

## The Legacy and Prospect of Black Writers' Commitment for Pan-Africanism



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**ABSTRACT:** This article deals with the issue of black writers' commitment for the implementation of Pan-Africanism. In fact, black writers in America, the Caribbean and Africa have developed an episteme that aims at reconnecting black people not only with their genuine cultural and historical matrix, but also at urging them to struggle for unity. Their literary oeuvre and actions posit Pan-Africanism as the required weapon for black empowerment and progress. This study unveils the transformation of Pan-Africanism throughout history. The Afrocentric perspective that underpins it, deconstructs the Western political, economic and cultural hegemony and advocates black agency through unity. This analysis, therefore, argues that black writers' vision and action still operate as a fertile ground for the implementation of the ever-changing Pan-Africanism.

**KEYWORDS:** Black Empowerment, Black writers, History, Pan-Africanism, Western Imperialism

### INTRODUCTION

Africa underwent traumatic experiences throughout its contact with Arabs and later Europeans. The venture of those foreign forces scattered Africans all over the world. The trans-Saharan trade by Arabs lasted thirteen centuries. European's expansionism brought about slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. (Walter Rodney 1981), (Olufemi Taiwo, 2010). For centuries, black people have been struggling for their societal self-determination. In that perspective, resorting to Pan-Africanism, appears as the most reliable solution. According to an African Union special publication, Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encouraged the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social and political progress and aims to 'unify and uplift' people of African descent. The ideology asserts that the fates of all African peoples and countries are intertwined. At its core, Pan-Africanism is 'a belief that African peoples both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny.' (AU Echo, Issue 5, 2013:1)

Works about Pan-Africanism unveil the historical context of its germination, its evolution in history and the problematics pertaining its effective implementation. Authors also show the key figures that struggled for the advancement of the project of black unification. Amzat Boukari-Yabara (2014), Hakim Adi (2018), Michael Amoah (2019) to mention but a few, concur that Pan-Africanism, despite the hindrances, remains a challenge for today's black people to reconquer African agency and progress.

This article based on a diachronic perspective is a survey of the evolvement of Pan-Africanism. Yet, it specially focuses on black writers' perceptions, critics and expectations of Pan-Africanism. Black writers, in this work, refer to Africans at home and people of African descent throughout the world. Those authors, indeed, show the way for black empowerment in a context of Western domination. This work therefore, details and interrogates the relevance of their commitment. The objective is to highlight, throughout their works, the legacy of their vision and to point out the prospects of Pan-Africanism in this globalization era.

Pan-Africanism operates in this work not only as a socio-political weapon but also as an ideology that aims to overthrow an established dominating force. For the black writers, there is an impetus for changing a system fueled by the Western selfish capitalist desire, in order to establish justice, freedom and progress. In that perspective, Afrocentricity, viewed as a paradigmatic shift, serves as the theory that lays the orientation of this analysis. Indeed, Afrocentricity aims at debunking the alleged universality and hegemony of Western episteme, in order to center African perspective as the blueprint of thought for black people empowerment. Therefore, Afrocentricity appears as a key feature of Pan-Africanism.

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This analysis focuses, first, on the endeavor for black people in America and in the Caribbean to set up a transnational black community. The forerunners and also writers of the idea of a universal black community, defend the commonality of black history and destiny. Those black writers insist on the relevance of unity as a weapon against the white system of exploitation. The second part analyses the representation of Pan-Africanism by African writers in the continent. It discloses the grounds and aftermath of black people dislocation and draws the perspectives of their re-unification as one can read in fiction and non-fiction. The third part decrypts the new Pan-Africanism at the era of the development of the internet. It uncovers the germinating shift, both in America and Africa, from an elite-driven Pan-Africanism to a rather uncontrollable and popular one.

### **1- Creating a Transnational African Community**

#### **1- Black Diaspora and the Struggle for Self-Determination**

The scattering of Africans all over the world through trans-Saharan and transatlantic slave trades has caused over centuries, a momentum for the creation of a transnational African community. Commonly viewed as a political and ideological tool, Pan-Africanism has nonetheless, been the concern of many Black writers. They concur that Pan-Africanism is the ultimate and the most efficient alternative to resist Western imperialism and achieve Black empowerment. African descents in the diaspora were the precursors of that commitment for freedom. They forecast in the project of Pan-Africanism, the essential condition to achieve African renaissance.

The pioneers of that breed of writers were Blacks in America and the Caribbean. An overview of their literary works about that issue shows that the idea of Pan-Africanism was motivated by three main aspirations. First, the psychological need for Blacks outside Africa to reconnect with their origin. Then the economic opportunity that Africa offers, and finally the political and ideological urges to build a strong union in order to resist western domination (Tunde Adeleke,2009) Africa represented therefore a common heritage, a rallying cry of an effective freedom in order to achieve societal self-determination.

