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**Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands:
A Study of African American Engagement with the Second Italo-Ethiopian War and the Role
Black Periodicals Between 1935 to 1937 Played in Italian Colonial Resistance**

*Wesley Carson*¹

By the early 1930s, the world would witness the fierce rise of fascism in Europe, and as the decade passed, a global panic ensued as fascist aggressions threatened the hopes of avoiding another World War. Proceeding onwards, the United States largely separated itself from intervening with European fascism, as exemplified by the Neutrality Acts between 1935 and 1937, along with the widespread appeal of isolationism amongst the public, but these non-interventionist sentiments would soon change when Benito Mussolini's Italy began their invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. In what would become the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, the crisis in Ethiopia provoked African Americans in a nationally recognized effort to aid the country, where tens of thousands of Black Americans gathered in demonstrations and volunteered their services to fight on the frontlines. So exactly why and how did this nationwide anti-fascist movement confront Italian imperialism, addressing both the racialization and colonization of Ethiopia as a threat to the African American identity? Ethiopia was a crucial concept of Blackness on a spiritual and political scale. African Americans present at this time had not seen such an aggressive and massive force of white supremacy, as exemplified by Italy's African imperialism. It was not only concerning that Africa was continually getting colonized, but Ethiopia's struggle fostered a popular sentiment that if it were to fall to imperialism, there would be a disconnect between their transnational connection with Black Americans. In essence, aiding Ethiopia was a way to protect racial integrity, and Black periodicals played a significant role in influencing this enthusiasm to engage with the war. This enabled Black nationalist writers in the United States to be heard while also providing an outlet where demonstrations would be publicized to generate a larger span of supporters across the country. However, this was not just something that occurred overnight; it is essential to recognize how the concept of Ethiopianism forged Ethiopia as a core component of pan-Africanism and Black nationalism in the 1930s.

Ethiopianism considered Ethiopia as the last remaining independent African nation, and African Americans symbolically used its image as a symbol of freedom from racial oppression imposed by white supremacy.² Extending from the Italian loss at the Battle of Adwa during the First

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² Fikru Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia: A Comparative Assessment of Caribbean and African American Anti-Fascist Protests, 1935-1941," *Northeast African Studies* 2: 1 (1995): p. 145.

Italo-Ethiopian War, many believed it prophesied the verses of Psalm 68:31 stating that, “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”³ Soon, Ethiopianism would be embraced in Black churches, beginning in South Africa and later in the United States, convinced Ethiopia was going to be the savior of the Black race.⁴ As Getachew Metaferia asserts, Ethiopia represented “hope in the rise of Africa and the coming together of her scattered children.”⁵ Upon this coming together, it was claimed that God would punish Ethiopia’s aggressors, in this case, the colonizers of Africa. Essentially, Ethiopianism psychologically reinforced Black integrity and developed a sense of hope on a spiritual scale, encouraging a movement that challenged social injustice, racism, and colonization.⁶ This movement was the backbone of Black resistance in the United States during the 1930s, especially among Black periodical publications whose pivotal role immensely encouraged the fight to save Ethiopia against its Italian aggressors. Periodicals like *The Crisis* were crucial in defining this phenomenon, expanding Black voices on the subject nationally and keeping audiences informed of outlets to contribute their aid in the resistant fight. Likewise, its editor, W.E.B. Du Bois, was a central figure in Black nationalist attitudes, and his rhetoric was reflected in resistant writing throughout the war.

W.E.B. Du Bois was a firm supporter of Ethiopian resistance and condemned Italy for being disillusioned with revenge and barbaric fantasies. For Du Bois, Mussolini’s campaign was ultimately a “psychological onslaught,” upon the entirety of Italy, using the invasion of Ethiopia as a means to revive “the glory of Rome,” or rather the apogee of Italian political prosperity that had been lost for centuries.⁷ To create an empire equal to that of the Roman Empire, it was necessary to “revive the minds of young Italy,” and according to Du Bois, “What could thrill Italy more than revenge for Adowa?”⁸ However, as empowering Du Bois asserts Italians were by the idea of this future, in “Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View,” he considered these visions as hazardous not only to Ethiopians but to Italians as well because such a fantasy would only harm Italy from the “heart and body,” as invading Ethiopia neglected to properly address Italy’s exorbitant issues with wide-scale poverty.⁹ Along with Mussolini’s claims to expand their colonial empire, there was the

³ Psalm 68:31-35 (KJV).

⁴ Gebrekidan, “In Defense of Ethiopia,” p. 147.

⁵ Getachew Metaferia, “The Ethiopian Connection to the Pan-African Movement,” *Journal of Third World Studies* 12:2 (1995): p. 302.

⁶ Metaferia, “The Ethiopian Connection,” p. 305.

⁷ Du Bois, W. E. B. “The hands of Ethiopia, ca. 1936.” W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, p. 14.

⁸ Du Bois, “The hands of Ethiopia,” p. 14.

⁹ Du Bois, W. E. B. “A forum of fact and opinion, May 23, 1936.” W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

impractical idea that Ethiopia would be used to found Italian settlements in order to expand Italy's population with the new land mass they acquired, and for Du Bois, this rhetoric further disregarded imperative country-wide issues than expansion.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as concerned as he was with the war's impact on the chances of avoiding another global-scale conflict, Du Bois recognized the cruciality of bolstering Ethiopian support in the United States. However, this endeavor was complicated by debated notions of race regarding Ethiopians, specifically surrounding the monarchy's famed Semitic origins, and Du Bois was poised to confront this matter.

Du Bois recognized that a large portion of African Americans were concerned with the debate on whether Ethiopians and their monarchy were ethnically Semitic, referring to Haile Selassie's famed lineage extending to King Solomon more than they were a part of the African diaspora. He understood that the attempt to distance Ethiopians from their Black counterparts was dangerous for the transnational connection forged between African Americans and Ethiopia that aided in fueling resistance against Italian colonialism. Ultimately detesting this form of racial separatism, Du Bois made it known that "If American 'Negroes' are 'Negroes', then all Abyssinians are 'Negroes'. If Abyssinians are not 'Negroes' there is scarcely a 'Negro' in the United States."¹¹ In essence, he argued that it was not racial implications that bound African Americans and Ethiopians together but rather their struggle to resist the horrors of white supremacy and colonialism that created this deeply rooted solidarity. To further his point, Du Bois even attempted to show how the Ethiopian monarchy's lineage extending to King Solomon played an insignificant role in the grand scheme of global politics. Du Bois cites how, in meetings with the United Nations, Haile Selassie's pleas for aid and condemnation against Italy were always disregarded because of his skin color. Instead, if he were a white man, "the whole world would have risen in his defense and fought for his salvation, rather than sitting helplessly by while a bully with a gangster's jaw, sent the brigands of an impoverished and brutally crucified nation to kill people with mustard gas and airplanes."¹² In addition to his assertions on the war, Du Bois' support for Ethiopia was a critical asset in motivating African Americans to take action against white supremacy, connecting the two fronts to promote Black upliftment.

