisively, with deeper pictorial complexity, and more penetrating insight than South African photographers. (International Center of Photography 2012)

According to the curators of the exhibition, Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester, photography in South Africa as visual language was altered within its core by the intensity of the Apartheid political regime. Here, I argue that it is not photography that is transformed by Apartheid; rather, it is the people on all sides of the racial divide. Under Apartheid, black photographers, trying to make their lives visible to the outside world, were under intense political pressure,

often working in secret with concealed cameras. On being arrested by the police, Ernest Cole, the black South African photographer, was offered two options: join their ranks as an informer, or be sent to prison. He went instead into exile. His book *House of Bondage*, published in 1967, 'shows the Apartheid world within the world but also hints at a larger, yet unrealized world where black people could be seen or choose not to be seen, on their own terms' (Baer 2014, p.5). A statement from Cole's book reads: 'Three hundred years of white supremacy in South Africa has placed us in bondage, stripped us of dignity, robbed us of self-esteem, and surrounded us with hate' (Cole 1967). Reading photography from below, or from the south, opens the door for subaltern voices to address the impact of photography on the black body and mind, and enables them to recognise themselves as subjects in their own right. The making of photographs such as the one taken in 1923 at Badagry says nothing of any note or worth about the African and everything about the time and people of the photograph's making, when 'the Briton saw his world in terms of a broad three-stage hierarchy in which the white race, western civilization, and Christianity occupied the top rungs of the racial, cultural and religious ladders of mankind' (Cairns 1965, p.74). While this imperial northern perspective on the world has proved remarkably resilient, photographers such as Cole proved their revolutionary qualities – and those of photography; each time they released the shutters of their cameras, they chipped away at imperial systems of knowledge. They altered the frames of reference in which the subaltern subject had been located.

Likewise, the *Without Sanctuary* project, made possible through the collecting work of James Allen, a white American from Florida who describes himself as a 'picker', becomes a radical intervention in how we see race. He states:

I believe the photographer was more than a perceptive spectator at lynchings. The photographic art played as significant a role in the ritual as a torturer or souvenir grabbing – a sort of two-dimensional biblical swine, a receptacle for a collective sinful self. Lust propelled their commercial reproduction and distribution, facilitating the endless replay of anguish. Even dead, the victims were without sanctuary ... Studying these photos has engendered

in me a caution of whites, of the majority, of the young, of religion, of the accepted. (Allen n.d.)

By bringing a corpus of lynching photographs together and positioning them within the public realm, where they perform critical and ongoing political work, social change becomes a reality. The *Without Sanctuary* photographs were cited as being a significant contributing factor for encouraging the US Senate finally to acknowledge its complicity in lynching. Senators George Allen and Mary Landrieu sought a formal apology from the state to be given to the victims of lynching, and, in this, they were partly motivated by seeing these images. The visual vocabulary of the book helped them to secure progress through the Senate of non-binding 'Resolution 39', which was passed by the Senate on 13 June 2005 (S. Res. 39 2005). On this historic date the US Senate issued a long-awaited formal apology to civil-rights political activists for not protecting people against lynching. The resolution reads as follows:

Now, therefore, be it *Resolved*, That the Senate –

- (1) apologizes to the victims of lynching for the failure of the Senate to enact anti-lynching legislation;
- (2) expresses the deepest sympathies and most solemn regrets of the Senate to the descendants of victims of lynching, the ancestors of whom were deprived of life, human dignity, and the constitutional protections accorded all citizens of the United States; and
- (3) remembers the history of lynching, to ensure that these tragedies will be neither forgotten nor repeated. (S. Res. 39, 2005)

Over a hundred years after some of these photographs were taken, they still perform serious cultural and political work and caused change at the highest level of politics when re-introduced into the public realm. Here, we can point to a rare and direct moment when photographs have generated real social and political change. Resolution 39 is more than an apology for not prosecuting racist murderers and not protecting black lives. It is a symbolic moment of recognition and a significant moment of justice.

Such a journey across time to a form of justice for those black people executed for white pleasure is an example of racial time in operation. Racial time is exhausting for those whose lives have been historically managed and framed through the images and ideas of race, not because they are worn down by seeing images of violence against the Other, but because they are the Other so familiar with being framed in a violent totalitarian Eurocentric gaze. Homi Bhabha in his 1986 foreword to Frantz Fanon's seminal text, *Black Skin, White Masks*, states that:

The black presence ruins the representative narrative of Western personhood: its past tethered to treacherous stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy will not produce a history of civil progress, a space for the Socius; its present, dismembered and dislocated, will not contain the image of identity that is questioned in the dialectic of the mind/body and resolved in the 'epistemology of appearance and reality'. The White man's eyes break up the black man's body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision disturbed. (Fanon & Bhabha 1986, p.12)

PART 2. RUPTURED IMAGE

Archives of images address the ebb and flow of the political realities through which colonised and African American subjects were brought into public focus by the Allied governments both during and immediately after the Second World War. Certain critical image positioning of the black subject was produced by the Allies, which sought to bring the black subject closer to whiteness at an unprecedented time of crisis. Images that addressed racism and colonialism were produced and put to work in various public realms within Britain and the US, and these public-service racialised images either aided or hindered the sociopolitical conditions of subaltern subjects under imperial rule during the war, and the question of race was managed through the photographic image at this critical juncture in global politics.

For colonised and subjugated peoples, the Second World War ruptured the established image of European dominance. With

the experience of the war, as noted in the previous chapter, many from the colonies and those who had historically been subjected to racial, cultural and political violence, developed the conviction that they had the moral right to carry on the fight against European colonisation and against other oppressive practices of white racial superiority that had become widely accepted as norms across much of the 'developed' world. A steady process of political agitation against the hegemony of systematic colonial and racial oppression was unleashed during the war years. This represented a new kind of black cultural and political work from within the subaltern international body politic. For the subaltern, the war against the fascist threat seamlessly evolved into battles for equal rights, recognition and independence. This subaltern political work was staged on myriad cultural and ideological fronts, both from within the Allied states and throughout their colonial territories. Direct forms of agitation, effectively from below, produced a climate in which critical consideration of the subaltern had to be addressed by the Allied governments. In Britain and the US, the result was an attempt to produce an official visual shift in the perception of black people and their place in the fight against fascism. This desired shift in perceptions of race was consciously generated by state bodies to perform specific cultural work across the fault-lines of race that were opening up across the US and throughout the British empire. It became evident that the status quo around race could not be maintained as the Allied states faced the threat of the Axis powers.

During the Second World War the idolatry-like presence of the 'white, western, civilised male ... as the ultimate face of humanity was in crisis. It is this profile that monopolised the definition of humanity in mainstream western imagery' (Pieterse 1992, p.223). This was an imagery that would be profoundly challenged and altered as a key consequence of black participation in the war. 'The war diminished not only the power but also the self-confidence of Europeans to rule their colonial possessions. In so doing, moreover, it revolutionized the myth of white invincibility and superiority among indigenous peoples' (Lauren 1988, p.172).

For the European powers during and after the war, African nationalism and civil-rights movements became an unstoppable force for change. The great white nations in fighting themselves,

effectively opened the door to freedom for the colonised and those who Fanon would later call *The Wretched of The Earth* in his inspiring 1961 revolutionary book. For African nationalist leaders, the Second World War was the point at which Europe's grip on Africa began to loosen:

During the war the Allied powers taught the subject peoples (and millions of them!) that it was not right for Germany to dominate the other nations. They taught the subjugated peoples to fight and die for freedom rather than live and be subjugated by Hitler ... Here then is the paradox of history, that the Allied Powers, by effectively liquidating the threat of Nazi domination, set in motion those powerful forces which are liquidating, with equal effectiveness, European domination in Africa ... The emergence and the march of African nationalism are in reality a boomerang on the colonial powers. They fired the anti-domination bullet at Nazi Germany, but now the same bullet is being fired at them. (Sithole 1959, pp.19-23)

In the midst of the disasters of the Second World War, the image of black people in the Western world experienced a significant shift within and in relation to Western governments. This shift occurred not as a result of any great act of humanitarian Allied enlightened policies but because the Allied governments slowly began to recognise that the impact of the continuous promotion of cultural and political hostilities against black people was not beneficial to their wider objective of defeating the Axis powers. In the early 1940s, racial conflict in the US was absorbing vital resources and discouraging the much-needed labour power in the factories to defeat the Axis powers. In analysing some of the country's race riots, in the 'United States the War Department noted that 1,250,000 man hours of production were lost in the factories of Detroit' because of riots in 1943 (Menefee 1944, p.15).

