

Elisabetta Vezzosi

THE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN
AT THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION AND ITS LEGACY:
PAN-AFRICANISM, DECOLONIZATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ten years ago, in 2004, Michelle Rief wrote an important article based on her innovative and in some respects pioneering doctoral thesis regarding the international activism of African American women between 1880 and 1940.¹ In her article, Rief denounced the lack of substantial research on the global organization of African American women, identifying it as an essential area of study, calling for the *longue durée* and stressing the importance of the presence of these women at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago for understanding the origins of that activism and reconstructing political networks that would endure well beyond the 1950s. Despite this, only a handful of doctoral theses² and articles³ have since addressed this critical topic. How did African American women use Pan-Africanism as a resource in their battle for racial progress and gender equality? What roles did these women play in the various Pan-African movements? To what extent could they hold leadership positions within these movements, at least during certain

1 M. Rief, *Thinking Locally, Acting Globally: The International Agenda of African American Clubwomen, 1880-1940*, "The Journal of African American History", 89, 3 (Summer 2004): 203-222; ead., "‘Banded Close Together’: An Afrocentric Study of African American Women’s International Activism, 1850-1940, and the International Council of Women of the Darker Races" (Temple University, PhD dissertation, 2002). See also *Women’s Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation*, eds. K. K. Sklar and J. B. Stewart (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

2 A. N. Robertson, "‘The Drums of Africa Still Beat in my Heart’: The Internationalism of Mary McLeod Bethune and the International Council of Negro Women, 1895-1960" (Howard University, PhD dissertation, 2013).

3 L. G. Materson, "African American Women’s Global Journeys and the Construction of Class-ethnic Racial Identity", *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 32 (2009): 35-42; A. Gallagher, "The National Council of Negro Women, Human Rights, and the Cold War", *Breaking the Wave: Women, Their Organizations, and Feminism, 1945-1985*, eds. K. A. Laughlin and J. L. Castledine (New York-London: Routledge, 2011), 80-98; J. Tomás, "Better Homes, Better Schools, Better Churches, and a Better Country": *the International Council of Women of the Darker Races*, Women and Social Movements, International – 1840 to Present, on-line database, eds. K. K. Sklar and T. Dublin, last accessed 1 June 2014, http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/better_homes_better_schools_better_churches_and_a_better_country_the_international_council_of_women_of_the_darker_races?setlang=en.

phases (e.g. the Pan-African Congresses in London, 1900, and New York, 1927)? The participation of African American women in universal expositions, especially the one in Chicago in 1893, has rarely been explored from the perspective of Pan-Africanism. Yet this context can reveal much about the life experiences that interwove with international ideas and public speeches and brought together women's rights, the creation of a global community of the 'darker races', anticolonialism, peace, social justice and human rights.⁴

"To-day we stand on the threshold of woman's era" heralded African American Frances Ellen Watkins Harper⁵ in 1893 to an audience representing a global community of women at the World's Congress of Representative Women, a five-yearly conference held by the International Council of Women. This time the conference had been organized to coincide with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which was attended by over 27 million people from around the world. Over 600 delegates, representing 27 countries and 126 organizations, met for 76 sessions addressing a variety of topics including education, science, religion, charitable works, philanthropy, moral reform, the civil and political status of women, and labor issues. The extraordinary number of attendants to the World's Congress of Representative Women – some 150,000 – shows that universal expositions represented an expansion of women's presence in the public sphere.⁶ In fact, the World's Columbian Exposition was one of the first to be studied by scholars as an opportunity for women seeking a stage from which to demand rights in specific national and international contexts. In addition to being planners, visitors, organizers, administrators, performers, workers, journalists, artists, intellectuals and architects, these women were also political activists whose appeals wove together gender, nationalism, internationalism, anticolonialism, race, class and human rights. In fact, the World's Columbian Exposition took place during the Progressive Era, a period of rapid expansion in the U.S. that women's organizations defined as a "golden age". It provided a scenario in which women activists could discuss their increasing participation in the labor market, their battle for sexual and reproductive autonomy, and their aspiration to civil and political citizenship through its redefinition, among other things.

⁴ See the non-exhaustive book by T. Tsenes-Hills, *I am the Utterance of My Name: Black Victorian Feminist Discourse and Intellectual Enterprise at the Columbian Exposition, 1893* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2006).

⁵ F. E. W. Harper, "Woman's Political Future", *The World's Congress of Representative Women*, ed. M. Wright Sewall (Chicago-New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1894), 433-434. On Harper, see, among others, C. L. Peterson, "Literary Transnationalism and Diasporic History: Frances Watkins Harper's 'Fancy Sketches', 1859-1860", *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, eds. Sklar and Stewart, 189-210.

⁶ M. F. Cordato, "Representing the Expansion of Woman Sphere: Women's Work and Culture at the World's Fair of 1876, 1893 and 1904" (New York University, PhD dissertation, 1989); T. J. Boisseau and A. M. Markwyn, *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

After the Exposition these women returned to their own lives. But in the meantime they had effectively managed the resources entrusted to them and the international meetings they had organized had attracted worldwide attention to many of their demands. They may not have changed history, but they showed the world the value of their appeals and of women's presence in the public sphere. And although that presence was marked by significant racial discrimination,⁷ the Exposition would nevertheless become the source of an internationalized activism among black women whose research – at the crossroads between various disciplinary fields including U.S. foreign relations, transnational movements of women and the involvement of African American women in the Pan-African movement⁸ – represented an extraordinary field of ongoing investigation.

I. AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AT THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION: THE BEGINNINGS OF AN INTERNATIONALIST STRATEGY

Despite the policies of racial exclusion carried out by the Board of Lady Managers⁹ – who organized the events and exhibitions held in the Woman's Building and justified their marginalization of African American women by pointing to their internal divisions and lack of a national organization – not only were these women present¹⁰ but the Exposition also represented an important moment in their activism.¹¹

Exposition organizers were so explicit and visible in their exclusion of African American women and men that they did not even ask abolitionist icon Frederick Douglass to produce an African American exhibit, even though he would have been the natural choice. Instead it was the government of Haiti, where Douglass had served as ambassador in 1889-1891, who commissioned him to curate its national pavilion. It was therefore left to a foreign government to assign Douglass “the place denied at home”, as

7 C. R. Reed, *The Black Presence at “White City”: African and African American Participation at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, May 1, 1893-October 31, 1893*, 8 March 1999, Paul V. Galvin Library, Digital History Collection, last accessed 1 June 2014, <http://columbus.iit.edu/reed2.html>; id., *All the World is here!: The Black Presence at White City* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000).

8 Rief, “Banded Close Together”.

9 G. Biderman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

10 A. R. Valint, “Fighting for Recognition: The Role African Americans Played in the World Fairs” (State University of New York, College of Buffalo, Department of History, theses, 2011); B. J. Ballard, “A People without a Nation”, *Chicago History* (Summer 1999), 27-43; A. R. Paddon and S. Turner, “African Americans and the World's Columbian Exposition”, *Illinois Historical Journal*, 88 (Spring 1995), 19-36.

11 See Rief, “Banded Close Together”, 81.

Robert W. Rydell put it.¹² Wells, who was engaged in an anti-slavery campaign in Great Britain during the early months of the Exposition, gave voice to the unease around that exclusion by publishing a damning pamphlet, *The Reason why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, which had a major impact on U.S. public opinion and on visitors to the Exposition where it was distributed. The exclusion of African Americans sparked widespread debate over the meaning of citizenship and a non-inclusive democracy, and black women – subjected as they were to both racial and gender discrimination – were precisely the ones to drive it, thus “expand[ing] the civic space that they occupied in Chicago and the nation”.¹³

Six African American women gave talks at the World's Congress of Representative Women:¹⁴ Anna Julia Cooper; Fanny Jackson Coppin; Sarah J. Early, a teacher (“The Organized Efforts of the Colored Women of the South to improve Their Condition”); Hallie Quinn Brown, a teacher; Fannie Barrier Williams, a teacher and the first woman to serve on the Chicago Library Board (1924-1926), who also spoke at the World's Parliament of Religion; and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a member of important women's associations like the Universal Peace Union and the American Woman Suffrage Association, which she founded. Barrier Williams and Harper were asked to deliver two of the keynote addresses, “The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States Since the Emancipation Proclamation” and “Woman's Political Future”. Their presence was somewhat unexpected, considering that in 1892 Hallie Quinn Brown – who had proposed herself as “solicitor of exhibits among the colored people” but only obtained the unpaid position of secretary to the Department of Publicity and Promotions for the Woman's Building – had sent a harsh letter of protest to the Board of Lady Managers regarding the absence of African American women and men in positions of responsibility in the realm of the Exposition:

It seems to be a settled conviction among the colored people, that no adequate opportunity is to be offered them for proper representation of the World's Fair [...] If, therefore, the object of the Woman's Department of the Columbian Exposition is to present to the world the industrial and educational progress of the breadwinners – the wage women – how immeasurably incomplete will that work be without the exhibit of the thousands of the colored women of this country.¹⁵

12 R. W. Rydell, Introduction, *The Reason why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, I. B. Wells, et al., ed. R.W. Rydell (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), XIII.

13 E. Shaughnessy, “Introduction”, *How did African-American Women define Their Citizenship at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893?* (Electronic Sources, Binghamton: State University of New York, 1997).

14 See A. Massa's dated yet relevant “Black Women in the ‘White City’”, *Journal of American Studies*, 8 (1974): 319-337; Tsenes-Hill, *I am the Utterance of My Name*.

15 M. I. Thompson, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett: An Exploratory Study of an American Black Woman, 1893-1930* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1990), 214.

Of the aforementioned women only Fannie Ellen Barrier Williams, the wife of a lawyer and a member of Chicago's black elite, took part in the organization as the secretary of the Art Department. This sparked heated controversy among the African American women engaged in asserting their presence at the Exposition, since Williams was not part of their group.¹⁶

The six speakers at the Congress touched on subjects of great importance that aligned them with the positions of Booker T. Washington or W. E. B. Du Bois, two of the most prominent African American leaders of the day. The sharing of their pro-inclusion demands represented the first significant occasion a women's network was created that led to the founding of important national organizations and increased sensitivity to and interest in the sphere of international relations, especially subjects related to colonialism and human rights.