Whether it was in the U.S. or overseas in Ethiopia, Du Bois proclaimed that the horrors of white supremacy and colonialism would not "prove to the dark peoples their weakness," but rather, it pointed towards "the path to strength," that sought to utilize these tragedies as a means of motivation

¹⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois, "The hands of Ethiopia, ca. 1936," p. 15.

¹¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Emerging Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois: Essays and Editorials from The Crisis with an Introduction, Commentaries and a Personal Memoir by Henry Lee Moon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 384.

¹² James Quirin, "W.E.B. Du Bois, Ethiopianism and Ethiopia, 1890-1955," *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 5:2 (2010): p. 14.

and not as a submission to racial oppression.¹³ Certainly, as apparent as it was in the U.S. during the war, this was undeniably true. The Second Italo-Ethiopian War played an immensely significant role in making the African American masses aware of the horrors of colonialism and the influence of white supremacy, which further inspired a massive wave of protest and the gathering of Ethiopian aid to be sent overseas in the early twentieth century. Martin Ijere states that Du Bois' ultimate aim was for his audience to acknowledge how the war would enable African Americans "to better themselves for the sake of race. Education and intelligence would eradicate prejudice and uplift Black people," with the preeminent objective to be better equipped and fortified to fight back against all forms of racial oppression, whether it was in the U.S. or especially in Ethiopia.¹⁴ Likewise, this nation-wide push to eradicate African imperialism and the demand for colonial powers to return the right of self-rulership to their colonial territories would facilitate the goal of making democracy achievable for Africa, which, in turn, facilitates self-dependence and hands the African diaspora the agency needed to dispel racist institutions.¹⁵ These ideals stemming from Du Bois' theories are what contributed greatly to the basis of Black nationalist activism in the early twentieth century, being especially a prime influencer for African Americans to engage in humanitarian efforts during the war. However, Du Bois was not the only foundational figure who established this new wave of Black nationalism in the 1930s. Indeed, his rival Marcus Garvey was amassing a large audience of his own, and their antipathy for each other was deeply rooted and influenced their narratives regarding the war.¹⁶

¹³ W. E. B. Du Bois, "The hands of Ethiopia, ca. 1936," p. 21.

¹⁴ Martin O. Ijere, "W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey as Pan-Africanists : A Study in Contrast." *Présence Africaine*, 89 (1974): p. 190.

¹⁵ Ijere, "Pan-Africanists : A Study in Contrast," p. 191.

¹⁶ Du Bois' support for integration and Garvey's separatist rhetoric were among the most important ideological aspects that caused a rift between these figures before the war. Garvey believed that Whites would never regard the lives of African Americans as equal to themselves. So, depending on Whites to aid in the struggle for equality was out of the question, and Garvey called for racial separatism to uplift Blacks. This thought process ultimately challenged Du Bois' who sought Black integration into American life through protest, economic nationalism, and rejecting accommodationism. Likewise, social class became a point of interest that influenced their rivalry. Du Bois advocated the development of an intellectual elite and persuaded audiences of the necessity for higher education. This concept, entitled the "Talented Tenth", aimed to designate ten percent of the most abled Blacks for leadership in the hopes that it would disrupt the confinement of Blacks into second-class citizenship industrial training caused. However, Garvey challenged such an idea as elitist and instead focused on the upliftment of working-class Blacks while criticizing Du Bois for such thinking. For details on the rivalry between W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey before the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, see Raymond Wolters, *Du Bois and His Rivals* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002): p. 143-70.

This rivalry notably stemmed from a comment Du Bois made in a volume of *The Crisis* in December of 1920, claiming while Garvey was an exuberant leader, he was also:

... dictatorial, domineering, inordinately vain and very suspicious ... The great difficulty with him is that he has absolutely no business sense, no flair for real organization and his general objects are so shot through with bombast and exaggeration that it is difficult to pin them down for careful examination.¹⁷

Later, he would claim that Garvey expended the Universal Negro Improvement Association's funds for unnecessary expenses instead of using it for capital improvements. This provoked Garvey into denouncing Du Bois as a puppet by white capitalists, disregarding his Spingarn Medal in 1920 for his role in the First Pan-African Congress as a "discreditable fraud."¹⁸ For Garvey, Du Bois ignored the African American masses, focusing more on forming a "bastard aristocracy" and criticizing him for being bourgeois.¹⁹ In turn, Du Bois explicitly announced that Garvey was not invited to the Second Pan-African Congress, calling his movement "dangerous" and "impracticable."²⁰ Garvey would in turn discredit the move by asserting that Du Bois' policy was doomed due to his vision of racial amalgamation because whites would maintain their racist nature and would inhibit Black development.²¹ For Du Bois, Elliott Rudwick asserts Garvey was a "disoriented victim of the color line," whose rhetoric disregarded logic for hatred.²² Meanwhile, Garvey asserted his proposals were more effective than dwelling on theoretical demands, especially the ones made by Du Bois, whom he regarded as elitist. However, this is not to say that either was right or wrong on racial matters, especially regarding their stances on Ethiopia. Simultaneously with Du Bois, Marcus Garvey was a fiery critic of the war and even went to great lengths condemning Haile Selassie.

By the time the war started, Garvey had departed from the U.N.I.A. after his prison term for mail fraud, compromising him between 1922, when he was officially charged, and in 1927, after his release. Deported to Jamaica and later moving to London, Garvey tried reestablishing the past glory of the U.N.I.A.²³ In analyzing editorials from his new monthly journal, *Black Man*, Garvey, in his article "Italy and Abyssinia" in 1935, wrote about the beginning of the conflict with a hopeful stance, stating

¹⁷ Elliott M. Rudwick, "Du Bois versus Garvey: Race Propagandists at War," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 28: 4 (1959): p. 3.

¹⁸ Rudwick, "Du Bois versus Garvey," p. 4.

¹⁹ Rudwick, "Du Bois versus Garvey," p. 5.

²⁰ Rudwick, "Du Bois versus Garvey," p. 6.