Popular constructions of Second World War history, such as those produced by the BBC relating to Winston Churchill's famous morale-boosting speech to the House of Commons on 4 June 1940 after the great retreat from Dunkirk, tend to omit the fact that the empire was regarded as a vital element of survival should Britain be

successfully invaded by the Germans. The designated role of the empire, according to Churchill, was to carry on the struggle against the Axis powers until the 'New World' (the US) could rescue, liberate and restore the old imperial world. Churchill stated, 'We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender', but the final part of the speech is most revealing:

and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old. (Churchill 1940)

It was in this moment of Britain's most dire need that the idea of empire became a reassuring symbol of British freedom within the House of Commons and across the nation. The empire here is importantly framed by Churchill as a permanent entity, as much a part of Britain as Britain itself. He later stated that, 'We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire' (Churchill 1942). Churchill understood clearly what was at stake in the war, and he insisted on distinguishing strategic and tactical war considerations, such as that of the Atlantic Charter (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.174), over notions of decolonising the empire. Freedom for subject peoples was not, at this time, part of Britain's post-war agenda. Churchill's view of the empire's role during and after the war was profoundly different from that of the many anti-colonial and pro-independence groups:

which had been formed in Britain before or during World War II ... The most important [of these groups] from an international perspective were the West African Students' Union (WASU), formed in London by Ladipo Solanke and Dr H. C. Bankole-Bright in 1925; the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), formed in London by Harold Moody in 1931; and the International African Service Bureau (IASB), formed in London by George Padmore in 1937. (Adi 1995, p.12)

For political groups such as these 'the Second World War provided the opportunity to further develop their anti-colonial activities' (Adi 1995, p.12). It was therefore from within the body politic of the Allies that increasing political pressure was applied to the Allied leadership:

to disclose their war aims, especially after the signing of the Atlantic Charter in 1941, to declare that self-determination was a principle that applied as much to colonies as to the occupied countries of Europe. British colonial administration came under the spotlight, as did the effects of racism in Britain, at a time when the Government was anxious to enlist support for the war effort, and to demonstrate how British imperialism was morally superior to Nazi fascism. (Adi 1995, p.12)

The Second World War was at a critical point in 1941, and Britain needed manpower. Across the colonies, appeals were made for colonial subjects to join the armed services and extensive propaganda campaigns against the Nazis were put to work to bolster manufacturing and recruits for the armed services (Sithole 1959, pp.19-23).

'The plan [as far as Britain was concerned] was to compete with Nazi Germany's highly efficient Ministry of Propaganda by promoting Britain's position both at home and abroad [as secure]. The Ministry of Information duly came into being on 4 September 1939' (Slocombe 2010, p.5). From that date, Britain's Ministry of Information produced images that attempted to construct a more intimate face of the colonial subject. This was done mainly through public poster campaigns seeking to reassure the British public that they were not alone in their fight against Axis aggression. The faces presented in these propaganda posters were designed to work as reassuring messages to the public that 'we' were not alone, as these Other loyal, British subjects were on hand to help; that they were fundamentally not separate subjects. Therefore these wartime posters, with the colonial subject in focus, represent a significant moment within Britain's imperial story. They are objects that function as critical visual markers in the perception of racial difference and racial time. The posters were aimed at a British nation

that was perceived to be harbouring deep-seated anxieties and fears in relation to Germany's military might and grave concerns about Britain's readiness for war and fear of isolation as German forces swept across Europe. The posters were thus produced at a time when the British government was desperate to define a face of support, especially as the US was reluctant to enter the war. The distinctive message to the British public was that the colonies were the 'sinews of war' (Slocombe 2010, p.11), a resource that strengthened British resolve and would hold the muscle of Britain in place to resist any threat posed by German forces.

How effective the overall poster campaigns were in raising British morale is a matter of dispute, according to senior curators at the Imperial War Museum such as Richard Slocombe. In 1939, the same year as the posters entered the public domain, a survey was commissioned, which revealed that the British public felt patronised through a use of language that expressed 'lofty tones and abstract notions of "Freedom" and "Resolution"' (Slocombe 2010, p.5). These lofty 'abstract' notions that seemingly patronised the British public resonated differently throughout the empire, as thousands of colonial subjects rallied under the British flag to join the fight for freedom. The colonised subject identified in these posters a new sense of self that had not been widely displayed in public across the empire prior to the Second World War. In offering an image of closer cultural proximity between the coloniser and colonised, the posters visually articulated a people's aspirations for self-determination. 'WWII did not give birth to the spirit of independence, but rather gave expression to that spirit which was already there' (Sithole 1959, p.26).

As stated above, how successful the poster campaigns produced by the Ministry of Information in Britain may have been in raising British public morale is disputed. In his 2010 publication *British Posters of the Second World War*, Slocombe omits any analysis of race in presenting his interpretations of the cultural work the war posters performed. In fact, he references only one of the more popular posters that feature the colonial soldier or colonial war worker. Slocombe does, however, include four other posters from across the empire – from Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand – but these present a rather anglicised vision of the colonial industrial

workers' support for the war and are more textual than visual in nature. The single poster that references the colonial soldier that Slocombe chose to reproduce in his book is titled 'Together' and is credited to the British artist William Little. It was reproduced in various formats throughout the war and was used across colonial recruitment stations. Second World War public information posters, especially those that reference the colonies, warrant greater scrutiny than curators such as Slocombe have offered. Given the critical and contradictory nature of racial politics at work across both the Axis and Allied powers before, during and after the war, race should be a primary concern when exploring the archive of posters produced by the Ministry of Information.

In some of the posters, rarely seen in public after the war, the black subject is presented with a greater degree of parity and individuality, effectively singled out as visually honourable in their own right as either soldier or war worker. These images are radical, because they break with the tradition of portraying the colonised subject as merely the backdrop to white endeavours (Wood 2000). Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, the dominant photographic images in circulation showed colonial or black soldiers or workers as an extension to the colonial mission or to white authority: the people were afforded no name, no rank, no worth. In the popular realm, black subjects were rarely portrayed as dignified fighting men in their own right. The normative mechanism and preferred visual message, when bringing the black subject into view, was to reproduce them as objects signifying the Allied army officers' superiority. In US print culture:

the good black soldier remained conspicuous by his absence. *Life* magazine supported the war with gusto. But in seventy-eight glossy issues during the final year and a half of the war, when black (American) soldiers were at last in combat, *Life* published a mere ten pictures of black men in uniform – out of some 14,000 photographs. Most of these ten pictures were very small, and most of the soldiers were clearly service troops. One black soldier carried an accordion. None carried weapons. (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.113)

However, in contrast to those posters and photographs discussed here, it is also the case that some of the lesser-known and now celebrated Second World War posters that are held at the Imperial War Museum and the United States National Archives can be read as attempts by the Allied forces to advance the publicly understood image of the black subject towards a more refined and human presence, a presence that opens up the possibilities of seeing the racialised subject not merely as a curiosity but as a professional participating soldier or as trained and skilled worker with a meaningful purpose, history and identity. These relatively rare images may have helped to close the cultural gap that surrounded the understanding of the black subject. In some cases the images were supported by informative and detailed texts relating to the black subjects' own personal journey in aiding the war effort.

PART 3. THE POSTERS

One of the posters produced in Britain, from the 1939 series titled 'Empire War Workers in Britain', which carries the subtitle 'A Tank Worker from Nigeria', participates in this more benevolent representation of the black subject (Figure 9). The full caption from the Imperial War Museum reads as follows:

Whole: the image occupies the majority, with a smaller image placed in the lower left, held within a blue circular inset. The title and text are separate and positioned in the lower fifth, in black. All set against a white background and held within a brown border.

Image: a half-length depiction of a Nigerian worker in a British factory. He is repairing a component of a tank. The smaller image is a Union Flag.

Text: EMPIRE WAR WORKERS IN BRITAIN: A TANK WORKER FROM NIGERIA This is Jack Smith, from Nigeria, who worked for the Secretariat there before coming to England to play saxophone in a dance band. When war broke out he, like many other West Africans, took a course in a Ministry of Labour training

school, and now he is helping to repair engines of light tanks in a Ministry of Supply factory. Some of the tanks he has worked on were salvaged from France before the collapse. They were reconditioned in England and then sent out to his native Africa where they went into action against the enemy during the British advance into Libya. FOR VICTORY G.P.D. 365/67. (Imperial War Museum n.d.a)

'Jack Smith' is portrayed as a typical British factory worker. He is wearing standard navy blue workers' overalls and is at his position on the factory production line. There is no visual exchange between Jack Smith and the camera, as he is looking down at his work. The scene is reportage in style, and the poster has been produced as a colour lithograph. This gives the image a rich depth and texture, painterly in quality, as if it has been hand-tinted.