For the writers of the second half of the nineteenth century, for instance, Africa represented the benchmark that every African descent should refer to in order to regain their real identity and their freedom. They were all victims of white people's segregation system. Blacks in America, for example, were denied citizenship in a dominating proslavery socio-political context. Blacks were objectified and denied rights and privileges they should be granted as citizens. Facing with that nationality void, setting up an alternative black citizenship outside the US surfaced in the African American fight for freedom. That endeavor was noticeable in some black writers' works. Martin Delany (1812-1885), abolitionist, promotor of the slogan "Africa for Africans", struggled for the development of black nationalism. He observed that, due to their marginalization, Blacks became "a nation within a nation, an alienated minority whose only option, in the judgement of many, was the creation of an alternative black nationality abroad". (Delany,1852:12).

Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) went further by asking African descents to return to Africa. For the political activist and writer, each black descent in the diaspora should be cognizant of his-her African roots. Marcus Garvey founded, indeed, the Black Star Line a company that aimed at furnishing ships that would take African Americans back to their mother land. Garvey's "Black Zionism" meant to separate all African descents from their oppressors and send them to Africa where they can experience real freedom. His declarations were head-on and radical:

"We want to unite the Negro race in this country. We want every Negro to work for one common object, that of building a nation of his own on the great continent of Africa. That all Negroes all over the world are working for the establishment of a government in Africa, means that it will be realized in another few years" Garvey:2021).

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) argued that the objectification of Black people was due to race difference. Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk* advocated the concept of color line. He sustains that freedom is rather to be conquered than granted. The post-racial context proclaimed by the US government, after the Reconstruction period in America, was just an illusion. African Americans, after the civil war, were still living in an oppressive society that devalued them as equals. That is why he wrote that "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (DuBois,1903:5). He posed an existential crisis that African Americans faced. They suffered from racial segregation as they had a nominal freedom. That color line problem was also perceptible wherever the white system of domination was settled. Therefore, the racial solidarity became obvious, and the resort to Africa as the source of political, economic, cultural and even psychological liberation grew in importance. DuBois' involvement in the organization of the first Pan-African congresses, that started in 1919 in Paris, is an illustration of his commitment for the advent of a transcontinental black community.

Writers were cognizant of their responsibility as forerunners in the project of a black transnational community. Yet Black people in America and the Caribbean were to be educated to understand the stakes pertaining the project of uniting all Africans. Education was for those writers a priority for African descents to fully set themselves free from white bondage. Their literary production therefore insisted on the power of education in the process of liberation and the creation of Pan-Africanism.

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Martin Delany warned the African Americans on the necessity of education. He advised African Americans in the following terms: "let's have an education that shall practically develop our thinking faculties and manhood; and only then, we shall be able to vie with our oppressors" (Martin Delany, 1882:195). Marcus Garvey also invited his contemporaries to broaden their knowledge. He addressed the following advice to his contemporaries: "intelligence rules the world, ignorance carries burden. Therefore, remove yourself as far as possible from ignorance and seek to be intelligent. (Garvey, 1987:189).

In that perspective, history represented an important field of investigation for the black writers. They, indeed, argued that the history of Africa was falsified to the profit of the Caucasian civilization. Africans worldwide were to develop a critical mind and question the western representation of Africa. Black writers adopted an Afrocentrist standpoint. They advocated an African perspective of history. The reconnection with Africa should generate a cultural renewal and foster the unity of Africans. Malcolm X (1925-1965) for example, counter-attacked that western misrepresentation of Africa. He critiqued the distortion of history that the Euro-American civilization imposes as the universal truth. He therefore unveiled the responsibility of western civilization in the reification of Africans through their diffusion of fake knowledge. He contended that the image that Europeans "created of our motherland and the image that you created of our people on that continent was a trap, was a prison, was a chain, was the worst form of slavery that has ever been invented by a so-called civilized race and a civilized nation since the beginning of time" (Malcom X, 1989:167).

The struggle for self-determination focused mainly on the political liberation and the cultural regeneration of Blacks all over the world. Those writers also knew that Africa represented a new and viable economic opportunity. Pan-Africanism appeared as the formalization of that enterprise. Yet there was a divergence in the writers' vision and implementation of Pan-Africanism. A trend advocated the solidarity of all Blacks worldwide while the other one encouraged the return to the motherland. Despite that divergence, all black writers had a grass-root idea that freedom of African descents and Africans in the continent depended on their capacity to struggle against their common foe, that is, the white oppressor's system of domination.