²¹ Rudwick, "Du Bois versus Garvey," p. 7.

²² Rudwick, "Du Bois versus Garvey," p. 9.

²³ Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia," p. 159.

that “Africa is no longer a sleeping continent. The ‘Negro’ is no longer a political slumberer. He has watched and studied world events for centuries ... The next 50 years will see the ‘Negro’ a potential power in world affairs.”²⁴ For Garvey, fascist aggressions against Ethiopia were a chance to prove this, and it is noticeable that he felt Ethiopia would triumph against Italy if war were to be officially declared. Garvey argued that Italy was attempting to colonize Ethiopia strictly for economic and political reasons, likely to manipulate Ethiopia’s wealth of resources for Mussolini’s ambition to reclaim Italy’s glory to that of the Roman Empire rather than the dictator’s promises to civilize Ethiopia’s population. However, Garvey was worried about how European powers would respond to Mussolini’s campaign, citing that the League of Nations feared his presence, which also worked in his favor. He believed that countries like Britain or France had much to lose due to their reliance on their African colonies, and their reactions were needed to repel Italy as race prejudice stood between Haile Selassie to demand it from the League of Nations.²⁵ However, when Ethiopia fell to Italy, Garvey’s editorials would later become fiery critiques aimed toward Mussolini but targeted Selassie for his incompetence in modernizing Ethiopia before the war.

Garvey’s criticisms of Selassie’s failure to provide contemporary foundations occurred after Selassie’s exile in England. Garvey argued that upon his exile, Selassie would notice how English citizens received a greater number of opportunities under an environment with better conditions compared to Ethiopian backwardness. However, by May of 1936, he had not blamed Selassie, declaring in his editorial “Italy’s Conquest?” that the emperor did not have enough time to change the society, especially during the Italian invasion. This attitude would soon change when Garvey heavily condemned Selassie for failing to manage the country’s wealth properly. Garvey asserted that the government should have installed world markets to stabilize the currency and, in turn, use the stronger domestic paper currency to revitalize Ethiopia’s major industry sectors. He also argued that Ethiopia should have borrowed from other countries for development, especially for its educational system, which Garvey highlighted as poor, and funding could have gained vital patriotic support from the population.²⁶

On top of this censure, Garvey also attacked Ethiopia’s organizational efforts on the battlefield. When it came to the frontlines, Garvey notably emphasized that the Selassie government was notorious for providing false information on the war, noting it as a major concern as the energy used in relaying

²⁴ Marcus Garvey, “Italy and Abyssinia,” In *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers. Vol 7, November 1927-August 1940*, ed. Robert A. Hill, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 636.

²⁵ Garvey, “Italy and Abyssinia,” p. 635-637.

²⁶ Marcus Garvey, “Italy’s Conquest?” In *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers. Vol 7, November 1927-August 1940*, ed. Robert A. Hill, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 787-93.

these erroneous reports could have been used to tell the truth, building up more considerable support overseas. In an article entitled “Haile Selassie is Bad Historian and Worse Psychologist, Opines Fam[ou]s U.N.I.A. Leader,” in a 1937 edition of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, he declared that when Selassie went into exile, the support of the monarchy followed him, leaving Ethiopians to fight for themselves.²⁷ Garvey downgraded the Ethiopian military in his “Fighting in Abyssinia—The Emperor Runs” editorial as “scattered bands of Abyssinian patriots who are fighting in guerilla and other warfare with the hope of saving their country ... it is a pity that there is no real Abyssinian Napoleon to gather these scattered patriots together and conduct a proper campaign against the Italian settlers.”²⁸ Without Selassie present and the government failing to get in order, sending aid was difficult because the country's agency was too weak. Likewise, Garvey also claimed that Selassie was ineffective in utilizing the support of enthusiastic African Americans who could have played a vital role in suppressing fascist aggression on the battlefield.²⁹ Indeed, it is estimated that over 50,000 African Americans volunteered their services for Ethiopia. The U.S. Constitution, however, prohibited citizens from joining a foreign army to fight against a country the United States was at peace with, Italy included.³⁰ Garvey's paramount critique, however, surrounded Selassie's ethnicity and lineage in the Solomonic dynasty.

Haile Selassie is claimed to have lineage to Menelik I, the first emperor of Ethiopia, whose father is regarded as King Solomon. According to Garvey, Selassie's Semitic heritage caused him to view himself as white, which proved to have dissociated him from Ethiopia's Black population. He declared that the emperor formed racial policies for his own divine personal purposes that suppressed the “darker” elements of the population, which destroyed the country's Black integrity, leading to the loss of Ethiopia.³¹ In a letter to a reader, Garvey described:

If the Emperor had paid more attention to modern diplomacy and scientific politics, rather than flattering himself over the idea of his being descended from Solomon, making him

²⁷ Marcus Garvey, “Haile Selassie is Bad Historian and Worse Psychologist, Opines Fam[ou]s U.N.I.A. Leader,” In *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers. Vol 7, November 1927-August 1940*, ed. Robert A. Hill, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 718-21.

²⁸ Marcus Garvey, “Fighting in Abyssinia—The Emperor Runs,” In *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers. Vol 7, November 1927-August 1940*, ed. Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 727.

²⁹ Garvey, “Italy's Conquest?” p. 787-93.

³⁰ Gebrekidan, “In Defense of Ethiopia,” p. 148.

³¹ Garvey, “Italy's Conquest?” p. 787-93.

superior to the other Abyssinians, because they are black, he would have been still Emperor and we would have been proud of him as our representative.³²

This condition is what Garvey discerned in “The Failure of Haile Selassie as Emperor” to diminish patriotic support amongst civilians, but globally, he declared it influenced the image of incompetence within the Black race.³³ In essence, Garvey’s fiery scrutiny of Selassie was the product of emotional fervor generated by not just the loss of Ethiopia itself but must be viewed as a component crucial to his life’s work.