Through the text, Smith's individuality becomes an active agent in reading the image. His short story explains the conditions of his arrival in Britain, highlighting his skills and his place of origin. The dominant message is that he is here because Britain needs him, and he is fulfilling his sense of patriotic duty. We are told that he previously worked at the 'Secretariat', which suggests he has a high degree of literacy and administrative skill. He plays the saxophone, a complicated and expensive instrument, suggesting that he is a competent musician associated with jazz or an orchestrated big band of the time. We also learn that he has been retrained as a skilled engineer who now repairs the engines of tanks that are fit for purpose in front-line war manoeuvres. The African's transformation into a worthy war worker is completed through his anglicised naming: 'Jack Smith' is a very British name, and it serves to further trans-culturally locate him for the viewer. He has been made by Britain in Africa. In this guise, this colonial subject is an ideal contributor to the empire's war effort. Smith, here working in the 'Ministry of Supply Factory', through this poster, represents an African mirror, reflecting hope into the minds of the British while they are under siege. This poster has one other compelling factor. In the background another worker can be seen at his station. He also appears to be operating a machine. This man is white and he is out of focus, but his presence is critical to the message. The white man's framing within the image makes

Jack Smith a co-worker and generates in the audience the reality of racial equality within the industrial war effort.

Women from the colonies are also brought closer to their European colleagues through the cultural work they perform in a similar series of posters produced during the Second World War titled 'On War Work in Britain'. This series focuses on Asian women and men carrying out various highly skilled and trained tasks, such as the poster featuring 'Miss Dogdo Ardeshir Jilla' (Figure 10). The Imperial War Museum captions the poster as follows:

Whole: the image occupies the majority, with a smaller image placed in the lower left, held within a blue circular inset. The title and text are separate and positioned in the lower fifth, in black. All set against a white background and held within a brown border.

Image: a half-length depiction of an Indian nurse holding the back of a male patient's head as a doctor examines his nose. The smaller image is a Union Flag.

Text: ON WAR WORK IN BRITAIN: No. 6: FROM INDIA TO PLAY HER PART IN BRITAIN'S MEDICAL SERVICE In the Prince of Wales' Hospital, Tottenham, London, twenty-year-old Miss Dogdo Ardeshir Jilla, a Parsee, is taking a four-year course as a probationer nurse. Now in her second year, Nurse Jilla lives in the nurses' quarters with the other nurses, takes part in the ordinary routine of the hospital, attends three lectures a week and studies in her off-duty time. In this photograph Nurse Jilla is seen adding to her experience by taking a turn of duty in the out-patients' department. She is assisting a doctor who is giving nasal treatment to a patient. FOR VICTORY G.P.D. 365/13/21/1. (Imperial War Museum, n.d.*b*)

'Nurse Jilla' is positioned in the centre of the poster gently supporting a young white man's head as he receives attention to his nose from a white doctor. Dressed in her immaculately clean, predominately white uniform, she looks down caringly at the patient. The poster is a colour lithographic print, the effect of which works

to epidermally harmonise the range of skin tones of those portrayed. Racial differences between the three figures are diminished. The extended caption helps the viewer identify with the journey Nurse Jilla is making to becoming a nurse, and, by extension, becoming British. We are informed that 'Nurse Jilla lives in the nurses' quarters with the other nurses'. This implies that she has successfully integrated into living within the nursing institution. We are told that she takes part in the ordinary routine of the hospital, attends three lectures a week and studies in her off-duty time. Like Jack Smith, Nurse Jilla represents a much-needed colonial helping hand, framed as a real person doing valued wartime work. In caring for Britain's men in their hour of need, Nurse Jilla represents a saving angel from the colonies, as her dark right hand cradles the young soldier's blond head while he receives treatment from the doctor.

These posters help to shift the black body away from its historical debasing renderings produced across the history of Western visual culture. This new black face from the colonies is portrayed as committed to fighting and working for king and country, with both pride and an increased degree of cultural parity, but still bound by empire and loyal in the service of their colonial masters and as people allied in their collective purpose in defending Britain's interests. This juncture in the image production and presentation of the colonised subject at home and abroad marks a distinctive transfiguration in the portrayal of the colonised black body. It was out of political necessity and foreign invasion that the British propaganda machine produced the conditions in which 'the savage had turned subject, an image of mature colonialism' (Corbey & Leerssen 1991, p.192).

These wartime posters worked in different geographical and political conditions, and within the context of an empire on its knees, so, as forms of propaganda, they may have registered 'differently' within the colonies from how they appeared at home. In West Africa, the image of a dignified, respected black worker viewed from within the context of Africa's colonial reality could carry multiple different or transgressive meanings.

The British Ministry of Information further produced this sense of colonial coevalness within another series of posters that focuses directly on the colonial soldier. The series, produced in 1939, is titled

'Our Allies the Colonies'. One of these posters highlights the Royal West African Frontier Force, portraying an African soldier looking confidently at the viewer, as if staring them down (Figure 11). This series is also held in the archives of the Imperial War Museum and its object description reads as follows:

Whole: the main image is positioned in the upper centre, with a smaller image placed in the lower centre. The title is separate and located in the lower half, in red. The text is separate and positioned across the top edge, in white cursive script, in the lower centre, in black, and down each edge, in black held within a brown and white design. Further text is integrated placed in the lower centre, in black outlined orange. All set against a grey background.

Image: a portrait-length depiction of a soldier of the Royal West African Frontier Force. The smaller image is a depiction of the badge of the Royal West African Frontier Force.

Text: The British Colonial Empire ADEN ANTIGUA BAHAMAS BARBADOS BASUTOLAND BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE BERMUDA BRITISH HONDURAS BRITISH SOLOMON IS. BRITISH VIRGIN IS. CEYLON CYPRUS DOMINICA FALKLAND IS. FIJI GAMBIA GIBRALTAR GILBERT AND ELLICE IS. GOLD COAST GRENADA HONG KONG JAMAICA KENYA MALAYA MALTA MAURITIUS MONTSERRAT NEW HEBRIDES NIGERIA NORTH BORNEO NORTHERN RHODESIA NYASALAND PALESTINE ST. HELENA ST. KITTS ST. LUCIA ST. VINCENT SARAWAK SEYCHELLES SIERRA LEONE SOMALILAND SWAZILAND TANGANYIKA TONGA TRANSJORDAN TRINIDAD UGANDA ZANZIBAR Royal West African Frontier Force OUR ALLIES THE COLONIES R.W.A.F.F. Printed in England by A.C. Ltd. 51/2372. (Imperial War Museum, n.d.c)

The poster displays a head and shoulders portrait of a uniformed young African man with his regiment's name clearly stated just beneath him. The soldier looks resolute and proud. The signs of caricature or servitude, or exaggerated African props, are absent.

There are no indicators that support notions of the savage African Other. This is a portrait of a black man on the edge of modernity, a professional soldier bearing his British regimental regalia. It places him outside of racial time and into the contemporary condition of war. His only sign of servitude is the one that cannot be changed: his black skin, his Fanonian epidermal schematic marker, which holds him in a place of inherent cultural bondage. 'He is the object of information, never a subject in communication' (Foucault 1991, p.200).

The soldier wears a striking bright red fez on his head that carries his regimental crest. The fez is adorned with a long black tassel resting neatly down its left-hand side and stopping at the corner of the man's left eye. The gold braiding on the collar of his uniform frames his head in regal splendour. The braiding meets in the middle of his throat and surrounds the royal blue collar, separating it from the red fabric of the rest of his uniform. His image appears framed by a white halo that emphasises his black skin. It is as if his body heat bends the white light around him, creating a subtle suggestion of divine light. The white halo then fades to a sandy desert orange colour. Above his head in italics are the words 'The British Colonial Empire', and directly beneath his image, spelled out in small black letters, are the words, 'Royal West African Frontier Force'. In large red letters follows the most prominent text on the poster, which reads 'Our Allies the Colonies'. Below this is a simple graphic image of the regimental symbol of the RWAFF: a palm tree on a small mound. Either side of his image is an elaborate scroll, which lists the British colonies, starting with Aden in the top left corner and finishing with Zanzibar in the bottom right. In total, 49 colonial territories are represented through the face of this one West African soldier, who is rendered fit for purpose and is clearly portrayed as an asset.

Another poster from the same series portrays a young black soldier from the King's African Rifles. While he, too, is portrayed in a head and shoulders portrait style and also wears a tall bright red fez, he is shown looking attentively off to the right of the frame. His eyes do not meet those of the viewers. His uniform is more basic than his fellow African counterpart: it is a regular collarless khaki uniform. His regiment and its symbol are also named and

positioned directly under his portrait. Similarly, this same text and overall compositional format are shared across the 1939 series of posters that includes colonial soldiers from Malta, Cyprus and Ceylon. However, it is the soldier from the Royal West African Frontier Force who stands out in the series, as only he is privileged with the right to project his gaze directly back at the viewer. The information available through the Imperial War Museum cites that all the posters are 'Subject Period: Second World War'.