The biographies of some of these women – some better known than others – reveal their international interests, which were sparked by their ability to cross national and racial borders, both physically and through intense intellectual work by imagining a transnational space in which to carry out their activism.¹⁷

Oberlin was the first prestigious college to open its doors to African American men and women before the Civil War. A place devoid of prejudice, the seat of a sort of interracial utopia,¹⁸ Oberlin played a key role in the educations of Anna Julia Cooper¹⁹ – who graduated in 1884, the same year as activists Mary Church Terrell and Ida A. Gibbs Hunt – and Fanny Jackson Coppin, class of 1865. Like Cooper, Coppin had been born a slave. She went on to become the first woman ever to teach at Oberlin and to create the Industrial Department at the Institute for Colored Youth. She later became the national president of the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, which she represented in 1888 at the Centenary of Missions Conference in London. There she joined forces against the ban on women assuming ecclesiastical functions by spreading the word of the missionaries who had founded the Foreign Missionary Society and had worked in Haiti, Santo Domingo, Trinidad and Sierra Leone.²⁰ After traveling throughout Europe, Coppin lived for a brief

16 D. Spain, *How Women saved the City* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 221.

17 See S. Y. Evans, "African American Women Scholars and International Research: Dr. Anna Julia Cooper's Legacy of Study Abroad", *Frontiers*, 18 (Fall 2009): 77-100.

18 C. Lasser, "Enacting Emancipation: African American Women Abolitionists at Oberlin College and the Quest for Empowerment, Equality, and Respectability", *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery*, eds. Sklar and Stewart, 319-345.

19 C. Lemert and E. Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998); V. M. May, *Anna Julia Cooper, Visionary Black Feminist* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

20 F. Jackson-Coppin, *Reminiscences: School Life, and Hints on Teaching* (Philadelphia, PA: A. M. E. Book Concern, 1913), 119-120.

period in South Africa with her husband, who had become bishop of the AME Church. The impact of her work there, educating missionaries and creating the Bethel Institute, was so great that a Fanny Jackson Coppin Hall was built in Cape Town.

Oberlin also proved an important launching pad for Anna Julia Cooper, a thinker of extraordinary charisma and modernity. Her personality has made her an icon of black feminism and has attracted many studies, both historical and otherwise, especially in recent years.²¹ She is best known for her 1892 book *A Voice from the South*, which is considered one of the first interpretations of black feminism. Addressing everything from women's rights and racial progress to segregation and literary criticism, the book places enormous importance on the education of African American women, which Cooper believed was essential to the "regeneration and progress of race". Her anti-patriarchal and anti-imperialist theories have led some scholars to describe her as a pioneer in masculinity studies.²² Referring to African American women of the South in her book, Cooper stressed "the universal triumph of justice and human rights" and women's rights as human rights.²³ However, the impact of her thought and intellectual and militant work on politics and African American internationalism go far beyond her famous text. Cooper's theories on how race, class and gender interwove in the U.S. even seem to have influenced the thought of W. E. B. Du Bois. Her transatlantic analyzes of the Haitian Revolution have also inspired many post-colonial scholars of both sexes. "Thus", according to S. Moody-Turner, "in addition to being a voice of the South, Cooper also should be acknowledged as a key theorist in the emergence of new forms of black internationalism".²⁴ However, as Vivian May has argued, Cooper's role therein was due not only to her participation in salient moments of Pan-Africanism but also to the content of her thesis, a theory supported by a letter written by Jane Nardal, writer and co-founder of *La Revue du Monde Noir*, to Alain Locke in 1927.²⁵

Teacher, feminist, human rights supporter, writer, traveler (in 1896-1897 she visited the West Indies, primarily Nassau in the Bahamas): thanks to her leadership role in the

21 In 2008 Penn State University dedicated a seminar to her, and the proceedings were published in the *African American Review*, 43, 1 (Spring 2009).

22 M. A. Lindquist, "'The world will always want men': Anna Julia Cooper, Womanly Black Manhood, and 'Predominant Man-Influence'", *Left History*, 11, 2 (Fall 2006): 13-46.

23 Let us recall that women's rights and the rights of the "girl-child" were only firmly declared as human rights for the first time at the 1993 United Nations conference in Vienna.

24 S. Moody-Turner, "Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice beyond the South", *African American Review*, 43, 1 (Spring 2009): 7-9.

25 May, *Anna Julia Cooper*, 109. See also, by the same author, "Writing the Self into Being: Anna Julia Cooper's Textual Politics", *African American Review*, 43, 1 (Spring 2009): 17-34; B. Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).



Anna Julia Cooper, portrait in her M. A. regalia. Courtesy of the Scurlock Studios Records, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. <http://sirismm.si.edu/archivcenter/scurlock/AC0618.004.0000291.jpg>.

Washington Colored Woman's League Cooper became a vital force in the black women's movement of the late nineteenth century. As a member of the black intelligentsia, she was the only woman invited by Du Bois to take part in what today we would call a think tank, the American Negro Academy, whose members included Arthur A. Schomburg, Carter G. Woodson, Francis Grimké and Alexander Crummell. In 1900 she spoke at the First Pan-African Conference in London before an audience of Africans and Afro-Caribbeans, together with Anna H. Jones ("A Plea for Race Individuality"), though unfortunately the

text of Cooper's talk, "The Negro Problem in America", has been lost. At the conference she and Jones were elected to a six-member executive committee (along with four men). She was also one of the authors of a memorial to Queen Victoria on apartheid in Africa.²⁶ Although Cooper played down her involvement, calling herself a "Globe Trotter",²⁷ she played a key role, especially when it came to anti-imperialist and human rights causes. After returning to the U.S., she was even asked to join an organizational committee for the Pan-African conference to be held in Boston in 1902. However, the conference never took place, probably because the U.S. Department of Defense was monitoring black activists from the Philippines and Cuba, where imminent revolution was feared.