For Garvey, Ethiopia was much more than an African country; it was considered the last Black empire free from colonialism and colonial influence. A proponent of the back-to-Africa movement and enticed greatly by a united African-diasporic sovereign, Garvey felt let down when Selassie accepted exile. According to Shawn Sobers, Marcus Garvey was demanding “immediacy in galvanising the African diaspora, and he saw an urgency to build a nation but, as I say, he did not have a land, so it was an idea, a project,” but unfortunately for him, “His Majesty did not want to gamble Ethiopia on a project idea, because he had an empire that he could have actually lost in that moment.”³⁴ However, it is possible that his criticism of Selassie reflected the intolerance of other Black leaders, a weakness that led to his downfall.³⁵ Powerless to the war’s outcome and encircling back to Garvey’s 1935 message in his article, “Lest We Forget”, the one thing that was unchanged by his ideological evolution was his demand for readers to prepare for the future, embracing education and keeping current on world affairs. He argued that what happened in Ethiopia should stay fresh within their minds because the Black race could not afford another loss to the terrors of white supremacy.³⁶ Garvey would not live to see Ethiopia unrelinquished from Italian colonialism. However, Garvey was not the only writer to condemn others besides the aggressor; George Padmore wrote significantly about France and Britain’s

³² Marcus Garvey, “Marcus Garvey to Una Brown,” In *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers. Vol 7, November 1927-August 1940*, ed. Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 701.

³³ Marcus Garvey. “The Failure of Haile Selassie as Emperor,” In *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers. Vol 7, November 1927-August 1940*, ed. Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 739-42.

³⁴ Shawn Sobers, “When the Prophet was angry with the Emperor: On Marcus Garvey’s critique of Haile Selassie I, and the aligned legacy of both their logic,” Speech delivered at the Kuumba Centre, Bristol, United Kingdom, August 19, 2019.

³⁵ Gebrekidan, “In Defense of Ethiopia,” p. 159.

³⁶ Marcus Garvey, “Lest We Forget,” In *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers. Vol 7, November 1927-August 1940*, ed. Robert A. Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 739-42.

role in leveraging Italy's colonial motivation, addressing the struggle against colonialism through a Socialist lens and merging it with Pan-Africanist ideals.

George Padmore began his writing career for the Marxist publication, *The Negro Worker*, determining that issues amongst the Black race were economic and not racial. Padmore claimed that race consciousness was influenced by bourgeois rhetoric to alienate the working class.³⁷ Because of these ideologies, Padmore rejected Black leaders who did not support Marxism, and this encouraged Padmore's hostility towards figures like W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey.³⁸ However, his attitude changed in 1933 when he celebrated Garvey as the "father of pan-Africanism," and declared he "was undoubtedly one of the greatest 'Negroes' since Emancipation."³⁹ Later, in 1934, he officially left the Communist Party when news exposed that the Soviets were supplying Italy with oil, among other necessities.⁴⁰ While he remained a dedicated Marxist, he took his work to Du Bois' *The Crisis*, where he shunned Britain and France for their involvement with Italy before the war, prioritizing their colonial assets over the war.⁴¹

In his 1937 editorial for *The Crisis* entitled "Abyssinia—The Last of Free Africa", Padmore stated that Britain and France played a role in bullying Ethiopia, along with Italy. Since the reign of

³⁷ Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia," p. 157.

³⁸ P. Kiven P. Tunteng, "George Padmore's Impact on Africa: A Critical Appraisal," *Phylon* (1960-) 35:1 (1974): p. 33.

³⁹ Tunteng, "George Padmore's Impact on Africa," p. 35.

⁴⁰ Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia," p. 157.

⁴¹ After his expulsion, Padmore's critiques of the Soviet Union would impact early Ghana-Soviet relations as he later developed a friendship with then-president Kwame Nkrumah. Padmore eventually became his advisor and criticized Britain's attack on public socialist, communist, and pro-Soviet movements in Kenya and British Guiana until Ghana gained independence from Britain on March 6, 1957. From there, Nkrumah's government aimed to transform its colonial economy to ensure that Ghana would not be recolonized. This included powers like the Soviet Union, who feared Ghana was susceptible to American and British capital, which would thwart Soviet attempts to form diplomatic relations with the Nkrumah government. In addition, Soviet officials claimed that Padmore was threatening enough to steer Nkrumah away from holding an alliance with the USSR and denounced them as much as American and British imperialists. Despite Soviet pressures, Padmore's bond with Nkrumah stayed strong, discussing matters of what forms Ghana's constitution should take, enforcing discipline in Nkrumah's Convention People's Party, and conscripting individuals to spy on anti-Nkrumah factions, revealing assassination plots against him. Padmore's office was even placed right next to Nkrumah's presidential residence, where he would continue the rest of his political career until September 25, 1959, when he died in London receiving treatment for cirrhosis of the liver. For details on postcolonial Ghana-Soviet relations, see Nana Osei-Opare, "Uneasy Comrades: Postcolonial Statecraft, Race, and Citizenship, Ghana-Soviet Relations, 1957-1966," *Journal of West African History*, 5:2 (2019): pp. 85-111.

Menelik II, the European superpowers had exponentially contended with one another in implementing their sphere of influence over Ethiopia. Early into the conflict after the First Italo-Ethiopian War, Britain had hostility with France over their Nile Valley colonies and French Sudan. Italy had lost the war, and the two superpowers quickly tried forming greater relations with Ethiopia, which lay between their colonies. What came later was The Tripartite Treaty of 1906 between the Europeans, Italy included, that aimed to forestall notions of conflict but also prioritized concessions being made to each country involving the construction of railway systems between their colonies. Most importantly, this enabled Britain to negotiate with Ethiopia over a contract to build a dam in Lake Tana.⁴² However, the Lake Tana project would crumble, and Italy, under the new grasp of Mussolini, swooped in, encouraging Ethiopia to join the League of Nations. A concerned Britain went against this measure, but eventually, Ethiopia joined the League in 1923. Italy and Ethiopia signed the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928, declaring a twenty year friendship between the two countries, ultimately providing Mussolini a step forward in his goal of invasion.⁴³ Subsequently, even when the war began, Britain and France continued to neglect the conflict, receiving criticism from Padmore as the two superpowers were too consumed in protecting their interests.

One of Padmore's principal condemnations in his article, "Abyssinia Betrayed by the League of Nations," surrounded Britain and France's engagement in the secret Hoare-Laval Pact (1935), giving Mussolini a "free hand to grab as much of Ethiopia as he can." in a proposal that would have partitioned Ethiopia to satisfy Italy's demands as long as they refrained from starting war.⁴⁴ Examples like these, according to Padmore in 1935 in his editorial, "Ethiopia and World Politics", showed that "White nations, regardless of their political systems, have no scruples in assigning parts to Africa to whichever one stands most in need of colonies ... Africa is not worth while for whites to fight over. They share it over mutual agreement."⁴⁵ While the proposal was leaked to the public and dropped entirely, Padmore argued that it showed how Britain and France were somewhat aware of Mussolini's aims yet concealed these dangers from Ethiopia. Exposed, Padmore declared, "they just scurried away like rats from a drowning ship, not only deserting the victim of aggression, but the League and collective security.", especially noting how their "policy of watchful waiting" failed to take any steps in preventing Italian military commodities from passing through the Suez Canal.⁴⁶ In brief, Padmore cleverly argued, "Where profits are concerned there is no morality among imperialists."⁴⁷ Motivated by Marxism, Padmore's dissection of the war emphasized Europe's economic exploitation of Africa and

⁴² George Padmore, "Abyssinia—The Last of Free Africa," *The Crisis*, May, 1937.