Pan-Africanism represented, therefore, the ideal political tool to impel blacks' sovereignty worldwide. Black writers of that time would produce pieces of literature to denounce a system of exploitation of Blacks all over the world. Their works criticized harshly slave trade, slavery, racial segregation, colonialism, apartheid which were the implementation of white's system of black dehumanization. Identity crisis issue was, therefore, closely linked to the struggle for the creation of Pan-Africanism. Their literary works amended black identity and dethroned the Euro-American monopoly on knowledge and civilization. Black writers in the diaspora would reaffirm and re-establish their personality as active agents of their own destiny in order to achieve Pan-Africanism. This is also perceptible in the Harlem Renaissance movement.

### 2- The Harlem Renaissance: The Claim for an African heritage

A significant turn in the blacks' literary breakthrough was the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920's in New York. Harlem was the symbolic capital of that artistic bloom. The Harlem Renaissance marked the shift from the "Old Negro to the New Negro". Alain LeRoy Locke (1885-1954), the intellectual Godfather of the Harlem Renaissance, in his essay, *The New Negro (1925)* insisted on the change of the black people's identity paradigm. For him, instead of being restricted in a degraded position, the black person was to overcome oppression and struggle for political, social and economic freedom. "The Negro Renaissance" meant the change of mindset to henceforth see oneself as capable to fight for their civil rights and live as equal to the whites. He consequently asserted that "The question is no longer what whites think of the Negro but of what the Negro wants to do and what price he is willing to pay to do it" (Locke, 1925:630)

Yet that cultural and political phenomenon was rooted in an Afro-centered ideology. Since ever, there had been a prevailing stigma that Blacks were inferior and could achieve nothing constructive in society unless they lean on Whites. The Harlem Renaissance marked a period in which Blacks were invited by artists to dismantle "the fatalistic position" of inferior people. Artists generated an ideology that aimed to develop black people's critical mind. Black artistry aimed then to demonstrate that all the black people, no matter the location, were capable of empowerment. The Harlem Renaissance advocated the idea of an African shared values and identity deriving from history.

Dance, drama, painting, folklore, etc., were designed to restore the true identity of the black people. Their creations were irrigated by the idea of the African origin of world civilization. Black artists showed and claimed their African origin. In literature, black writers condemned the Euro-American denigration of the African origin. They rather promoted a creative vitality by advocating their African origin. History revisited in an African perspective operated as a fertile ground to educate and instruct the black people. Artists aimed to fill the gap between African Americans and Africa. They conveyed the necessity to restore their dignity and their self-worth. Therefore, struggling to achieve their self-determination became an imperative condition. Michael Onwebuchi Eze writes that:

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The Harlem Renaissance invoked a new sense of black identity not defined in terms of European episteme but a rebirth emerging from "authentic" African cultural values and historical past. Black identity is no longer to be defined as a "product" of European gaze, African cultural system can offer an adequate source of humanity independent of Western civilization. The Harlem Renaissance offered a sense of universal black identity in which African ways of life became a subjective blueprint of what constitutes black humanity ( Onvebuchi Eze, 2019:666).

The African American person henceforth viewed in the ideology of the Harlem Renaissance, a perspective for the construction of a new identity. Africa became the identity benchmark. African history, sociology, myth, culture and economic potentialities were to be used by artists to dispel negative stereotypes associated with African Americans. Africa was turned into a source of pride and resources for artists. The encyclopedia Britannica reminds Alain LeRoy Locke's commitment for drawing the cultural bridge between Africa and the black diaspora. One can read:

"Having studied African culture and traced its influences upon Western civilization, he urged black painters, sculptors, and musicians to look to African sources for identity and to discover materials and techniques for their work. He encouraged black authors to seek subjects in black life and to set high artistic standards for themselves" (Harlem Renaissance, Britannica, Online).

Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Dubois, Langston Huger, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Zora Neale Hurston, George Padmore to quote but a few developed a pioneering oeuvre that not only denounced the white system of exploitation, but also celebrated their African heritage. Their works unveil a trans-continental solidarity with all the Blacks. Their struggle went beyond the boundary of the Americas. Robert Philipson indicated that "The Harlem Renaissance offered a diasporic consciousness that embraces the Euphrates, the Congo, and the Nile as rivers of Black geography" (Robert Philipson,2006:145)

Those black thinkers and artists' commitment for justice and equality in a hostile white society that vehemently promoted racism, irradiated the African continent. The Negritude movement followed the Harlem Renaissance's lead. The oeuvre of Langston Huger and Claude McKay caught the attention of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Léon Gontran Damas and Aimé Césaire. Claude McKay's picaresque novel "Banjo" depicts the suffering of black people under the domination of the French colonial system. Senghor designates Claude McKay as "the true inventor of the values of negritude" (Negritude Literary Movement Britannica, Online)

The transnational African community was designed through art, literature and political activism. The idea of Pan-Africanism germinated in the mind of the first black writers in America and the Caribbean. Yet, some political organizations tempted to effectively implement Pan-Africanism. There were Casely-Hayford's Aborigines Rights Protective Association in 1877, the United Negro Movement founded by Marcus Garvey in 1914, and the National Congress of British West Africa. (Ferkiss, V. C, 1996:81-2). As to Henry Sylvester William, a Trinidadian lawyer and writer succeeded in organizing the first Pan-African conference in 1900 at Westminster Hall in London in order to set up a resistance front against colonialism. Despite the endeavors for the creation of Pan-Africanism, it remained an aspiration that was to be actually materialized. Black writers in the African continent shared the same vision.