After the Pan-African Congress of 1900, which according to Du Bois "put the word 'Pan-African' in the dictionary for the first time",²⁸ Cooper visited the Universal Exposition in Paris, including most importantly the "American Negro Exhibit",²⁹ accompanied by Du Bois. She continued traveling to Europe in later years. In 1911 she started attending the summer sessions of "La Guilde International, Bibliothèque Militaire" and visiting the France National Archives. In 1925, following an interruption for work and family reasons, she received a degree from the Sorbonne with a thesis demonstrating her Pan-African convictions: "The Attitude of France towards the End of Slavery in the eighteenth century Revolutions in France and Haiti".³⁰

Like Coppin and Cooper, Hallie Quinn Brown, who was Dean of Women at the Tuskegee Institute from 1892 to 1893, moved to Europe in 1894 and stayed for five years, working as a lecturer for the British Women's Temperance Association. In 1899 she represented the NACW at the International Council of Women conference in London, in which Margaret Murray Washington also participated. Quinn Brown lived in Germany, France, Switzerland and England where she taught diction, acted, sang, and recited poems and political speeches by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, among others. She also founded the Colored Woman's League of Washington, D.C., and served as President of the NACW in 1920-1924. Her most famous work, *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*, recognizes African American women who made history, though it touches very little on the international aspects of their undertakings.³¹

26 M. K. Asante, *The History of Africa* (New York-London: Routledge, 2007), 260.

27 Lemert and Bhan, *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, 324.

28 W. E. B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: Color and Democracy*, ed. H. L. Gates Jr. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014)

29 E. Bini, "Drawing a Global Color Line: 'The American Negro Exhibit' at the 1900 Paris Exposition", in this same volume.

30 G. Shearin, "Writing the Haitian Revolution, Uplifting the Race: The Divergent Views of William Wells Brown and Anna Julia Cooper", *Teaching American Literature: A Journal of Theory and Practice*, 1, 4 (Fall 2007): 31-49.

31 *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction*, ed. H. Q. Brown (Xenia, OH: Aldine Pub. Co., 1926).

Although Hazel V. Carby³² maintains that the black speakers at the 1893 World's Congress of Representative Women wound up the subject of "a discourse of exoticism that pervaded the [Chicago] fair", their talks seem to have been fundamental to the future activism of African American women.³³ The Exposition even generated one of the most important black organizations in America, the National Association for Colored Women (NACW), founded in 1896 and initially presided over by Mary Church Terrell. In fact, it was in response to the reasons given by the Board of Lady Managers for their exclusion of black women from the upcoming Exposition that in 1892 Hallie Quinn Brown created the Colored Woman's League, which together with Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin's National Federation of Afro-American Women and other black women's groups would contribute to the foundation of the NACW.

In Chicago, Anna Julia Cooper gave a talk on "The Needs and Status of Black Women" and made special efforts to promote the role of black women in racial uplift by tying together issues of race and gender. But the focal point of her talk was human rights, which had become increasingly central to the debates and writings of African American women:

Let woman's claim be as broad in the concrete as in the abstract. We take our stand on the solidarity of humanity, the oneness of life, and the unnaturalness and injustice of all special favoritisms, whether of sex, race, country, or condition. [...] We want, then, as toilers for the universal triumph of justice and human rights, to go to our homes from this Congress, demanding an entrance not through a gateway for ourselves, our race, our sex, or our sect, but a grand highway for humanity. The colored woman feels that woman's cause is one and universal; and that not till the image of God, whether in parian or ebony, is sacred and inviolable; not till race, color, sex, and condition are seen as the accidents, and not the substance of life; not till the universal title of humanity to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is conceded to be inalienable to all; not till then is woman's lesson taught and woman's cause won not the white woman's, not the black woman's, not the red woman's, but the cause of every man and of every woman who has writhed silently under a mighty wrong. Woman's wrongs are thus indissolubly linked with all undefended woe, and the acquirement of her "rights" will mean the final triumph of all right over might, the supremacy of the moral forces of reason, and justice, and love in the supremacy of the moral forces of reason, and justice, and love in the government of the nations of earth.³⁴

32 H. V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 5.

33 Paddon and Turner, "African Americans and the World's Columbian Exposition".

34 *The Congress of Women*, ed. Sewall, 714-715. See P. P. Cookem, "Anna Julia Cooper: Educator and Humanitarian", typewritten and undated, though perhaps from 1980, in Anna J. Cooper Personal Papers, folder Biographical Data, Morland-Spingarn Research Center – Howard University – Manuscript Division.

While African American women dominated Cooper's vision of racial progress, she also argued in favor of universal women's rights. She believed the full development of their talents through education would open new perspectives for the American nation, both inside and outside its borders. It was clear that the international context at the Columbian Exposition sparked the interest of African American women speakers in particular, along with the many NACW leaders participating in the Pan-African movement.³⁵ In fact, the diversified activism they would practice during the first decades of the twentieth century would weave together universal women's rights, human rights, anticolonialism and pacifism.