To look directly into the eyes of the colonised soldier and for him to return the gaze of the viewer creates a more difficult and demanding exchange than the four other images. The other posters of soldiers with their gazes averted do not engage directly with the viewer, and thus might be read as losing a certain sense of authority. The construction of the other posters denies the viewer the task of looking directly into the face of the Other (Levinas 1987, p.74). Exploring the archive of this particular wartime campaign raises a critical question: was the direct face-to-face exchange with the colonial soldier rejected as an unacceptable public message and were the alternative, more passive images of colonial soldiers averting their gaze deemed more suitable by the British Ministry of Information?

For Africans who were among those colonial subjects that had been most viciously rendered as docile and dependent and in particular need of the British empire's civilising mission, these types of images would have represented revelatory moments in identification. Any visual communication that promoted African cultural worth would have been considered a major shift in European perceptions of African capabilities.

Many of the racialised recruitment posters and photographs produced by Britain during and in the lead-up to the Second World War can be read as representing a radical shift in the mindset of the colonisers. This shift clearly worked against dominant renderings of the black subject. It also served as a distinctive historical marker, exposing the hegemonic nature of the history of racial imagery in the West that constructed entire races of people as inferior. Once war with Germany appeared inevitable, the aim of Britain's national communications departments, as far as the empire was concerned, became to foster an image of equity among its subjects and to visually attempt to close the gap between the coloniser and colonised, at

least for the duration of the war. 'It is not ethnicity, or "race" that governs imagery and discourse, but rather, the nature of the political relationships between peoples which cause a people to be viewed in a particular light' (Pieterse 1992, p.217). These particular Second World War posters now offer an opportunity to see the logic of racist imagery at work as attitudes in Britain shifted during the war and eased when it was deemed to be politically expedient.

This adoption of a sympathetic view of the colonies was not due to a concern with readjusting the archive of racist imagery that was so prominent across the field of perception. That field had been created by scores of photographers working within visual codes that had laid the foundation for the colonial view that Britain had of its subject peoples (Edwards 2001, p.139). Instead, this new inclination towards a more human view of the colonised subject was a matter of national survival. Across the British empire, and as far as this moment in the visual perception of the Other is concerned, the long-standing Eurocentric photographic and academic fascination with race, culture and religion was laid bare and rendered less significant. One hundred years after its invention in 1839, the racialised photographic discourse produced in Britain, due only to the possibility of its own destruction, was diverted away from its historical fixation with racial difference and European supremacy towards much-needed reassurance that the country was not alone. With the crisis of the Second World War, it became strategically important to move away from a stance of cultural ridicule towards a more unifying and humanitarian purpose. The European is 'fixed upon a certain variety of perception that favoured particular representational scales and could only follow on from the isolation, quantification, and homogenization of vision' (Gilroy 2004, p.35). The extreme conditions of war interrupted that Eurocentric visual homogenisation process.

These new wartime British state-sanctioned images carried a uniquely distinctive message that encouraged the British public and colonial subjects to see themselves as united, allied and equal, both in the workplace and the armed forces, in which they shared a common goal: to fight against Nazi tyranny and Japanese imperialism. These images, now only visible in the archives of the Imperial War Museum, were distributed throughout the British

empire and carried the message that collectively the coloniser and the colonised were magnificent in their joint purpose: that of defending 'freedom'. Black subjects within the context of a modern world in conflict were thus no longer framed as dependent children or willing servants but as men and women with great potential and equal power to overcome the threat from the Axis powers. These more sympathetic images could be read as an early attempt by Britain to bring black cultures back to life (Gilroy 2004, p.31), and to awaken a sense of black cultural self-esteem, even if ideally this only represented another layer of colonial management to be prosecuted through the theatre of war: 'Visibility is a trap' (Foucault 1975, p.200).

PART 4. UNITED WE WIN

During the Second World War, race relations were a continuous problem across the US. 'By 1942, the federal government began investigating Negro morale in order to find out what could be done to improve it. The Office of Facts and Figures and its successor, the Office of War Information, undertook this project' (Hixson 2002, p.102). Walter Hixson goes on to inform us that:

Surveys by these agencies indicated that the great amount of national publicity given to the defence program only served to increase the Negro's awareness that he was not participating fully in the program. Black Americans found it increasingly difficult to reconcile their treatment with the announced war aims. (Hixson 2002, p.102)

The treatment of black servicemen was also a highly contentious issue, because:

Urban Negroes were most resentful over defence discrimination, particularly against the treatment accorded black members of the armed forces. Never before had Negroes been so united behind a cause: the war had served to focus their attention on their unequal status in American society. Black Americans were almost unanimous in wanting a show of good intention from

the federal government that changes would be made in the racial status quo. (Hixson 2002, p.102)

The early 1940s in the US saw major racial unrest and cities explode with racial violence. 'In 1943 alone there were over 200 major disturbances across the country' (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.109):

Riots in Los Angeles, Mobile, Alabama and Beaumont were all precursors to the massive 1943 riot in Detroit City, which lasted for four days and ended with the army having to protect black students trying to go to college. The city of Detroit was in the 1940s nicknamed the 'arsenal of democracy'. The days of rioting had been severe. Twenty-five black residents and nine white residents had been killed. Of the twenty-five African Americans, seventeen had been killed by white policemen. The number injured, including police, approached seven hundred while the property damage, including looted merchandise, destroyed stores, and burned automobiles, amounted to two million dollars. The Axis Powers grabbing the propaganda opportunity were quick to point out that the riot was symptomatic of a weak nation. The German-controlled Vichy radio broadcast on the riot revealed 'the internal disorganisation of a country torn by social injustice, race hatreds, regional disputes, the violence of an irritated proletariat, and the gangsterism of a capitalistic police'. (WGBH/PBS n.d.)

It is evident from the scale of racial unrest across the US during the Second World War that racial tension was damaging for the country's economy and that, as far as race was concerned, it could be described as being at war with itself.

One month after the outbreak in Detroit, another riot erupted in New York City's West Harlem. Again the U.S. Army had to intervene. Troops occupied Detroit for six months until Roosevelt felt it was safe to pull them out in January of 1944. Racial conflicts would not appear on such a visible and widespread scale again until the Civil Rights movement just one decade later. (WGBH/PBS n.d.)

As the Detroit riots of 1943 proved, African Americans were aware of the stark reality that they had to fight on two racialised fronts if they were to achieve the ultimate objective of the 'Double Victory', a term that the black press embraced in order to illustrate the paradox of being black in the US during the Second World War. Many of the African Americans participating in the war did so in full recognition that they were actually going to be fighting on two fronts: with the long-term aim of defeating fascism abroad in order to win freedoms at home. The contradiction and ironies of fighting a foreign enemy and not having equal rights at home were clearly evident to the black American workforce employed in the factories that built armaments. One of the core causes of the riots in Detroit was that whites were not prepared to work alongside blacks in the same factories:

In 1942 James G. Thompson, a mere cafeteria worker in a Kansas aircraft manufacturing company, wrote to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a black newspaper, stating that the 'V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries, which are fighting for victory ... Let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within.' ('Hennessy History – Double Victory Campaign-1' n.d.)

Black Americans who entered the theatre of war were humiliated at every point of engagement: in the factory, in uniform and on return from front-line engagements. They bore this humiliation in exchange for some possible political domestic advantage in their fight for equality, which, as far as political reality was concerned, was still decades away. It is evident that old ingrained Jim Crow attitudes towards race were inherent within the body politic of the US government throughout, and indeed after, the war.

The American War Manpower Commission, which was formed by executive order from President Roosevelt in May 1942, was acutely aware of the negative impact that internal racism had on the US capacity to prosecute a war. As a move to counter the deeply ingrained hostile racial tensions in the US, the Manpower

Commission produced a key propaganda poster titled 'United We Win'. This poster represents a defining moment in the field of American racial and visual politics. It signifies a naïve and concerned critical point in state policy where race is visualised and acts as an indicator of that recognition sought by black Americans. This is despite the vast scale of the cultural distance that the 'United We Win' poster would have to cover in order to unify black and white citizens during the 1940s.