## II- RESISTING THE COMPARTMENTALIZATION OF AFRICA

### 1-The Dismemberment of Africa

The Arab-Islamic intrusion in Africa, the Euro-American slave trade and the 1885 Berlin conference are viewed by black writers as the starting point of the dismemberment of Africa. That fragmentation of Africa was consolidated later by many African elites who adopted and spread the colonial mentality. Black Writers concur with the idea that beyond the geographical division of Africa, the mental brainwashing of Africans represents the worst form of subjugation. The colonial ideology, in such a condition, easily propagated a distorted version of the African history. African docile minds would, for example, accept rationality and societal enhancement as European exclusive property. So, for black writers, the division of Africa is first rooted in the mental blindness. Ayi Kwei Armah designates it by "a lethal indoctrination" (Armah 2010:10). Criticizing the colonial domination in Africa, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O declares that "Europeans planted their own memory on whatever they contacted" ( Ngugi, 2010:7). That is why he advocates the decolonization of the African mind.

Black writers are vitriolic as to the devastating project of the Arab and European invasion of Africa. Foreigners' cannons, schools and religion are depicted in narrative fictions as means to subjugate the body, the land and the soul of the African people. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The healers* (1979) illustrate the significant impact of western forces on Africa. The White formalized and consolidated the dismemberment of Africa through colonization. European invasion torn the Africans between his/her indigenous culture and the foreign one.

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Africa is still impacted by that fragmentation. In fact, the African space, language, history, culture, religion, politics are undermined by the Western enterprise in the continent. That invasion has generated an identity crisis. African people are culturally uprooted, bewildered and intertwined between the two cultures. Frantz Fanon shows that losing one's cultural origin can cause a black person to wear "a white mask" in order to mimic the Whites and their culture. In addition, to worsen and justify their domination, the West would develop an episteme that propagated the Whites' ideology as universal, exceptional, hegemonic and irrefragable. They consequently relegated the African set of knowledge to the domain of historical curiosity and amusement. For example, Trevor-Roper's *The Rise of Christian Europe history* will posit European civilization as the heart of the modern world. He asserted that:

The new rulers of the world, whoever they may be, will inherit a position that has been built up by Europe, and by Europe alone. It is European techniques, European examples, European ideas which have shaken the non-European world out of its past – out of barbarism in Africa, out of a far older, slower, more majestic civilisation in Asia; and the history of the world, for the last five centuries, in so far as it has significance, has been European history. I do not think that we need to make any apology if our study of history is European-centric. ( Trevor-Roper,1965:11)

African fictions and non-fictions aim at debunking that Euro-American modernism. Black writers criticize the Western policy of assimilation. For the African writers indeed, the division of Africa is not only a question of geography but also a question of African mentality that should not be cut off from its history and culture. Their literary works are rather subversive and show that African cultural heterogeneity is a potential asset for uniting all Africans. Therefore, for Black writers in the continent, the cultural and historical awakening of Africans represent the prerequisite for the implementation of Pan-Africanism. Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), laid the emphasis on that point. He asserted that "there are those who maintain that Africa cannot unite because we lack three necessary ingredients for unity, a common race, culture and language" (Nkrumah,1963: 132)

The challenge of black writers in the continent will consist in demonstrating the oneness of the African people despite the cultural differences that affect their outlook. Writers revisited the African history and culture to unveil the potential empowerment of the continent. Their literary works are a call for cognizance on the ability and the necessity to unite. They also call for an effective action to implement that unity.