II. THE GENDER OF PAN-AFRICANISM: THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF THE DARKER RACES

The internationalism of the African American women present at the Columbian Exposition and that of the women active in the Pan-African movement would come together through the organizations that some of these women would go on to establish during and after World War I. This was the case with the International Council of Women of the Darker Races (ICWDR) founded in 1922. Initially called the International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World, its members demanded civil rights and global citizenship for women of color. Its initiators included well-known African American women like Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Church Terrell and Margaret Murray Washington, as well as less famous women who were nevertheless leaders among women of color at the time, especially in the NACW, including Nannie Helen Burroughs, Addie Waites Hunton, Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Janie Porter Barrett. The African American women speakers and attendees in Chicago involved in its creation were Hallie Quinn Brown, Fannie Barrier Williams, Mary Burnett Talbert and Lugenia Burns Hope.³⁶ Many of these women had multiple affiliations with various kinds of organizations, including the YWCA, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the NAACP, the National Urban League and the International Council of Women. However, this plural activism limited the space each one could dedicate to the new organization. For some, participating in international conferences and belonging to organizations that were

³⁵ Among the subjects discussed at NACW's foundational meeting in Washington were the 1900 International Exposition in Paris and the role to be played by African American women. See E. L. Davis, *Lifting as they climb*, 1933 (reprint, New York: G. K. Hall, 1996), 14-26.

³⁶ J. A. Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer* (Athens-London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989).



Some members of the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, circa 1930: Lugenia Burns Hope (back row, far right); Mary McLeod Bethune (front row, far right), Marion Wilkinson (front row, far left) and Mrs. Moton (back row, middle). Courtesy of Robert W. Woodruff Library Archives, Atlanta University Center, Neighborhood Union Collection. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/lugenia-burns-hope-1871-1947>.

not exclusively black offered a global stage from which to create a cross-ethnic and transnational racial identity that surpassed the borders of the U.S.³⁷ One example is the speech Mary Church Terrell gave at the 1904 conference of the International Council of Women in Berlin, in which she explained that she was not just representing the women of color of her own country but “the whole continent of Africa as well”,³⁸ thus tying together the civil rights battles of black women to the international battle of the anticolonial movements.

The ICWDR aimed to spread awareness of the conditions of ‘colored’ women in countries like Haiti, India, China, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and to encourage widespread recognition of not only their history and successes but also the ills of co-

37 In this sense, see also Materson, “African American Women’s Global Journeys”.

38 M. Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Salem, NH: Ayer Co., 1940), 372.

lonialism. Encouraging “racial pride”³⁹ as a founding element of self-determination in the U.S., the ICWDR promoted a nationalist philosophy whose popularity was increasing within the African American community, while at the same it also identified itself with the battles of the ‘darker races’ around the world.⁴⁰ As recorded in its founding documents: “We are a band of women, though small, working with every other group of women to bring about the things for which we all stand – justice and fair play for every woman in every land”.⁴¹ Later, Hallie Quinn Brown wrote of president Margaret Murray Washington’s interest in the conditions of foreign women:

She thought and spoke of them as our sisters, and it was her hope that this Council would bring together the women of the darker races in a close and sympathetic contact.⁴²

The agenda of the new organization – centered on education, international affairs and social uplift – was entrusted to study groups that played an important role in the development and spread of African studies. Addie Whiteman Dickerson presided over the Committee on Foreign Relations, within which study groups were formed to examine the conditions of women in Africa and India and the relationship between African American women and women of other ‘darker races’ around the world.

The fact that India and its resistance to British colonialism were at the center of their interests proves that blackness was primarily a political-symbolic dimension. The relationship formed several years later between Mary McLeod Bethune, president of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit Nerhu testifies to the connection between African Americans and Indians against colonial oppression around the world and is the subject of an interesting book by Nico Slate who makes reference to “colored cosmopolitanism”.⁴³

³⁹ *International Council of Women of the Darker Races*, undated document, probably from 1922, Papers of Mary Church Terrell, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (henceforth cited as LOC-MD), reel 2.

⁴⁰ C. Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned: Race, Class and Internationalism in the American and British Women’s Movements c. 1880s-1970s* (London: Routledge, 2013); M. E. Hawkesworth, *Globalization and Feminist Activism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 63; *Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present*, eds. F. de Haan et al. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁴¹ Unknown author and unknown date, *International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World*, Papers of Mary Church Terrell, LOC-MD, reel 2, 4.

⁴² Brown, *Homespun Heroines*, 229.

⁴³ N. Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

According to the constitution of the organization, members comprised 50 African American women and 50 foreigners of color. Along with vice presidents Mary Church Terrell and Addie Waites Hunton, the organization was led by Margaret Murray Washington⁴⁴ who, as mentioned earlier, had been Dean of Women at the Tuskegee Institute in 1889, where she had created the Tuskegee Women's Club with Booker Washington, whom she later married. She had also led a study group there on the conditions of foreign women. The ICWDR, whose acts were important yet 'micro-political', took the utopian approach of proposing to resolve the problems of "women of the darker races of the world". As Mary Burnett Talbert would explain a year after its foundation, regarding Sallie Stewart (future president of the NACW, 1928-1933) and her candidature for council membership:

She has an acquaintance with the forward thinking women of China, Japan and Constantinople and Africa. We need women from each one of these groups to join with us in solving the problem of the women of the darker races of the world.⁴⁵

The most oft-repeated goals – studying and spreading awareness of the condition of 'colored' women around the world and creating international contacts with associations interested in building a global community of black women – were therefore ambitious for such a small, dispersed group and often came up against a scarcity of funds, non-acceptance of the role of women in international relations and limited human resources. Study groups and fundraising for targeted campaigns would constitute the group's fundamental strategies. For example, the Chicago West African Women's Club, which was tied to the ICWDR, supported the efforts of Adelaide Casely-Hayford – wife of Afro-nationalist Joseph Casely-Hayford and a teacher for many years in Sierra Leone – to build a school and later a hospital in Liberia. She was even nominated "vice-president for Africa". In 1922 Emily Williams stayed for several months in Haiti on behalf of the ICWDR and the following year gave talks about the situation on the island. In fact, these three countries were particularly significant. Sierra Leone had been a destination for emancipated Americans and slaves from the West Indies since the nineteenth century, as Liberia was from the 1920s on. And both Liberia and Ethiopia were independent black nations admitted to the League of Nations in 1919 and 1923, respectively.