The purpose of the poster was to help overcome the damaging impact of racism on the American industrial war effort and workers' relationships. Since the onset of war, activists such as the black American Asa Philip Randolph had been prominent in highlighting the chronic extent of racism and discrimination in terms of the armed forces being segregated, the segregationist employment policies among America's employers and white workers' racist attitudes towards black workers. Randolph and several of his colleagues played an important role in the American civil rights campaign. He devised the systematic lobby of Roosevelt, to allow black people the right to fight as soldiers on an equal footing with white people, and the right to work for the US under the same terms and conditions as white workers. It was through this lobbying that, after the Second World War, the civil rights movement gained its powerful momentum and it was as a result of sustained pressure from these early campaigners that a new image of the US was attempted. The poster shows two young men, one black and one white, working together, constructing an aeroplane with the American flag as a backdrop. The photograph was taken by Alexander Lieberman, a skilled photographer, painter, sculptor and author who later went on to establish himself as an influential editor in the American popular magazines industry. The 'United We Win' poster was circulated across the US in 1943 and according to research undertaken at Bucknell University in the US, it became one of the best-known American propaganda posters of the Second World War. The researchers describe the poster in the context of its production and aspects of its interpretation and reception in the following way:

The goal of the War Manpower Commission was to present an idealized view of race relations in America. However, the poster

may have been depicting racial inequality through the placement of the two main subjects. The white man stands above the black man. While this [placement] may have been unintentional, it could be interpreted as white superiority in the work force at a time when blacks still held lower positions, equality in the work-force was not actually occurring. The words 'united' and 'we' are significant. The government wanted the public to see that in order to unite the country individual differences must be put aside ... However, large numbers of employers refused to hire blacks for anything but unskilled work. (Anon. n.d.)

Further examination of the 'United We Win' poster reveals greater fault-lines in the desired message produced by the American War Manpower Commission in attempting to create an image/myth of American racial harmony. While the two men are working in the same space and on the same part of the aircraft, there is no sense of workers' solidarity between them, as they are engaged in disjointed autonomous work, although performing the same task. There is no empathy, solidarity or celebration in their shared mission in assembling the aircraft. Contact between the young men, both physical and ocular, is non-existent due to the positions of the subjects in the frame. The workers' focus is downwards, aimed at the job in hand rather than upwards or outwards towards the intended viewers, or to each other. As subjects in the frame they do not produce signs of coming together across racial and racist separation. Their shared space thus does not point towards a new, racially harmonious workplace. Instead, their division is made evident through their lack of engagement with each other, and the poster therefore inadvertently alludes to the extreme levels of racial intolerance in the factories of the US during the war. The image's framing throws into doubt that a single photograph of the two men in the same place at the same time was ever actually made; rather it suggests that the poster is a montage and, if so, it emphasises further the degree of racial distance active in the American workplace.

The 'United We Win' poster may well have been read by black Americans as a positive sign in the right direction towards some form of equal recognition in society. Given the extreme racial violence operating in factories at the time the poster was produced,

it would likely have generated among white workers feelings of anger and anxiety that black workers were now seen by the state as being increasingly able to compete in the workplace for well-paid jobs. The poster represents a significant marker in the visualisation of racial politics in the US, during the crisis of the Second World War, when vital propaganda had to be employed by the state to advance the ways in which African Americans were literally seen and understood:

While the UAW [United Automobile Workers] hierarchy outwardly supported integration of its work force, its rank and file did not. Whites didn't mind so much that blacks worked in the same plant, but they refused to work side by side with them. Three weeks before the riot, Packard promoted three blacks to work on the assembly line next to whites. The reaction was immediate and swift. A plant-wide hate strike resulted as 25,000 whites walked off the job, bringing critical war production to a screeching halt. A voice with a Southern accent barked over the loudspeaker, 'I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win than work next to a Nigger'. ('1943 – a race riot there will be' n.d.)

However, regardless of their failed impact, these posters from the Second World War suggest that it was a significant moment in which the production and promotion of images of black people by the Allies was seen as essential to national security, national morale and national confidence.

From a present-day perspective, these photographs and posters may be read as being a mild or minor attempt by the Allied governments to reconfigure public perception of the racialised subject through striving to build a sense of unity in a time of crisis. As images produced by official state agencies, they represent a few conscious steps in trying to reverse the historical tide of images that worked to negate black humanity in the West. However, rather than simply presenting an acceptable face of blackness for white consumption, these images may have created a space in which oppressed subjects saw themselves in a new independent light. The subaltern subject may have decoded these images as being a positive move by the Allied governments towards empathy, recognition and equality. As

images placed in public spaces, their reception would always be in flux. Independence and civil rights movements were active agents working on the black subject, soldier and worker, and these images as frames for interpretation may have performed a task that aided further the awakening of black nationalist movements and claims for equality, especially as, in these images, black subjects are brought to more closely resemble Europeans and are therefore, by extension, brought much closer to the idea of self-determination and equality. The image of 'Jack Smith' could, for example, be read as that of the black subject being transformed into a man in a benevolent act of colonial coevalness or a more harmonious relationship across race. However, from a black nationalist perspective the image may also be read as that of black oppression: a man robbed of his name and African cultural identity, transformed into the complete subaltern colonial subject conditioned to serve the empire.

PART 5. TOGETHER

A photograph from the archives of the Imperial War Museum represents a rare instance in which we can see a colonial recruitment poster at work, articulating a new moment in black recognition within the context of empire, war and recruitment. The image is black and white, square in format and probably shot on a medium-format camera. It shows five young black African men all studying a rather weathered poster that has been put on the side of a wooden clapperboard colonial building (Figure 12). The white text of the poster's masthead reads 'The British Commonwealth of Nations' and is contained in dark borders. A larger text runs across the bottom of the poster. This is also framed in dark borders and reads 'Together'. According to information supplied by the Imperial War Museum, the horizontal central image of the poster shows seven representatives of the Commonwealth Armed Forces marching towards the right, with a Union Jack positioned behind the front four figures. We are informed that when 'reading the image left to right the men pictured in the poster are from India, East Africa, South Africa, New Zealand, a Canadian airman, an Australian soldier and a Royal Navy sailor'. This version of the 'Together' poster went into production in 1941 (there are several different versions, some of

which incorporate representations of the Allied forces along with the Commonwealth forces). The five young African men appear to be engaged with the poster's message, as each of them stares directly at the Commonwealth soldiers marching off in unison. One of the young African men positioned nearest to the camera is dressed in long dark shabby-looking robes. His head is shaved around the back and sides leaving a small crown of hair on the top. His appearance suggests a rural or impoverished existence. Two of the other men are wearing shorts and loose-fitting shirts, while the fourth man also appears to wear only robes. The fifth man is mostly obscured but we can just manage to observe that he is wearing a checked shirt. The four men whose feet we can see are all bare-footed. The central figure with his robes and shaven head has raised his right arm and is pointing at the black East African soldier, although the actual tip of his finger appears to be resting on the shoulder of the white South African soldier. This suggests that the critical point of encounter for this particular group of young African men is the presence of the black African man in the poster. As a group, the young African men are presented in sharp contrast to the well-groomed soldiers. The caption informs us that the photograph was taken at a 'recruiting centre in Accra, Gold Coast [now Ghana], British West Africa' and that 'these men are joining up in the Royal West African Frontier Force' (in 'Recruitment in British West Africa WWII' collection, Imperial War Museum). In this instance, in Accra, if this photograph is to be believed, the 'Together' recruiting poster seems likely to have done its work in encouraging the young men to sign up to defend the Commonwealth. However, the purpose of this particular photograph and what its intended use may have been is also relevant; as a photograph of recruitment in progress, it supports the propaganda objectives of the empire by presenting 'real' documentary evidence of the interest and willingness of young Africans to join the armed services.

In studying the actual 'Together' poster, we can deduce that there is a racial hierarchy at work in its construction. White soldiers, from Britain, Australia and Canada, lead the parade and feature as a prominent presence framed by a flapping Union Jack. Indian and African soldiers are positioned to the outside of the flag and so appear to be forming the rearguard of the Commonwealth

army. However, all the men carry rifles and the African presence is presumably intended, as is evident from the young African men seen viewing the poster, to stimulate the idea of recruitment to 'The British Commonwealth of Nations' armed forces, to become proud men in uniforms and march forth into the modern world and future freedom. Recruitment to the armed services is a moment of coming into being with the rest of humanity. It is thus represented in this photograph as a departure from the world of the primitives and into the world of Western modernity, with uniforms, regiments and technology signalling the potential exit from racial time.

These new, wartime constructions of black subjects were in effect complex strategic images that were put to work to close cultural gulfs that existed between black and white subjects. The question of race across Britain, its empire and the US is culturally and profoundly different, but is historically yoked together through the legacies of slavery and cultural Apartheid. Black Americans during the 1940s existed in their millions as a people separated by and within a culture of segregation, fear and violence. This, in theory, marks the 'United We Win' poster as a willing sign from the state that it wanted to take a degree of responsibility in easing racial tension rather than simply maintaining the status quo of oppression. Black American veterans from the First World War would not have been easily convinced by this type of message; they would have remembered the violence committed against them in lynchings when they returned home from the last war, and this legacy would still have resonance. The visual messages concerning the British empire and its colonial subjects, fighting or working for Britain, form part of a long process of cultural indoctrination that built on established racist hierarchies, dashed hopes, forced servitude and the British sense of imperial entitlement. All of these worked on the colonised subject through a false face of hospitality.