### 2- The Blueprint for Pan-Africanism

African politicians, writers and scientists in 1960's shared the same vision of unity. They demonstrated through their essays and actions, the benefits and the feasibility of the union. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, followed the tracks of African Americans. As a politician, he struggled to make Pan-Africanism tangible. With his peers he took active role in the creation of the Organization of African Unity. His close relationship with writers and political activists like George Padmore (1902-1959) from Trinidad and the African-American W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963) symbolized his vision to create a platform to unite all the black people. Kwame Nkrumah was committed to Pan-Africanism even beyond the African geographical boundaries. The Pan-African policy was one of his chief political goals. For him and other African politician of his time, the key solution to the development of Africa was a tangible union. In his reference essay, *Africa must Unite (1963)*, he defends his commitment for Pan-Africanism:

Our essential bulwark against such sinister threats and the other multifarious designs of the neo-colonialist is in our political union. If we are to remain free, we are to enjoy the full benefits of Africa's rich resources, we must unite to plan for our total defence and the full exploitation of our material and human means, in the full interests of all our peoples. To go it alone will limit our horizons, curtail our expectations and threaten our liberty. (Nkrumah,1963: XVII)

As to the scientist Cheikh Anta Diop, he advocated the African origin of the world civilization. He argued that despite the different ethnic groups and languages all over Africa, there was a common cultural continuity across the peoples of Africa. Unity can therefore operate if one rather focusses on that shared cultural heritage. For the researcher, the restauration of black cultural and historical consciousness is imperative. He showed in his essay *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality (1974)* that blacks were the first to invent a set of knowledge in agriculture, mathematics, arts, religion, medicine, social organization, writing, architecture, technique, the calendar, astronomy etc. Blacks even built pyramids. By scientifically proving all those achievements, Diop intends to remind contemporary black people their capacity of empowerment. He also urged them to get rid of the complex of inferiority and impotence. Therefore, in his view, African people have to unite not only for the enhancement of their society through socio-economic development, but also to resist the predatory projects of the Euro-American coalition against Africa. He advocated the creation of a Federated African States to recover a complete sovereignty. He specified some fields in which the unification of Africa is possible. He writes that:

While we may be able to build a Federated African State covering all of the Black Continent on the basis of historical, psychological, economic and geographical unity, we will be forced, in order to complete such national unity and set it on a



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modern autochthonous cultural base, to recreate our linguistic unity through the choice of an appropriate African tongue promoted to the influence of a modern cultural language. (Diop, 1978: 21)

In the same vein, ideologies pertaining African fictional works question and reject the Western discourse and practice of the policy of divide and rule. The scattering of Africans all over the world is depicted in African fictions as a profound societal decadence that has sunk Africa into a terrible trauma. Africa was cut off from her past and fed with Euro-American ideologies that represented Africans as passive consumers of western knowledge and habits. The advocacy for unity, or Pan-Africanism, is a multi-facet struggle that writers engage to reconnect Africa with her genuine self. Writers are rather in a critical and self-critical posture to unveil the relevance of Pan-Africanism.

The Ghanaian writer, Ayi Kwei Armah, has become very prominent in the struggle for Pan-Africanism. His literary productions counter-attack the western imperialist power and the ideology that sustains its praxis. The rhetoric on unity represents the gist of his offensive posture. His narrative fictions, tagged historical novels, alternate factual past events and imagination to debunk the knowledge, convictions and practices that have become over the time, the mainstream that every African blindly follows. His creations call into question beliefs that have been insidiously imposed as truth and therefore as a part of the African identity.

In *The Healers*, for example, Africa is symbolized by the Ashanti empire in the nineteenth century. The Ashanti were confronted with internal and external threats of dismemberment. The set of convictions based on the African tradition, to justify the existence of the division of Africans into tribes, as well as the division of the Ashanti society into aristocrats, commoners and slaves are dismantled all along the narration. The narrator shows that such a socio-political configuration of the African society is grounded in the falsification of history to serve selfish purpose of a group of people (the elite). The reader discovers that at the beginning of the African history, there was no class division. Africa was one people with no horizontal division. The writer's commitment for Pan-Africanism is based on the deconstruction of history, that is to arouse consciousness on forged knowledge erected as truth.

The character Damfo, the healer, warned Asamoah Nkwanta, the general of the Ashanti army who had always believed that fighting against the other African communities was a sign of power. Damfo insisted on the vacuity of the general life's mission: "We have always been these silly little fragments each calling itself a nation (Armah, 1979:83). That sentence means that the recovering of the unity, the wholeness, instead of perpetuating division (the disease) is of paramount importance if Africans intend to achieve their empowerment in a world dominated by the West. That consciousness awareness is perceptible through the General's self-questioning: I've spent my life fighting to make Asante strong. If the past was a time of unity, then must I see my entire life as wrong? (Armah, 1979:177)

Black writers in the continent, indeed, criticize the weight of the Euro-American memory in the project of Pan-Africanism. For them, the failure of Pan-Africanism is also traceable to the tendency to duplicate the western model of union in Africa. Africa was viewed by politicians as a mere aggregate of little countries that they have to stick together. Whereas, for the writers, Pan-Africanism should be framed according to the economic, political, historical and cultural matrix of Africa. It means that Africans should first of all, cut the umbilical cord of the colonial state system. They have then, to reexamine their cultural resources to elaborate a system of values that focuses on what unites Africa instead of putting forward factors of division.