⁴⁴ On Murray Washington see, among others, J. A. Rouse, "Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism, and Race Vindication", *The Journal of Negro History*, 81, 1-4 (Winter-Fall 1996): 31-46.

⁴⁵ Mary B. Talbert to the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, 21 July 1923, Mary Church Terrell Papers, LOC-MD, reel 7.

Addie Waites Hunton⁴⁶ became the president of the ICWDR after Murray Washington's death in 1925. A graduate of Oberlin, Hunton had extensive international experience, having resided in Madagascar, France, Guadeloupe, the Azores and Liberia. She had also been the first chair of the WILPF's Interracial Extension Committee and head of the Peace and Foreign Relations Department of the NACW.⁴⁷ Strongly interested in Pan-Africanism, Hunton was primarily involved in the situation in Haiti and wrote a report in 1926 condemning the occupation of the country, which she visited in 1927 as a representative of the ICWDR. In 1929 she helped found the Save Haiti League, which united the protest against occupation with philanthropic and social service work. In 1932 Hunton gave a vibrant speech on the same topic at the NAACP conference⁴⁸ and helped WILPF leader Emily Greene Balch⁴⁹ draft the book *Occupied Haiti*.⁵⁰

It is difficult to define and articulate the role of African American women's organizations within the realm of the Pan-African movements, both because research in this area remains scarce, recent and often superficial and because, as emphasized by Milfred C. Fierce,⁵¹ the term Pan-Africanism is often used in a simplistic way, without distinguishing between movements and ideologies. The precursor to the first Pan-African Congress of 1900 was the Congress on African Ethnology, also called the Congress on Africa,⁵² which was held on August 14-21, 1893, concurrent with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It too deserves further research. Conceived by Frederick Perry Noble, participants included Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Thomas Fortune and, probably, Hallie Quinn Brown and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. The London Congress of 1900 (strongly backed by Booker T. Washington, who took part in a preparatory meeting though not the conference) led to the foundation of the Pan-

46 C. Lutz, "Addie W. Hunton: Crusader for Pan Africanism and Peace", *Portraits of African American Life since 1865*, ed. N. Mjagkij (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2003), 109-127; M. L. Quintana, "Hunton, Addie Waites (1866-1943)", entry in *Online Encyclopedia of Significant People and Places in African American History*, BlackPast.org, last accessed 1 June 2014, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/hunton-addie-waites-1866-1943>.

47 On this, see J. Blackwell, *No Peace without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915-1975* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

48 B. R. Byrd, *The Transnational Work of Moral Elevation: Black Women and Haiti during the Eras of Reconstruction and Jim Crow*, paper presented at the 15th Annual Graduate Student Conference in African American History, University of Memphis, 2013, Brandon Byrd page on Academia, last accessed 1 June 2014, <https://marquette.academia.edu/BrandonByrd>, 9.

49 K. E. Gwinn, *Emily Greene Balch: The Long Road to Internationalism* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

50 E. G. Balch, *Occupied Haiti* (New York: Writers Publishing Co., 1927).

51 M. C. Fierce, *The Pan African Idea in the United States 1900-1919* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).

52 Reed, *All the World is here*, 182.

African Association, which was supposed to meet every two years – Boston in 1902, Haiti in 1904 – though this never happened. Six African American women participated in the inaugural congress: Anna Julia Cooper, Anna H. Jones, Fannie Barrier Williams, Ada Harris, Jane Roberts (widow of the first president of Liberia James Jenkins Roberts) and Harriet Loudin. Although it is difficult to trace the presence of African American women in the Pan-African Congresses, it seems that Mary Burnett Talbert, Addie Waites Hunton and Ida Gibbs Hunt attended the second one, which took place in Paris in 1919. Hunton and Hunt were also members of the International Committee of the Third Pan-African Congress of 1921, which was held in London and Brussels and was far more radical. In fact, one result was a document supporting the independence of Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia. The Fourth Pan-African Congress of 1923 was held in London and Lisbon, and Ida Gibbs Hunt, living in France at the time, co-chaired the organizational board of the congress with Du Bois and presented the talk “The Colored Races and the League of Nations”.

The Fifth Pan-African Congress was supposed to take place in 1925 in Africa or in the West Indies, but the governments of France and England opposed it. Addie Waites Hunton, then vice president of the ICWDR, with its Circle for Peace and Foreign Relations, therefore decided to organize it in New York in 1927. The congress was attended by some 5,000 people and proposed the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Haiti, a proposal approved by the WILPF the year before. Attendees included African Americans Helen Curtis and Addie Whiteman Dickerson, who would become the president of the ICWDR in 1929 following an important career in the world of international causes, including work for the WILPF.⁵³

Correspondence between Dickerson and Du Bois from 1929 seems to indicate the wish of the ICWDR to promote the Sixth Pan-African Congress to be held in Haiti or Bermuda, with the agreement of its leader, Du Bois.⁵⁴ However, this plan was never realized either. In fact, the financial crisis prompted by the Great Depression and World War II interrupted the Pan-African Congresses until 1945. Yet the ICWDR continued trying to play an active role in the Pan-African movement. In 1929, for example, Dickerson invited Du Bois to give a talk on the subject at a Council meeting: “I am so anxious that our women shall have some part in the Pan-African that I want you to come and talk with them regarding it, if only in a general way”.⁵⁵

53 J. C. Smith, *Notable Black American Women* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996), book II, 182-183.