As images produced and sanctioned by Allied states' communication bureaus to serve a distinctive moral and immediately political/economic purpose, posters such as 'Together' and 'United We Win' can be read not simply as images that fostered black participation in the Second World War but also as images that subversively encouraged black involvement in the war as a route out of racial, geographical and economic oppression.

At the time of their making, black political activists would have also interpreted the images against the backdrop of the newly stated Allied principles of liberation, promised by the signing of the 1941 Atlantic Charter. During the war, subject peoples began to argue that 'self determination should be universally applied; that imperialism, as well as fascism, should be condemned and eradicated, as it was the basis of international inequality and the rivalry that led to wars' (Adi 1995, p.16). These state-sanctioned black images emerged in the context of other global forces that were gaining momentum during the Second World War, especially the Pan-African movement and the American civil rights movement. These two movements forcefully challenged the global dominance of colonial and racial politics, and both expressed desires for people from the subaltern world to be recognised as modern subjects with their own rights to freedom and rights to re-imagining their own political futures and cultural lives. These new wartime images of black humanity, released in the public realm across the colonies, the US and Britain can therefore be read as participants in resistance work, as images produced under pressure applied from within and without the Allied states. This meant that, as posters, they served multiple political purposes beyond and outside of their original intention, as they had the potential to be decoded as radical signs of black autonomy.

PART 6. SEEING THE PAN-AFRICAN MOVEMENT 1945

The Pan-African movement enabled connections throughout the colonies to be consolidated, to become a manifest reality. As an ideological platform, leaders from within the movement could form important alliances that hastened the liberation movement and intensified the demand to have a representational voice in the staging of a new world agenda subsequent to the Second World War. The Pan-African movement would give weight to the demand for a meaningful timetable that would see an end to European domination across the world. It would constitute its separate and critical demands through the production of its own resolutions, such as 'The Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World', which stated that freedom must be delivered to the colonised world and if necessary

this would be claimed by force. The timing of these statements and the repeated references to force were politically critical, especially as Europe and much of the US was struggling with the moral dilemma of the atrocities committed in the German death camps. It was in this political moment, and with force being a real option, 'that black humanity takes its right to produce meaning, its freedom to choose a past from among the options that the (Western) culture offers it' (Mudimbe 1992, p.101).

Through the Second World War, 'third' world leadership envisioned a new postcolonial world. The liberation process represented an unstoppable quest for change, not just from the physical domination of colonial territorial occupation (the land) or structural domination in the form of governance (the order, through indirect or direct rule, assimilation or alienation) but perhaps most importantly from the psychology of the colonial mindset that had been ingrained in the black subject whenever the encounter with the European occurred. This concerned questions of power, whether on a micro level, through the basic tasks of servitude (the servant, or low-paid worker), or on a macro conflicted level, through ultimate resistance, represented by the form of force (the freedom fighter): the face of the well-trained black ex-serviceman, who, during and after the war, demanded equality.

Effectively, this postcolonial Pan-African vision added up to a modern concept of a new humanity that reconciled the past with a focus on traditional values, and called for justice through the creation of a different understanding of the universal man:

It's a question of the Third World starting a new History of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe's crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of man, and consisted of the pathological tearing away of his functions and the crumbling away of his unity. (Gilroy 2004, p.71)

From 15 to 20 October 1945 the Sixth Pan-African Conference was staged in Manchester. John Deakin photographed the conference for *Picture Post* magazine. His photographs represent a rare and

defining visual legacy of the event, which, apart from Deakin's work, was not well photographed. The headline used by the magazine for its two-page article reads, 'Africa Speaks in Manchester', with a subheading that states, 'Delegates from many parts of Africa and the United States to the first Pan-African Conference talk for a week of freedom from the White Man, of the colour bar, of one great coloured nation, of force to gain their ends' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19). The headline stating this to be the first Pan-African conference was, in fact, incorrect; similarly, it was cited by its primary organiser, George Padmore, as the fifth, although it was actually the sixth. He ignored the first Pan-African conference, held in London in 1900: 'it was at that first conference that Du Bois spoke his famous prophetic lines: "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 1965, p.25).

Above the main headline for the 'Africa Speaks' article, three portraits of conference delegates are presented, run as single images across the top half of the page (Figure 13). Reading left to right the first photograph is captioned, 'The Abyssinian Delegate Jomo Kenyatta asked for an Act of Parliament making discrimination by race or colour a criminal offence' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19). Kenyatta looks relaxed, confident but stern in his expression with his head leaning slightly to the left of the frame. He wears a heavy fur-collared coat over his formal suit, shirt and tie. His delegate's ribbon is clearly visible, pinned to the fur of his coat. The photograph suggests that the Chorlton-upon-Medlock town hall was a cold environment for the delegates. The background of the photograph of Kenyatta is one of the many handmade textual posters that were positioned throughout the conference hall and across the front of the raised stage. The poster states 'Ethiopia wants exit to the Sea'. Kenyatta's head blocks the word 'exit', but from another photograph on the following page we can clearly read the poster's slogan as it hangs high, decorating the front of the stage. The hard flash from Deakin's camera creates a strong shadow behind Kenyatta's head and brings his face into sharp focus as he returns the photographer's gaze, staring back directly into the lens of the camera. Kenyatta's left eye appears to be open wider than his right. This widened left

eye creates a focal point for the portrait that is loaded now with a Barthesian punctive postcolonial charge. It appears as though Kenyatta, not the photographer, holds the ocular power to observe, and his eye is as much on the viewer as the viewer's eye is upon him. The portrait suggests defiance: a man confident in the context of his framing. When looking at Kenyatta's right eye, however, it has a different expression, a warmer one.

The second photograph, which is positioned centrally on the page, is captioned, 'The Nigerian Trade Unionist Chief, A. S. Coker, represents unions with a half a million workers. He demands full franchise for the negro worker'. Behind Coker is a poster that reads 'Freedom of the Press in the Colonies!' He wears a formal three-piece suit, shirt and tie. His smoker's pipe sticks out of the top pocket of his pinstriped jacket. Pinned on his lapel is his delegate's ribbon. He is framed looking over the lens, beyond the photographer, appearing to be a more reflective and friendly colonial delegate than Kenyatta.

The third photograph is captioned, 'The Liverpool Welfare Worker Mr. E. J. Du Plau, is responsible for hostels and centres for negro seamen. "Negroes are social exiles in Britain", he maintains' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19). The photograph of 'Du Plau' mirrors the image of Kenyatta. His head, however, leans out towards the right of the frame. 'Du Plau', too, is photographed as a confident man, holding his own direct gaze back into the camera towards the viewer. He wears large rounded spectacles and sports a stylish pencil moustache. 'Du Plau' also sports a heavy coat over his formal suit. The poster behind him states, 'Down with Colour Bar'. His name in the caption – 'E. J. Du Plau' – is incorrect; his name is in fact E. J. Du Plan.

It is evident from the other photographs reproduced in the article and from Deakin's contact sheets and prints housed within the archives of Getty Images that the posters originally displayed at the conference were repositioned behind the three African men so as to provide a background for *Picture Post* readers, enabling them to fix the men within the context of simple one-line slogans. Through Deakin's image/text construction, the African men become synonymous with the messages that form their backdrops, rendering their physical presence as representing little more than human

slogans. This act of visual elaboration effectively over-determines Kenyatta, Coker and 'Du Plau'.

Deakin's work thus creates an image of a Pan-African face that is clearly working against the grain of Britain's empire, and, as such, *Picture Post* suggests that these delegates' presence in Manchester is an act of political transgression. It is clear from analysis of the archive that Deakin effectively set up a makeshift studio at the front of the conference hall to provide a set in which to present the Pan-African delegates. The uncropped photographs in the Getty archives show the construction process of the image-making that Deakin performed, especially because the uncropped photographs portray the men in a much more relaxed conference environment. The vital elements of the photographs, when compared with their cropped usage, are made more distinctive. In the cropped photographs, the white backgrounds highlight the black subjects, as does the text behind them. It is evident that the men are being tightly framed. This framing device gives a police-mugshot-like quality to the photographs. This means that when these three African men speak, given how they are represented in the magazine, it is through a highly mediated code that visually works to negate the legitimacy of their political voice.

Another, and larger, photograph on the same page works in complete contrast to the three previous images of the Pan-African men. It fills around a third of the page and is positioned in the bottom right-hand corner. It shows a couple taking afternoon tea in their house. The caption reads, 'A Mixed Marriage That is a Success: Mr. John Teah Brown, with his white wife, Mrs Mary Brown, in their Manchester home. He says the negro must earn the respect of the white man to merit full citizenship' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.20). The photograph shows the couple seated in a bay window at a dining table, which is covered in a bright white tablecloth. In the centre of the table is a vase containing a bunch of flowers. An elegant tea is laid out across a very well-presented table. Mrs Brown smiles at her black African husband, who is smartly dressed in a suit, shirt and tie. The scene is framed through the genteel act of tea being served formally using a fine china tea set, which, along with the caption, suggests an ideal integration into British values.