Armah, for example, advocates the Ancient Egypt's principle of *Maât*. A rational principle which is a shared historical, cultural legacy for all black Africans. That is why he writes that "I see the failure of Pan-Africanism, initially, in the field of knowledge", (Armah,2010: 288) "knowledge about Africa" (Armah,2010: 299). The commitment of Pan-Africanist leaders will remain a sterile infatuation as long as the logic of the market ideology inherited from the West operates as the ultimate target. The Pan-Africanist writer sustains that "without such an accurate African worldview, our aspirations for unity are doomed to get sidetracked into structures of division, while we continue working for system destroying us, instead of creating our own (Armah,2010: 293).

Besides, consciousness of Africa as one entity despite the apparent differences should trigger the population towards an effective unity. It implies that the project of Pan-Africanism cannot be achieved without the involvement of the population. A population that has a historical consciousness and also a sense of political commitment is more likely to engage the fight for self-determination. This is what Fanon designates as the "Revolutionary capital" (Fanon, 1963:150). The Martinican psychiatrist that joined the Algerian army to fight French colonization called for a rather active and educated African population. He wanted an African population that is aware of their common plight caused by their political elites in coalition with the western system of exploitation. For Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Armah nonetheless, the struggle for unity should take into account African cultural guideline. Ngugi suggests a "call for the decolonization of our economies, politics, and cultures, in order to create a new beginning for Africa (Ngugi,2004: 38).

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African writers concur that the cultural regeneration should precede the concrete commitment on the political field. It represents an important step in the implementation of Pan-Africanism. Without doubt, the cultural regeneration paves the way for more efficient Pan-Africanism in a world turned today into a global village due to the development of the internet.

### III- TOWARDS A MASS-DRIVEN PAN-AFRICANISM

#### 1- Black Power: People's Power

The early features of Pan-Africanism since the mid-nineteenth century had focused on the solidarity of black people no matter the location. Early fighters opposed racial segregation, colonialism and Apartheid. They aimed at the political independence of African countries, and the effective freedom of African descents outside the continent. The early African American black fighters' enthusiastic ambition led them to work hands in hands with African political leaders (Du Bois, Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah) or planned to resettle in Africa (Marcus Garvey). Their commitment gave birth to the nominal independence of many African countries and the creation later of the OAU. In America so far, no tangible realization as racism and exclusion against black people still lingers. That period was marked by key black political figures who were also writers. They played prominent roles in the struggle for Pan-Africanism.

In 1960's, Stokely Carmichael (1941-1998) who became Kwame Ture, 'took over' W.E.B. Du Bois and his peers' struggled for Black liberation. He advocated the connection with Africa by insisting on their historical commonality and the shared struggle against the white system of predation. He therefore supported the struggle for the liberation of Africa and the application of equal rights for all in the USA. The civil rights activist and leader of the Black Nationalism in the USA wanted to lend more credence to the struggle for Pan-Africanism. The originator of the slogan "Black Power" (thought other critics and historians attributed it to Richard Wright) also asserted that "in order to understand white supremacy, we must dismiss the fallacious notion that white people can give anybody his freedom (Carmichael 2005:55)." He hammered out that the end of racism is not a matter of attitude but a question of power; that is the responsibility to act for change. Consequently, he oriented his struggle in a radical perspective. Yet, that radicalism did not equate with the apologia of "violence for violence". Instead of an exclusive violence, he pledged himself for the reform of the system. He declared that "a true revolutionary must provide an alternative, not just rhetoric condemning the existing system" (Carmichael 2005:166). Kehinde Andrews, clarifies Stokely's thought by specifying that "Radicalism is not about the means (violence/non-violence), but the ends (reform/ revolution) (Kehinde, 2018: XXII).

Stokely Carmichael indirectly pointed at many black civil right movements of his time like the Black Panthers and leaders like Martin Luther King Jr and Malcom X who were at the forefront of the combat. He declared that "we need each other. We have to have each other for our survival. We need everyone from the revolutionaries to the conservatives, a Black United Front is what we are about, a Black United Front" (Carmichael 2005:107). Stokely Carmichael vehemently claimed "If you accept Black Power, you must accept Pan-Africanism because it is the logical and consistent development. The highest political expression of Black Power is Pan-Africanism" (Carmichael. 1970).

The slogan "Black Power" operated therefore as a strong and rallying call for self-determination. Hakim Adi (2018) explains that "In Ture's subsequent elaboration of the phrase, he specifically mentions the need not just for African American unity but also wider Pan-African unity and the importance of African Americans uniting with those in Africa to achieve empowerment and liberation" (Adi 2018:164).