54 W. E. B. Du Bois to Addie Dickerson, 29 November 1929, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312) Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, Correspondence – Pan African Congress (henceforth cited as Du Bois Papers, SCUA-UMAL).

55 A. Dickerson to W. E. B. Du Bois, 2 November 1929, Du Bois Papers, SCUA-UMAL, Correspondence – Dickerson Addie.

Traces of this enduring commitment also include the participation of Dickerson (for the ICWDR) and Hunton (for the WILPF interracial commission, over which she presided) at a meeting of African American leaders (Mordecai Johnson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Walter White, Rayford Logan of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Charles Wesley and Emmett Scott of Howard University) held on July 31, 1933 at the State Department regarding their support for the sovereignty and independence of Liberia.⁵⁶ The ICWDR and its leaders, whose views were similar to those of Du Bois, therefore did more than just organize study groups. Their work manifested itself as an active international presence in certain relevant moments for the Pan-African movement, thus demonstrating the wish to interweave race and gender on a global basis, feminism, and the Pan-African drives of the first black women activists.⁵⁷ These women shared the experience of being black in America and therefore of dealing with the double discrimination of race and gender. Their experience abroad, among other things, led them to develop a broad vision that demanded civil rights for all African Americans, education and international attention for black women, freedom for colonized peoples, and the creation of a black global community. Yet, even though they conceptualized their oppression within the realm of global racism and colonialism, they never managed to unite this large number of women of different nationalities.⁵⁸ Neither were they able, despite their best efforts, to recruit a younger generation of women to carry forth their commitment in the 1930s. As a result, the history of the ICWDR came to an end with the death of its last president, Addie Whiteman Dickerson, in May 1940. If any of its ideals and actions survived it is thanks to one of its leaders, Mary McLeod Bethune, who in 1935 founded the NCNW, a new organization of African American women with a strong global vision and international activism centered on the subjects of race, gender, economic justice and de-colonization. Many ICWDR activists joined the new organization, including Lugenia Burns Hope who in 1937 became the assistant of Bethune, then the director of the Bureau of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration.

56 I. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 176.

57 In this sense, see also *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. D. Clark Hine, (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1993), book I, 613.

58 In this sense, see also Materson, "African American Women's Global Journeys".

III. FROM DE-COLONIZATION TO HUMAN RIGHTS: THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

While the NCNW had supported the work of the ICWDR from the start,⁵⁹ it was not until after the latter's disappearance in 1940 that the NCNW's international work began to increase. Not only did it start sending representatives to Europe, the East Indies and Cuba (where it planned to launch summer seminars in partnership with the Asociación Cultural Femenina), but the organization also began welcoming the representatives of women's associations from the Philippines, Liberia, Mexico, Costa Rica, France, China, Haiti, Great Britain and Belgium to its annual meetings. In fact, the NCNW sought to foster this process of internationalization by encouraging the study of international relations within religious, civic and education groups; membership in international associations; and the strengthening of relationships with women in ethnic groups closely tied to Cuba, Haiti, South America and the Orient.

In 1943 the NCNW joined the Women's Action Committee for Victory and Lasting Peace, which aimed to bring all American women together to build a world of peace and justice by spurring the U.S. government to cooperate internationally and open its borders. A few years later, the NCNW joined the Committee on Women in World Affairs, which campaigned for the nomination of qualified women to international organizations. This passionately sought objective was further pursued by attending the conference "How Women may share in Post-War Policy making", organized by Eleanor Roosevelt in Washington D.C. in 1944, at which Bethune demanded such nominations include "qualified negro women", who tended to be more marginalized than white women on the public scene.

Appointed by the State Department to the delegation of black consultants of the NAACP sent to the foundation of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945,⁶⁰ Bethune immediately introduced the subject of the participation and leadership of black women in the construction of the new world order. Hers was certainly an optimistic vision, given that the few women present in San Francisco were aware that the agenda being carried forth by many internationalists through the League of Nations – e.g. monitoring the conditions of women around the world; making the juridical legitimization of married women as independent citizens an international legal standard;

59 "Council History", undated, Edith Spurlock Sampson Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe – Institute for Advanced study, Harvard, folder 88, box 10.

60 E. Vezzosi, "Mary McLeod Bethune at the United Nations Founding Conference: Women's Leadership and the Building of a Black Global Community", *Beyond the Nation: Pushing the Boundaries of U.S. History from a Transatlantic Perspective*, eds. F. Fasce, M. Vaudagna and R. Baritono (Turin: Otto Editore, 2013), 117-139.



Mrs. Bethune with W. E. B. DuBois (left) and Walter White (right) in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in April 1945. Courtesy of NPS, Griff Davis, photographer. <http://www.nps.gov/mamc/upload/I-Carried-the-Torch-of-Leadership-photo-gallery.pdf>.

spreading women's suffrage to all countries – was left incomplete after having come to a standstill in the early 1940s.⁶¹

One of Bethune's objectives was to build international women's networks, and she established a special synchronicity with some of the observers at the conference. One of these was Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit⁶² (the sister of Jawaharlal Nehru) who was present in San Francisco in a non-official capacity but would go on to lead the Indian delegation to

61 E. Du Bois, "The League of Nations as Testing Ground for Women's Rights in the UN", paper presented at the Conference of the International Federation for Research in Women's History, Amsterdam, 25-27 August 2010.