This photograph is in sharp contrast to the more radical men pictured above it, who demand political change and equality. In the caption, John Teah Brown seems more concerned with earning respect from the white man, assuming inequality as something to be overcome, rather than an a priori equality that needs to be asserted. Deakin, however, in photographing John and Mary Brown seated directly in front of their bright sunlit bay window, has created an image so high in contrast that it renders John as an almost unrecognisable dense black form disrupted only by the whiteness of his teeth. As a portrait of a couple, the photograph is grossly inadequate. Its only redeeming quality is that the Browns are pictured exchanging smiles across the fabulously traditional display of English afternoon tea. The white teapot, placed so prominently on a stand directly in front of Mary, commands the attention of the viewer; it seems to symbolise the presence of the empire within the everyday life of this couple's British home. The Browns' 'Mixed Marriage That is a Success' is made more palatable for the presumably white British reader by the fact that they, as a mixed-race couple, are framed as subjects aspiring to traditional British life, represented in this photograph through the act of tea being served. This, in turn, becomes symbolic of the 'simple human values' the writer refers to in the first paragraph of the text that accompanies the photograph.

Hilde Marchant, a well-respected Fleet Street journalist, was sent by *Picture Post* to cover the Pan-African conference. Marchant's approach was to frame it through the 'mixing' that she discovered while in Manchester. Her opening sentences for the article are:

The dance was a mixed affair – mixed in trade, from the stoker to the anthropologist; mixed in class, from the £3 a week labourer to the rich cocoa merchant; mixed in dress, from the baggy grey flannels to the suit of tails. But above all it was mixed in colour, from the blonde white to the midnight black. The dance, held at Edinburgh Hall, on the corner of one of Manchester's drab and soot-blackened streets, was the first gathering of the delegates to the Pan-African conference. (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19)

Marchant is clearly concerned with the myths, fears and the spectacle of witnessing miscegenation at work. In her text she

draws on the hysteria and fears that were evident throughout the British empire of the white race being culturally contaminated as a result of sexual activity across the colour line. Marchant's mention of the blonde whites and midnight blacks 'mixing' potentially ignites the ultimate, ingrained, white males' fears of losing 'their' women to savage dark races if contact is allowed (Cairns 1965, p.59). In focusing on the fact of interracial mixing as seemingly a byproduct of Pan-African equality, Marchant creates a narrative that would be understood as subtly sinister by the readers of *Picture Post*, imagining that unnatural dark forces are at work in Manchester and that the sanctity and purity of British culture is being eroded and polluted. Manchester is constructed by Marchant as deviant, dark and 'soot-blackened' place with a unique breed of white people who have 'less curiosity or hostility to colour than the people of any other English city' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19). The misery and drabness of industrial Manchester become synonymous with the presence of the Africans, as if their blackness has somehow infected the architecture and the indigenous population, causing them to act differently from the rest of the nation: this is a contamination so deep that it has darkened the atmosphere of the city.

Marchant's text further informs us that:

Certainly, there was no self-consciousness among the white women who partnered their negro husbands or friends through 'jive' to the last romantic waltz. Their attitudes varied. Some had approached the colour bar problem intellectually, others from a Christian viewpoint and others from simple human values. (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19)

She suggests that this display of interracial contact through jive and waltz is a bold and transgressive act. It is evidently socially problematic for Marchant that the white women show no signs of 'self-consciousness' in dancing with their black husbands and friends; her use of the word 'certainly' suggests that she is rather surprised by this lack of self-consciousness.

Marchant, as a concerned and experienced journalist, decides to investigate this matter of racial 'mixing' further. She states that:

Typical of the last attitude [shared human values] is the mixed marriage of Mary Brown to John Teah Brown, and before the conference got down to more serious problems of the negro peoples, I went to their home to see a successful black and white marriage in its own domestic setting. (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19)

The domestic space of Mary and John Brown becomes a critical site of journalistic enquiry for Marchant: a curious human zoo on which she can report. Marchant's moment of discovery of northern interracial mixing produces an editorial charge that overrides the core purpose of her article: to report on the Pan-African conference. The Browns' home becomes a metaphorical moment of concern regarding the issues of equality and rights raised at the conference. Coded within Marchant's report is a dangerous reawakening of the ghosts of forms of popular racism that had been so evident before the Second World War. Her obsession with 'mixing' pushes the readership of *Picture Post* to consider the notion of racial 'hygiene' and purity of race at home in Britain. For Marchant, something alien has settled in Manchester and it represents a disturbing presence.

Marchant goes on to describe in detail the circumstances of how Mary and John Teah Brown met. Mary was left stranded with her child in Liverpool when she met John, a donkeyman in the merchant navy: 'He married her, gave her overwhelming affection, and saw that her child was properly educated'. This subtly establishes the terms of the relationship, for Mary is implicitly portrayed as being morally suspect (she has had a child, she was abandoned, she is not married), and John as being solid, loyal and fully able to assume the mantle of paterfamilias. Marchant writes, 'I listened to John Teah Brown's story – a story which in many ways put in terms of one human being the resolutions and speeches of the whole conference' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.19). We learn that John was born in 'Sierra Leone' (sic) and that he is a member of the Kroo tribe. Throughout the early twentieth century the 'Kroomen' dominated dockyard employment in Sierra Leone. Tribal headmen from the Kroo were used as agents by the European shipping lines from 1916 onwards to recruit cheap labour on the docks (Mukonoweshuro 1991, p.108). We are informed that John was brought up in a mission to be a Roman Catholic and that, while

in South Africa, he was ejected from a white church by a priest. 'He left Sierra Leone at the age of fifteen, for he felt the discrimination, segregation and low standards of the negro's life there cramped his spirit. His escape was to the sea and for thirty years he has been in the Merchant Navy' (*Picture Post* 1945, pp19-20). Through Marchant's text, John becomes the ideal colonial subject.

Alongside Marchant's fascination with 'mixing', the Browns' experience becomes the central narrative through which we enter the politics of the Pan-African Conference. Marchant finishes her focus on the Browns when she quotes John as saying, 'The negro is not only exploited by white men – he is often exploited by the rich and wealthy negro traders. When we learn to help each other, then we shall merit citizenship and freedom from the white man' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.20). Before she introduces any different voices into her article, and in quoting John Teah Brown, it is evident that Marchant is keen to highlight the notion of 'wealthy negro traders' as being one of the root causes of black exploitation. John is, of course, politically out of step with the conference, its delegates and its agenda. The conference organisers, George Padmore and W. E. B. Du Bois, do not regard independence and citizenship as something to be earned or merited from the 'white man': they regard them as their fundamental rights and not gifts to be bestowed by white people.

On page 20 of *Picture Post* are four more photographs (Figure 14). The main photograph positioned in the top left-hand third of the page shows the conference in full swing. The caption reads:

In Conference: A White Man Urges the Negroes' Cause. John McNair, General Secretary of the I.L.P., addressing the delegates, says: 'I object to the idea that the white people have anything to give to the black. There is, on the other hand, a debt which the white people owe to the coloured races: a debt which must and shall be paid'. (*Picture Post* 1945, p.20)

The photograph shows McNair, from the Independent Labour Party, standing with his hands clasped together. The distance of the photographer from the speaker and the low artificial lighting required Deakin to use a long exposure, so McNair appears as a

blurred, soft and out-of-focus figure. His presence in this photograph as an identifiable white ally to the Pan-African movement is, therefore, rendered ghostly. Deakin's archived contact sheets show that the photograph has been heavily cropped to make it square in format. In so doing, critical visual information about the Pan-African movement's wider political alliances with other liberation struggles has been lost. Cropped out on the right-hand side is a slogan that simply reads 'Down with Anti-Semitism', and on the left in the original photograph is the slogan 'Arabs and Jews Unite Against British Imperialism'. Omitting these two slogans from the photograph of McNair for *Picture Post* neither enhances the visual impact of the image nor brings us closer to specific details of McNair's presence. What could be argued, therefore, is that there was a deliberate decision by the editors to omit from the photograph any visual links or political concerns that the Pan-African movement may have had in relation to the rising tensions in the Middle East at the time of the magazine's publication, or, indeed, to the recent horrors of Nazi anti-Semitism.