The involvement of the mass as prior actors for ending racial injustice in the USA and neo-colonization in Africa gradually took shape. In churches (Martin Luther King Jr), in mosques (Malcom X), in universities (Stokely Carmichael), crowds of black people would grow to protest against racial injustice. Black civil right movements in America adhered to a vision of a united African struggle. Yet, in this era of globalization, Pan-Africanism euphoria has dampened. Black people are still trapped in the clutches of globalization. African people and African Americans, the Caribbean and all other African descents are still undergoing Western system of domination and exclusion. DuBois' bold declaration that the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, is still relevant today. In light of the racial violence that black people face in the USA today, and the shambolic development of Africa, the issue of Pan-Africanism seems more elusive. Today, with the advent and the development of the internet, actors and the fighting strategies have changed. However, the goals to see justice, freedom and equality for all remain a topical issue in and outside Africa.

The slogan "Black Power" echoes in today's civil societies movements. Nowadays, "ordinary citizen" takes the lead for black people's struggle for empowerment. They are not tagged as politicians or State men. The idea and the project of Pan-Africanism are conveyed by the means of the internet. For example, the brutal murders of young black people in the USA by the police have epitomized a tipping point for global surge of solidarity. There have been upsurge of protests against police brutality almost

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worldwide. The consciousness of Pan-Africanism has been reawakened by the murder of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, to quote but a few. Ending racial injustice across the world has galvanized and united people around the globe.

"Black Lives Matter" is a typical example of that shift in the struggle for self-determination. That originally American civil society group has become an international activist movement that struggles to defend the rights of black people victims of police brutality. The movement also struggles to denounce the murders and the miscarriage of justice that black people are victims of. They "give voice to the eruption of outrage, angst, hopes, and insurgent protest provoked by each new killing" (Abu-Jamal 2017:2).

Their actions are relayed thanks to the internet. Public opinion is swayed as videos turn viral. People, all around the world easily discover the problem of the entrenched racism that undermines the American society. It is reported that some African towns relayed the surge of anger that very often shakes America. In Uganda (Kampala), Ghana (Accra), Kenya (Nairobi), Nigeria (Lagos, Abuja), Sudan (Khartoum), demonstrators face local police to protest police murders and racial abuses in the USA (Global reporting Center,2020, Online).

Over a hundred prominent African writers even signed a statement to demand justice for George Floyd. Aminatta Forna (Sierra Leon), NoViolet Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Mona Eltahwy (Egypt), Lola Shoneyin (Nigeria) to quote but a few ,expressed their solidarity with the African Americans and everyone affected by the US police brutality against the black folks (Yomi Kazeem, 2020,Online). With the development of the internet, the local becomes global. Therefore, "this understanding of the global context of BLM shows that movement-based Pan-Africanism lives on today in the form of these civil society movements (Temi Ibiroba, 2021, Online).

The internet has given the power to anyone on earth to express and spread his/her view on an issue. It generates and amplifies the commonality of an issue. So the slogan "Black Power" resonates today as a call for self-reliance, racial pride, self-defense and economic and political empowerment. Today, among the African Americans in the US and the Caribbean, the Pan-African consciousness takes shape through the revival and adaptation of African cultural practices. For example, the Kwanzaa festival (the first fruit) is an annual holiday celebration that runs from December 26 to January 1. It aims to affirm their fidelity to Africa. African American are also setting up in the USA, Afro-centered schools and universities to educate African Americans about their true history and culture in order to develop their self-esteem and trigger the sense of commonality with Africa. Still, the implementation of Pan-Africanism remains mostly marginal among African-Americans. Worse, on the political field, no tangible action has taken shape. The main concern is to know if the civil society can bypass the politics to implement Pan-Africanism; that is the unity of Africa and African descents. The African youth today is also confronted with the same problematics.

### **2- Africa and the Rise of a Radical Pan-African Youth**

In the vision of the forerunners, "consciousness of shared African ancestry was the basis, the underlying force of the Pan-African tradition" ( Adeleke, 2009:78). They, therefore, expected the African continent to enact the union once decolonization was achieved. Marcus Garvey, Alexander Crummel, Martin Robinson Delany, W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry Sylvester Williams, George Padmore, Richard Wrights etc. will "pass on the torch" to African leaders to implement the African unity that will foresee the realization of the bigger project of Pan-Africanism. History has it that many African leaders struggled for the creation of Pan-Africanism. Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Robert Gabriel Mugabe and later Thomas Sankara, Mouammar Kadhafi and many others did not reach the expected goals of the economic, political, cultural and military unity of Africa. Moreover, the murder of Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara, and Mouammar Kadhafi, illustrates the complexity of the question.