⁴³ Padmore, "Abyssinia—The Last of Free Africa."

⁴⁴ George Padmore, "Abyssinia Betrayed by the League of Nations," *The Crisis*, June, 1937.

⁴⁵ George Padmore, "Ethiopia and World Politics," *The Crisis*, May, 1935.

⁴⁶ Padmore, "Abyssinia Betrayed by the League of Nations."

⁴⁷ Padmore, "Abyssinia Betrayed by the League of Nations."

the dangerous effects of capitalism on its African masses. Padmore effectively reminded readers nationally that the invasion represented much more Ethiopia than a territorial dispute, but it exemplified the struggle against white supremacy and imperialism. His call to action was for African Americans to acknowledge this with the incentive to enact resistance against capitalism's despotism over the Black race. In addition to Padmore, readers were likewise exposed to the Ethiopian narratives of George Schuyler, who provided critical commentary on race politics, critiquing transnationalism and addressing the consequences of forming a global black sovereignty.

Schuyler began his writing career critical of racial politics, especially concerning the Harlem Renaissance, and eventually criticized transnationalism between the U.S. and Ethiopia during the war. But before the war, his most famous criticism of racial politics appeared in 1926 in his article, "The Negro-Art Hokum," in *The Nation*, where he claimed a distinct "Black" art style, one which characterized the Harlem Renaissance, was nonexistent due to the longstanding influence of Anglo traditions. For him, the Harlem Renaissance was nothing but "race pride ballyhoo."⁴⁸ However, as he asserted, this "gabble about race" would later become a staple in his literary work in the mid-1930s when faced with the anguish of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War.⁴⁹ Dropping his opposition toward Black identity politics, Schuyler's political transformation was abrupt, persuading African Americans to financially contribute to "Ethiopia immediately in the hour of her great trial."⁵⁰ He was concerned that if Italy successfully invaded Ethiopia, it would only advance the rhetoric of white supremacy, leaving the Black liberation movement hopelessly impeded.⁵¹ Immediately, these sentiments would influence his serial *The Revolt in Ethiopia*, where Schuyler tasked himself with defeating the "primitive" representation of Africa.

The image of an "undeveloped" Africa was quite common amongst audiences, and the setting of "darkest Africa" was popular throughout the media in the 1930s. Robert A. Hill states that "Schuyler knew that ignorance and superstition about Africa were major impediments to the development of Black political consciousness."⁵² In a statement regarding the dangers of this demeaning portrait, Schuyler declared:

I do not believe I am exaggerating when I estimate that a large portion of our people firmly believe most of the tripe written about 'Negroes' and about Africa, and are convinced that

⁴⁸ Robert A. Hill, "Ethiopian Stories: George S. Schuyler and Literary Pan-Africanism in the 1930s," *South Asia Bulletin* XIV, no. 2 (1994): p. 70.

⁴⁹ Hill, "George S. Schuyler and Literary Pan-Africanism," p. 71.

⁵⁰ Hill, "George S. Schuyler and Literary Pan-Africanism," p. 74.

⁵¹ Hill, "George S. Schuyler and Literary Pan-Africanism," p. 74.

⁵² Hill, "George S. Schuyler and Literary Pan-Africanism," p. 75.

Africans are simple-minded, ‘primitive’ folk obviously inferior to us in every way because their habits, customs, and thought process vary from ours.⁵³

It was simply crucial for these attitudes to be altered as they provided subtle pretenses that disparaged Africans intellectually and socially as inferior beings. However, during the Harlem Renaissance, there was extraordinarily little fiction being produced on the subject of Africa itself, and this enabled Schuyler to steer Africa’s presence away from its oppressive boundaries.⁵⁴ The Ethiopian setting in *The Revolt in Ethiopia* embraces modernism, shaking off descriptions like “primitive” or “savage” as ethnocentric defamations. By showing audiences modern Africa, Schuyler provided a greater sense of unity between African Americans and Africans, condemning the white supremacist rhetoric that is said of them. After the invasion, Schuyler would write *Black Internationale* and *Black Empire*, another fictional serial that satirized the subtleties of fascism within Ethiopia’s African American freedom movement.

Beginning in the aftermath of the Italian invasion in 1936 and ending during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1938, *Black Internationale* and *Black Empire* are violent revenge fantasies that follow an African American-led conquest of Africa under genius scientist Dr. Belsidus who uses weapons of mass destruction in annihilating European colonialists. Schuyler’s motivation lay within the growing fascination with the rise of fascism, specifically among African Americans, to which he took on an anti-fascist approach.⁵⁵ Martha Patterson asserts that “Schuyler satirizes the longing for fascistic control and power in periods of particular strife, especially the extent to which charismatic fascist leaders use the culture industry as a means of interpellating ‘individuals’ as subjects.”⁵⁶ The most notable example of this satire put Marcus Garvey in the line of sight, whom Schuyler fervently detested for his radical approach to Black nationalism. In a scene where Dr. Belsidus reveals his plans to exterminate colonial whites from Africa to the protagonist, Carl Slater, he says, “It sounds mad, doesn’t it?” and Slater discerns, “Yes, rather Garveyistic, I’d say.”⁵⁷ Following this up, Belsidus says, “My son ... all great schemes appear mad in the beginning. Christians, Communists, Fascists and Nazis were at first called scary. Success made them sane.”⁵⁸ Schuyler essentially blurs the lines between Garveyism and fascism, associating them both as threatening tyrannical ideologies while also exposing the dangerous strength of propaganda. He saw Garveyism as militant in ways, worrying that such

⁵³ Hill, “George S. Schuyler and Literary Pan-Africanism,” p. 75.

⁵⁴ Hill, “George S. Schuyler and Literary Pan-Africanism,” p. 69.

⁵⁵ Martha H. Patterson, “Fascist Parody and Wish Fulfillment: George Schuyler’s Periodical Fiction of the 1930s.” *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 4: 1 (2013): p. 76.

⁵⁶ Martha H. Patterson, “Fascist Parody and Wish Fulfillment,” p. 78.