McNair, like John Teah Brown in Deakin's previous photograph, is almost unrecognisable. The lower third of the photograph is taken up by rows of delegates' backs and a small table at the front of the conference seated area, at which three white women appear to be working as note takers. The central, and most conspicuous, visual motif is the array of hand-painted slogans used to decorate the speaker's stage. The same posters and slogans that frame the delegates on the first page of the *Picture Post* article are clearly visible in the McNair photograph and have been repositioned for the rest of the duration of the conference. One of the slogans that can be seen behind the main speaker's podium reads 'Oppressed People of the Earth Unite'; another on the same rear wall reads 'Freedom for All Subject Peoples'. Others claim 'Africa for Africans', 'Freedom of Press in the Colonies' and 'Africa Arise'. High up on the left-hand side of the photograph we can see the words that form part of the coat of arms for Manchester – '*Concillo Et Labore*' – which translates as 'Wisdom and Effort'. The overall scene presented is one of a seedling African peoples' revolt.

Running across and filling the bottom of the page are three more portraits of delegates at the conference. These are square in format

and appear to have been taken while the subjects were listening to the speakers. The first photograph is captioned 'The American Red Cross Worker. He comes from Washington and cares for his own people in Britain. He suffers no colour humiliation' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.20). It shows the side profile of a middle-aged African American man, unnamed in the caption, in a military-style service uniform. On his lapel we can see the letters 'ARC' (American Red Cross). He is well-groomed, wearing a shirt and tie, and his hair has been oiled back. His profile is illuminated by the daylight coming in from the window behind him. While there is no reference to his presence in the main body of the text, the caption negates black American servicepeople's experiences of the war and the deep-rooted racism that was so widespread. This included benevolent institutions such as the American Red Cross, which had, in 1942, been denounced by the *Pittsburgh Courier* for refusing to accept blood from black donors (Gates n.d.). The notion that this African American Red Cross serviceman 'suffers no colour humiliation' effectively ignores the harsh reality: all war service personnel and its support structures were racially segregated. The ARC racially segregated blood for transfusion throughout the Second World War. The tragedy of the ARC is that, in 1941, its racist practices led the great African American surgeon Charles Drew to resign from his post as Director of the American Red Cross Blood Programme. Drew's work was critical to medical science; he pioneered revolutionary methods of storing blood plasma for transfusion and his scientific work created the conditions for the first large-scale blood banks in the US and Britain to be developed. As a result of his endeavours, thousands of serving Allied lives were saved. Drew's argument was very simple: there was no scientific reason to segregate blood, and he duly resigned. The American Red Cross, however, carried on its policy of segregating blood until the 1960s.

The second portrait, in the centre of the page, shows a black woman in profile facing to the right. The caption states, 'The Barrister from Lagos: Mrs. Renner urges the need for a great raising of the standard of education and knowledge among African women' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.20). Mrs Renner strikes an attentive pose resting her chin on her raised hand. She wears a small hat and we can just glimpse the collar of her fur coat. Mrs Renner was in fact from the Gold

Coast (Ghana). She was attending the conference with her husband, Bankole Awoonor Renner, who had been championing the politics of a ‘Federated West African State ... strong, and independent, free from feudalism since 1937’ (Sherwood 2012, p.110), and who was a strong supporter of Kwame Nkrumah. The Renners were representing the Friends of African Freedom Society that was based in the Gold Coast. B. A. Renner was the conference secretary, while Mrs Renner sat on the entertainment committee. Marchant and Deakin appear once again to struggle with reporting accurately the story of the subjects present at the conference.

The third portrait shows an elderly black man with a receding silver hairline, facing left. He sports a waxed turned-up moustache and round spectacles, to complement his formal shirt and tie. He squints, and his mouth is raised slightly as if in a half-smile. In the bottom left-hand corner of the photograph, there is a white object. In the full, uncropped version of the photograph we can see that the man is seated with a small biracial girl sitting on his knee. He holds both her arms affectionately just above the elbows as she returns a smile directly back at Deakin’s camera. The child’s white puff-shouldered dress is just visible in the cropped frame used by *Picture Post*, and in the original version the man is facing the other way. The editors of *Picture Post* flipped the image so that it faces into the centre of the page rather than the central gutter of the magazine. The caption states ‘The founder of Pan Africanism: Dr Du Bois is the head of the American Negro Association. He opposed the extremist idea of a “new nationalism of colour”’ (*Picture Post* 1945, p.20). Du Bois’s presence at the 1945 Manchester conference was hugely significant. It affirmed his intellectual and political relationship with George Padmore, the conference organiser, and cemented the continuity with the previous Pan-African conferences, which Du Bois had been central to organising.

However, the photograph used by *Picture Post*, although captioned as being a portrait of Du Bois, is clearly not him. The editors, writers, photographers and even current-day archivists at Getty Images have mistaken another delegate for Du Bois. Further research into Deakin’s negatives shows that Du Bois was indeed photographed by Deakin while he was at the conference, and the image represents one of the stronger photographs taken

there. However, the image reproduced in *Picture Post* is in fact that of Dr Peter Millard. Millard was instrumental in founding the Pan-African Federation in Manchester earlier in 1944. His political activity and, more importantly, his physical appearance were completely different from those of Du Bois. The only feature that Millard shared with Du Bois at the time of the conference was the fashionable handle-bar moustache. It seems that their moustaches were similar enough to have caused the editorial mistake.

In mistaking the photograph of Millard for Du Bois, *Picture Post* inadvertently raises the critical question relating to the reporting on and recognition of the black subject in European historical narratives. Given the significance of Du Bois being in the UK and the international standing he had as a leading political spokesman for black people, this misrecognition of him, together with the chain of other misinformation throughout the article, can be read as revealing a lack of both interest and due diligence in reporting black political presences in Britain. If we consider that the core premise of the conference in Manchester was that of black affirmation, political visibility and right to recognition, then Marchant and Deakin have done a journalistic disservice to these voices, choosing instead to focus disproportionately on the issue of 'mixing' couples. That the actual image of Du Bois, who at that time was the most important figure in Pan-African politics, has, through a lack of basic journalistic diligence, been rendered invisible, indicates a lack of concern for the politics of the day. Marchant and Deakin have therefore created a situation in which 'The Founder of Pan Africanism' has become the victim of a case of mistaken identity within the narrative of 'Africa Speak[ing]', from which he is absented. This misrecognition of Du Bois, along with the fact that he was never involved with an organising body known as the 'American Negro Association' and that no comment was sought from him by Marchant, illustrates, with a degree of irony, the attitude and lack of gravity this significant conference was given by the editors of *Picture Post*.

This editorial approach also, ironically, illustrates Du Bois's theory of 'the veil'. He formulated this theory over forty years before the events in Manchester, in his now classic 1903 book titled *The*

Souls of Black Folk, in which he describes that for black Americans a barrier exists, that a 'veil' stands between black Americans and white Americans' recognition of black people's humanity. Du Bois states that he was shut out from the white 'world by a vast veil'. This 'veil' serves to block the path to equality, black legitimacy and progress. The 'veil' silences and therefore makes the black subject invisible: 'It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (Du Bois & Gibson 1996, p.5). In absenting Du Bois, Marchant and Deakin undertake an incredible work of erasure in the context of reporting on the Pan-African conference in Manchester.

Marchant's text goes on to highlight that 'A few delegates admitted the positive side of our rule in Africa. There is a maternity hospital at Accra, capital of the Gold Coast, where a native woman can have a child for 1s. or nothing at all', and that 'a younger and more vigorous type of white civil servant has been sent to the West Coast and their conscience and good will is showing results. On Britain's side that six years of war has robbed us of much chance to put into operation White Paper proposals' (*Picture Post* 1945, p.20). Her reference to the war is also an early indicator of the way it would be framed historically as a white Allied victory.

Anne Sebba, in her book *Battling for News* (Sebba 1994), highlights that Marchant struggled in her later life: she became an alcoholic who suffered from ill health and a failed journalistic career. She eventually died destitute with no family to pay for her funeral (Sebba 1994, p.160).

Deakin was a war veteran:

the war marks the moment when his career – and his legend – properly catches fire. Audrey Withers, editor of *Vogue*, was so impressed by his street photographs of Paris and Rome that she hired him as a staff photographer in 1947, and quickly regretted it. His offhand manner, his drinking, his indifference to 'fashion' and his propensity for losing valuable equipment damaged an already dubious reputation. (Quinn 2014)

Deakin is now posthumously celebrated for his portraits in Soho and his friendship with the artist Francis Bacon. His work has been marked by a book by Robin Muir (Muir & Deakin 2014) and an accompanying exhibition at the Photographer's Gallery in London of the same title, *Under the Influence: John Deakin, Photography and the Lure of Soho*. It is evident through the many omissions across the 'Africa Speaks in Manchester' report that Deakin and Marchant as a journalistic pairing may not have been best suited to the task of reporting on this significant event in post-war black British history. They, like John Teah Brown, are out of step with the new face of African politics: a face that will be determined as much by the emerging Cold War as by the politics and ideologies of colonial liberation struggles.