The Pan-Africanism of great political leaders and institutions seems obsolete. Many African micro-states, (mainly French speaking Africa), are ruled by puppet governments. A category of Africans that Armah designates as "collaborationist elite groups" (Armah,2010:287). They are in true, colonially engineered groups that rather work for the benefits of the former colonizer. The unification of Africa means the decadence of a system of exploitation established since 14<sup>th</sup> century by the West. It also means the loss by African puppet governments of their selfish privileges. There is therefore a gap between the African political elite and the mass.

Undeniably, there is today a profound shift in the struggle for self-determination. The failure of the African political elite will bring about a new breed of Pan-African leaders. Kemi Seba, Nathali Yamb, Julius Malema, Adama Diarra etc. alternate education to Pan-African consciousness and popular direct confrontation with the African governments. Their struggle is a watershed in the process for the African self-determination. Thanks to the internet, they bypass the national media, and bans to convey their message of mobilization. Criticized for being in the pay of Russia, these young cyber activists have a strong capacity of mobilization and action. They act directly on the mass and worry the African leaders that defend the French strongholds.



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They concur that the Pan-Africanism of liberation is yet to come. For them, the Pan-Africanism of integration will continue to be a fallacy until African political elite remains in cahoots with the West. For those new Pan-Africanist leaders, the priority is the education, the awareness about the stakes of Pan-Africanism consciousness. The internet therefore becomes an indispensable tool to sensitize the mass before any "confrontation". The civil society henceforth becomes the backbone of the struggle for the African self-determination. They played tremendous roles in the recent events in Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso. Those three west African countries are indeed struggling to get rid of the French domination. They are even said to plan a confederation in order to be stronger.

After the failure of the African political elite, the African population is step by step appropriating the fight for self-determination. There is an emergence of an inhibited youth that feel more and more confident in the idea of self-determination. Kemi Seba and his peers deal with African current events. They revisit African history. They explain the economic and geopolitical contexts in which Africa is today. They emphasize on the necessity to fight for Pan-Africanism in order to regain self-determination. They contradict the France-Afrique hypocrisy and arrogance. Their videos and their literary productions identify two main culprits that hinder the walk toward Pan-Africanism: African political elites and the western system of predation. The new Pan-Africanists intend to debunk that oligarchy in the domains of politics, economy, military security, and communication. For example, Kemi Seba will call for popular uprising against the CFA francs, a currency shared by 14 African States and guaranteed by France. He organized through the internet campaigns to have that currency discarded.

Kemi Seba views the Westernization of the world as the AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) that one should eradicate (Kemi Seba,2018:178). For the cyber activist and writer, the West represents the worst form of exploitation. The coalition with the other civilizational blocs like Russia, China, India, Iran, the Bolivars in South America, could represent an occasional and not definitive aid to debunk the West. He asserts that the day the African Negro would decide to break the chains, not only Africans would be free, but the whole humanity ( Kemi Seba,2018:183).

Despite their determination, that new breed of Pan-African leaders is still burgeoning. Their popularity remains mostly internet-based. Their actions on the battle fields are punctual and isolated. Therefore, there is no significant impact on the African governments that remain clung on their national interests. Their combat is to take up the challenge of the Pan-Africanism consciousness among the population so as to trigger the effective revolution. In the same vein, there is a development of Kamit culture, and Afrocentrist groups on the internet. They debunk the western hegemony on world knowledge and suggest an African alternative. They also defend the relevance of Pan-Africanism in this era of globalization. That new form of commitment, nonetheless, heralds a new era in the struggle for Pan-Africanism.

## CONCLUSION

Black writers have been committed against the dislocation, the scattering, the disorientation and the exploitation of Africans and their descents all along history. The core of their literary production highlights the centrality of the African interests. They debunk the Western vision and praxis of exploitation that have been erected as the universal standard. Their commitment for Pan-Africanism is therefore a resistance against that predatory logic of western imperialism in order to retrieve African self-determination.

Pan-Africanism operates as a paradigmatic shift, the starting point for a genuine African renaissance. Black writers concur that only unity of all black people can pave the way to that renaissance. That is why the emphasis is laid on the amendment of history to unveil the stakes pertaining to that struggle. Black writers also call for the effective commitment on the political field to reach the goal of Pan-Africanism. They are cognizant that the fighters and the fighting strategies change according to the geo-strategic contexts.

For today's black writers, the elite-driven Pan-Africanism has failed. That is why they focus on the education of the mass and their involvement in the struggle for Pan-Africanism. Their works and actions grow in importance thanks to the development of the internet. They are aware that people now have the power of communication in order to influence the political system. They also have the means to contradict and debunk the western arrogance of hegemony. Though burgeoning, that shift in the combat forecasts, mainly in Africa, a hard, long but true liberation.

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