⁵⁷ Martha H. Patterson, “Fascist Parody and Wish Fulfillment,” p. 91.

⁵⁸ Martha H. Patterson, “Fascist Parody and Wish Fulfillment,” p. 91.

popular sentiments demanded a Westernized dominion over Africa. Against all patriarchal attitudes towards anti-colonial solutions, Schuyler's *Black Internationale* and *Black Empire* ultimately aimed to reform pan-Africanism.⁵⁹ But while his serial took storm amongst readers, another writer also provided an equally unique view of Ethiopia; his close friend Joel Augustus Rogers was one of the only Black reporters who wrote from the frontlines and whose articles aided the transnational connection between the U.S. and Ethiopia.

Being one of the few and most notable journalists to report from the heart of Ethiopia, Rogers thought that his war experiences were best used to maintain the country's transnational relationship with African Americans in the hopes of bolstering anti-colonial resistance. With this in mind, Rogers had to keep readers in *The Pittsburgh Courier* engaged, so he documented his experiences of the war to pull at their heartstrings. One of the most riveting examples of his war encounters occurred in the capital of Addis Ababa during a false air-raid rumor. Word had gotten out that the Italian planes were surveying the capital in a soon-to-be bombing of the capital. This instance never occurred, but civil defense sirens abruptly alerted the city into the night, causing a great frenzy. Upon evacuation, Rogers wrote in 1936:

In the rough cobbly road were thousands of panic-stricken people in their flowing garments headed for open spaces ... Mothers with sobbing children in their arms were dog-trotting away. Others were leading the blind or helping the lame and aged.⁶⁰

Purveying the horrors of war, even when no casualties occurred, Rogers pictured a different scene quite contradictory to the hysteria that simultaneously took place. While Indigenous Ethiopians struggled to defend their lives in a desperate attempt, Rogers noticed that:

Here and there could be seen an automobile or truck loaded with white people ... These were the late ones for the majority of the whites, hearing the rumor, which had been passed from house to house as early as three o'clock, had jumped into their cars and started off for the hills or the dugouts of their legations.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Martha H. Patterson, "Fascist Parody and Wish Fulfillment," p. 89.

⁶⁰ Joel Augustus Rogers, "Rogers Paints Vivid Word Picture of Panic in Addis Ababa Over False Air Raid Rumor: Whites Lead Panicky Procession Out of Capital as Italian Air Bombardments Fly--High Location of Addis Ababa may Prevent Sky Raid by Bombers, Col. Robinson Tells Rogers," *The Pittsburgh Courier (1911-1950)*, Jan 18, 1936, City Edition.

⁶¹ Rogers, "Rogers Paints Vivid Word Picture of Panic in Addis Ababa."

In the era of Jim Crow laws and rampant lynchings, the contradictory scenes painted by Rogers were undoubtedly an attempt to bind Ethiopians and African Americans through a shared struggle: the struggle against white supremacy. For Rogers, the crisis in Ethiopia was a matter crucial to the Black diaspora, not just Ethiopians, because it represented the fight against white supremacy. For the African American public, this was their chance to resist the mechanisms which provoked systemic racism. Later that year, Rogers, in an exclusive interview, would be given the opportunity to speak directly with Haile Selassie.

Rogers' interview with Selassie primarily emphasizes the emperor's views on the war in an endeavor to expose the brutal Italian rhetoric in colonizing Ethiopia and their ruthless tactics in achieving this goal. At one point in their meeting, Selassie would steer away from the conversation from the war to praise African Americans for their support but show his admiration for African American achievement. For example, Rogers declared in the 7 March, 1936 edition of *The Pittsburgh Courier* that:

“He spoke about the Tuskegee Institute and its splendid industrial education; of Howard University and its fine medical school; of Mrs. Mary Mcleod Bethune and her school ... Spoke of the colored writers and singers, such as Paul Robeson, Roland Hayes, Caterina Jarboro and others ... Nor did he forget the subjects of sports ... of Joe Louis.”⁶²

When asked if he would visit the United States, Selassie stated, “To visit America ... has always been one of my great dreams. If ever the occasion comes, be assured I shall not miss it.”⁶³ This effort to maintain Selassie's appeal was critical, especially in the wake of Marcus Garvey's heated criticism. In this interview, Rogers displays that while African Americans are firm admirers of Ethiopian accomplishments, Selassie is just as appreciative of their efforts. Moreover, in this interview, Rogers emphasizes Ethiopia as the future of African American industrial activity.

Rogers claimed that African American graduates “qualified in engineering, architecture, agriculture, chemistry, medicine, aviation and other fields,” are struck with “a great lack of opportunity for them in America.”⁶⁴ Following this statement, Rogers asked Selassie, “May these Aframericans just mentioned look forward to the day when their energies will find an outlet in Ethiopia?” and Selassie proclaimed that Ethiopia would proudly welcome such activity.⁶⁵ This sentiment was a common theme in Rogers' writing, especially in his popular pamphlet, *The Real Facts About Ethiopia*, which definitively argued:

⁶² Newspapers.com. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 7, 1936.

⁶³ Newspapers.com. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 7, 1936.

⁶⁴ Newspapers.com. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 7, 1936.

⁶⁵ Newspapers.com. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 7, 1936.

The Aframerican needs an outlet for his trained youth. And if the economic depression lasts in America opportunities for skilled ‘Negroes’ will become increasingly less. Ethiopia offers a vast outlet for Aframerican energies and ‘Negro’ youths need have no longer any hesitancy in training themselves in engineering and other mechanical sciences.⁶⁶

With a combination of racist prejudice and the Great Depression, the future of the Black workforce was alarming, especially considering how the new generations of college-educated African Americans would be undermined. For Rogers, to crush the notions of Black Americans as an inferior race would mean prioritizing education and inciting the next wave of brilliant scientists or engineers. Rogers found that Ethiopia could be the outlet that would achieve this, but first, the Italians had to be expelled. By proclaiming Ethiopia as the answer to this problem, Rogers appealed to the interests of the African American public, further forging their transnational bond in economic terms as well as racial ones. Rogers promised them a brighter future by aiding Ethiopia and defying the oppressive chains that bound them in America. During his period in Ethiopia, Rogers also wrote significantly about an American aviator who volunteered in Ethiopia’s military and attempted to modernize their air force. He is considered the “Father of the Tuskegee Airmen” for mentoring many members of the famed military unit and was none other than John C. Robinson.

Robinson would receive his calling from Ethiopia in 1935 after the state of Illinois rewarded him for his attempts to make the Challengers Air Pilots’ Associate, a company of expert Black aviators that he co-founded, affiliated with the Illinois National Guard, which was entirely made up of white airmen. His notability aided him in achieving the appointment of lieutenant colonel, and he later served as joint commander of the Military Order of Guard, Aviation Squadron, an independent quasi-military organization that received a charter from Iowa and later recognition from the War Department.⁶⁷ By this time, the Selassie government was looking for exceptional foreign volunteers with the war looming. In April 1935, a cable invite would be sent to him asking him to serve as a commissioned officer in the Imperial Ethiopian Air Force. By August, Robinson’s presence showed considerable progress in the novice aviation environment where Selassie would grant him the status of colonel and chief of the Imperial Ethiopian Air Force, preparing him to engage in combat.⁶⁸ Robinson would spend over seven hundred hours on flying missions and, luckily, survived the war.⁶⁹ His

⁶⁶ Joel Augustus Rogers, *The Real Facts about Ethiopia* (Connecticut: Martino Publishing, 2015), p. 21.

⁶⁷ David Mayers, “The Lure of Ethiopia and the Saga of Colonel John Robinson, 1935–1937,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 17:4 (2019): p. 490.

⁶⁸ Mayers, “The Lure of Ethiopia,” p. 491.

⁶⁹ Mayers, “The Lure of Ethiopia,” p. 497.

presence made him famous in the States, especially because Joel Augustus notably reported him in praise. Afterward, Robinson engaged in a fundraising tour between 1936 and 1937 that showed Robinson was not merely an ordinary military member but an aviator who was the shining figure of Black hope.

While these tours aimed to increase awareness of the Ethiopian dilemma and offered an outlet to collect relief money for aid organizations, David Mayers argues that they also served to increase Black morale.⁷⁰ Mayers states that “countless Black Americans in 1937 idolized him. To them, Ethiopia and the United States may have existed in a single mesh of woe, but the battle-tested aviator personified the courage indispensable to liberation.”⁷¹ It makes sense, considering the acclaim writers had given him. Rogers wrote on 4 January, 1936 for the *The Pittsburgh Courier* that during a bombing raid in Adowa, Robinson “sprang on the back of a mule and did a Paul Revere to reach his plane,” likening his heroic presence to that of one of the greatest American revolutionaries in history.⁷² In another example, Rogers, on 5 September, in detailing Robinson’s technical expertise, wittily claimed, “The fact is that Ethiopia is such an extraordinarily difficult country for aviation and her planes were so old that one deserved a medal for flying them even in peacetime.”⁷³ With comments like these reaching audiences nationally, it is no wonder why Robinson’s popularity soared because Black periodicals essentially made him out to be the model of Black resistance. Assefa Mehretu asserts that Robinson provided a significant show of Black achievement in “flying what at the time was the most sophisticated machine in operation,” and exemplified how African Americans could master engineering, technology, and science, unlike what racist rhetoric made them out to be.⁷⁴ Robinson was a model of defiance and represented the extent of Black prosperity through his braveness in the selfless cause of saving Ethiopia from colonial Italians. Black periodicals ultimately used his likeness to further motivate and remind African Americans that their energy was not used in vain, especially during the morally defeating period of Italian occupation that would follow. Nonetheless, while Robinson epitomized Black virtue on the battlefield, the African American public made waves at home in their grand anti-fascist protests.

The African American anti-fascist movement was expressed through a multitude of mass demonstrations, most notably in Harlem, New York. These demonstrations ranged from public

⁷⁰ Mayers, “The Lure of Ethiopia,” p. 498.

⁷¹ Mayers, “The Lure of Ethiopia,” p. 500-01.

⁷² “J. A. Rogers Gets Exclusive Interview with Col. Robinson, Ethiopia’s ‘Brown Condor,’” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Jan 04, 1936, City Edition.

⁷³ Joel Augustus Rogers, “Rogers Pays Tribute to Colonel Robinson: Believes ‘Brown Condor’ is One of World’s Heroes,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, Sep 05, 1936, City Edition.

⁷⁴ Aseffa Mehretu, “Partners for Progress and Modernization: Rise and Fall of United States of America’s Soft-power Relations with Ethiopia.” *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* 29: 2 (2013): p. 66

lectures, organized meetings, protests, and fundraising drives, all of which were reported extensively by Black periodicals in an attempt to shift Washington's neutral stance on the war.⁷⁵ In doing this, newspapers helped to publish open letters from Black organizations. For example, the March 30th edition of *The Pittsburgh Courier* circulated the NAACP's statement to Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State at the time. Here, representatives of the NAACP demanded that the government directly aid Ethiopia before it would become a "theater for European aggrandizement and discord ... on behalf of the continuance of the status quo and the maintenance of peace" not just for the world but also for the millions of restless African Americans whose faith in the government was in plight.⁷⁶ The NAACP was not the only organized group spearheading the movement, as by 1935, there were numerous Ethiopian defense groups, mainly based in Harlem. However, most of them would join in aid to form the organization United Aid for Ethiopia in 1936.⁷⁷ Additionally, Black newspapers published reviews of massive lectures from famed Black figures and meetings with nationally recognized organizations on the subject of the war.

In one example, NAACP Founder W.E.B. Du Bois was a widely recognized traveling lecturer and Black periodicals carefully documented his speeches about Ethiopia as recorded by *The Pittsburgh Courier* in the 11 May, 1935 issue.⁷⁸ This practice would be quite common in Black periodicals, which advertised and provided transcripts of speeches from fascinating figures like Ernest Work, who was an educational advisor who modernized Ethiopia's educational system and was knighted by Selassie for his contributions. Carter G. Woodson, the "Father of Black History" and the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, was another popular and vocal lecturer covered by Black news outlets as recorded by *The New York Age* on September 7.⁷⁹ As noted in a previous example from *The Omaha Guide* on 30 March, lectures like these could receive massive crowds, and it was estimated that three thousand people at one point gathered in the Abyssinian Baptist Church to hear local U.N.I.A. and Communist leaders speak about the conflict. Reporters claimed, "Harlem had never seen such a united front before."⁸⁰ These lectures informed the public about the latest matters of the war, which Black periodicals had advertised across the nation, making them more accessible to the public. However, these famed intellectual characters were not the only figures whose voices were heard because of periodicals; the Ethiopian government had used Black newspapers to connect directly with African Americans.

⁷⁵ Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia," p. 148.

⁷⁶ Newspapers.com. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 30, 1935.

⁷⁷ Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia," p. 148.

⁷⁸ Newspapers.com. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 11, 1935.

⁷⁹ Newspapers.com. *The New York Age*, September 7, 1935.

⁸⁰ Newspapers.com. *The Omaha Guide*, March 30, 1935.

One of the most essential roles Black newspapers played in supporting Ethiopia was providing a way for access to be made between Ethiopia's government and the African American public. In the midst of 1935, when talk spread amongst African American crowds of the possibility of volunteering their services to Ethiopia, *The Pittsburgh Courier* in the 12 July, 1935 issue sent a cablegram to the Ethiopian government "in order that its raiders could have first-hand information on this vitally important question and allay the reports of white news correspondents that Ethiopia desired to be linked with the Semitic race" to where a reply was sent back from Haile Selassie declaring "we will accept you with pleasure."⁸¹ As time passed, the Ethiopian government continued using its support to reach out to its many supporters in the United States. For example, *The Black Dispatch*, on August 15 of the same year, received and published a letter from Heruy Wolde Selassie, the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs, describing to readers the implications of the Abyssinia crisis in detailing how the Italians violated a treaty made between the countries in 1908, which specifically detailed the village of Walwal within Ethiopian borders.⁸² Even after the war, the Ethiopian government still made precious contact with its supporters overseas. In 1937, Dr. Malaku Bayen, Haile Selassie's personal physician and founder of the Ethiopian World Foundation, wrote to *The New York Amsterdam News* to warn African Americans and condemn a series of false fronts that posed as aid organizations while stealing donations in the 13 February issue.⁸³ However, the most effective public protests were their demonstrations, gathering tens of thousands of protestors all at once for the Ethiopian cause.

Participation in protests was a common way African Americans generated support for Ethiopia, and it proved effective in gathering large mixed masses of crowds. The success of these demonstrations came in large part due to Marxism. When the war was instigated in 1935, both Black and white Marxists saw that it posed an ideal opportunity to exhibit the party's discriminatory-free appearance. These were the same communists who were mainly responsible for bringing together the numerous Ethiopian defense organizations in 1936 and are credited for coordinating an extensive amount of the protests. Especially in August of 1935 in New York City, when they gathered a whopping 100,000 people in a wide-spanning anti-fascist demonstration.⁸⁴ Yet, these protests were not exclusive to anti-fascism in Ethiopia; instead, organizers encouraged demonstrations that emphasized fascist struggles from other countries. In an example from *The New York Amsterdam News* in the 27 March, 1937 issue, the United Aid for Peoples of African Descent had collaborated with the Committee for Defense of Spanish Democracy and the Spanish Anti-Fascist Committee in response to

⁸¹ Newspapers.com. *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 13, 1935.

⁸² Newspapers.com. *The Black Dispatch*, August 15, 1935.

⁸³ "Bayen Tells Reasons for Appointment" *The New York Amsterdam News*, 13 February 1937.

⁸⁴ Gebrekidan, "In Defense of Ethiopia," p. 156.

the Spanish Civil Wars.⁸⁵ Another part of the success of demonstrations came from the support of Black periodicals, which kept audiences up to date with these events. If not for them, organizers would have had to rely on word of mouth, flyers, and pamphlets. Still, those mediums can only go so far compared to getting coverage from reputable papers whose publications extended nationally. This demonstrates that Black newspapers played a vital role as an outlet for Black nationalist and pan-African resistance in supporting Ethiopia during the war.

The Second Italo-Ethiopian War demonstrates an evolution of critical pan-Africanist and Black nationalist thought, provoking African Americans to demonstrate their support for Ethiopia in a variety of ways on the home front. Black news publications played a crucial role in this movement, reinforcing Ethiopia's symbolic nature against the global struggle of white supremacy and imperialism. In addition, these periodicals informed the nation of the latest overseas intelligence and aided in organizing public demonstrations. Their role in racial resistance strengthened the Ethiopian bond with the African American identity on a political and spiritual scale. Moreover, these platforms allowed Black writers to provide their commentary on the conflict. Because of these opportunities Black news outlets made available, the essence of Black liberation and Ethiopianism took a wide range of forms as it influenced a whole web of logical thinking and action.

While many African Americans generally shared the same goal of freeing Ethiopia from the chains of colonialism, it was not done in a single definitive fashion. For example, foundational figures like Garvey and Du Bois were almost polar opposites regarding their support for Ethiopia. Garvey deemed that Selassie was an authoritarian leader and attempted to persuade audiences that supporting Ethiopia should also involve the condemnation of the Selassie government. Du Bois was fond of the leader and generally spoke about Ethiopia as an example of the dangers of European Imperialism, encouraging support for Ethiopia all around. On the other hand, George Padmore, with his Marxist background, more commonly attacked capitalist European nations for their lack of interference in the war and even for instigating it due to their protecting colonial aspirations before Italy invaded. However, editorials were not the only source of critical thought being passed around; George Schuyler demanded change within the pan-Africanist community through serial fiction, while others, like Rogers, became Black America's most notable wartime reporter for his graphic accounts. However, the fight for Ethiopia extended to other forms of action, such as support from aviator Robinson, who fought off Italians in a successful career on the battlefield and aided in the modernization of Ethiopia's military. But even at home, African Americans led one of the most significant anti-fascist movements in the period and did so in the name of Ethiopia. The African American reaction to the Second Italo-Ethiopian War was essentially a vast network of interconnected outlets and actions all in the

⁸⁵ "Mass Parade to Denounce Fascism Here: Demonstration Called By Spain-Ethiopia Committees," *The New York Amsterdam News*, 27 Mar, 1937.

agency of Ethiopia. Beyond this, what conclusions can be drawn from the movement in our contemporary understanding of African American engagement in the period?

Between the World Wars, the United States in the 1930s was transformed by Congress passing the Neutrality Acts in 1935, prohibiting the export of any war implements to foreign countries in conflict. What came afterward was a period of isolationism that encouraged popular sentiments advocating for non-involvement in foreign politics. But can this be genuinely claimed? While the United States isolationist policies and the general public's support for non-interventionism are considerable aspects to be acknowledged, it is just as important to understand the impact African Americans had in the wake of this, disregarding the popular stance and demanding action to be made in aiding Ethiopia during the war. After all, their presence must be recognized in defining American political affairs in the era. The African American public's activism effectively intervened in the foreign conflict, providing financial and material aid while organizing massive demonstrations in the tens of thousands. African Americans were even ready to hand their services to the Ethiopian military, and some successfully did so before the U.S.' official entry into the war. The claim that the United States was isolationist neglects the whole picture, and recognition of African American pro-interventionists should be considered in the conversation.