62 *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World*, eds. A. T. McCluskey and E. M. Smith (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 250 and 259.

the United Nations in 1946-1948 and 1950-1951, and become president of the General Assembly in 1953-1954.

During the foundational phase of the United Nations, the language of rights unified the critical leadership of women – Mary McLeod Bethune, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Charlotta Amanda Bass – who were fairly diverse in terms of political experience and existential trajectories. In 1952 Bass would become the national chairperson of the Sojourners for Truth and Justice, an organization of women protesting the racial violence taking place in the U.S. South that fostered relations with the African National Congress Women's League, the women's branch of the African National Congress that was fighting apartheid and colonialism.⁶³

After her controversial experience in San Francisco, Bethune continued passionately weaving together her remarks in favor of civil rights, de-colonization and human rights with those on the conditions of African American women, and women of the 'darker races' in general, as well as the leadership roles they deserved to acquire within international organizations. The San Francisco conference, which was disappointing for Bethune because it failed to lead to a firm new anticolonialist awareness, did not exhaust the internationalist strategies of the NCNW. On the contrary, they would reach their apex in the years to follow. During the second half of the 1940s, in addition to sending delegates and observers to international meetings everywhere from Europe and Cuba to Trinidad and the West Indies (though the strongest ties would remain those with Haiti and Liberia), the NCNW organized annual International Nights with important institutional guests; promoted World Security Month and United Nations Day; and joined the Women United for the U.N. and the Conference Committee of the United States Organizations for the United Nations.

Although the international commitment of many NCNW members was significant, it was mainly Bethune who pressured the United Nations to create the Commission on the Status of Women in 1946.⁶⁴ She was also the one to participate in the first postwar meeting of the International Council of Women in Philadelphia in 1947, in which the role of women in international organizations was widely discussed. Finally, it was Bethune who joined the National Committee on Atomic Information, taking sides as

63 See J. Castledine, "'In a Solid Bound of Unity': Anticolonial Feminism in the Cold War Era", *Journal of Women's History*, 4 (2008): 57-81.

64 On the differences between U.S. women's associations regarding the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women, see H. Laville, "A New Era in International Women's Rights? American Women's Associations and the Establishment of the UN Commission on the Status of Women", *Journal of Women's History*, 4 (2008): 34-56.

early as late 1945, together with the NCNW, against the military use of atomic energy and its control on the part of the United Nations.⁶⁵

The internationalist commitment of the NCNW and Bethune confirms Raffaella Baritono's argument whereby such commitment actually increased among women during the Cold War, despite the reassertion of the division between public and private spheres and the complexity of the task for American women of keeping nationalism and transnationalism together.⁶⁶ The dawn of the Cold War and pre-McCarthyism are precisely what made life difficult for the NCNW and its international relations. In 1943 the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) started investigating Bethune for communist sympathies because of her relationships with the National Negro Congress and her support of the Spanish Refugee Campaign, the American Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born and the Washington Committee for Democratic Action.⁶⁷ In 1946, while still under investigation, Bethune decided to protect the NCNW by distancing herself from Vivian Carter Mason, a close collaborator who had been fundamental in connecting Bethune to various women's organizations around the world, including the Women's International Democratic Federation, a coalition of women from 43 countries that focused its political action on human rights, and whose American branch – the American Congress of Women – was accused of being a communist organization. In fact, Mason had been investigated for her affiliation to this group, as well as a visit she had made to Moscow. Although Bethune firmly maintained her anti-communist stance, she nevertheless denounced the spy-like, persecutory methods of the HUAC more than once, and her break with Mason was temporary. Bethune would even back Mason as the third president of the NCNW from 1953 to 1957. Bethune's anti-communist commitment was in fact moderate and did not preclude criticism of U.S. politics.⁶⁸

In 1946 the Executive Board of the NCNW asked the director of the Women's Bureau, Frieda S. Miller, to appoint Bethune to the Human Rights Commission.

65 National Council of Negro Women, Findings National Conventions, 1941-1950, Minutes Conference 1945, Mary McLeod Bethune Papers, The Bethune Foundation Collection, E. Smith Editorial Advisor, Microfilm Project (Bethesda 1997) (henceforth cited as MMLBP), part I, reel 19, 14.

66 R. Baritono, "An Ideology of Sisterhood?: American Women's Movements between Nationalism and Transnationalism", *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2 (June 2008): 181-199. See also H. Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organizations* (Manchester-New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

67 See B. Plummer, *Rising the Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 198.

68 Resolution passed 16 November 1946 by the Annual Convention of the National Council of Negro Women, National Archives for Black Women's History (henceforth cited as NABWH-NCNW), Records of the National Council of Negro Women, series 5, box 23, folder 6.

However, because Eleanor Roosevelt (who even tried to promote Bethune's inclusion herself) was already a member, the request was denied since it would have been hard for another American woman to be nominated.⁶⁹ The NCNW's interest in human rights endured, and at its 13th annual convention in 1948, on the eve of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it clarified its positions on the subject, ardently weaving together the issue of universal human rights with that of the civil rights of African Americans in the U.S.:

We believe that human rights are not a mere extension of civic rights, but that all rights, civil, social and economic, form one complete whole and are therefore necessary – one to the other. Thus it is that only in a society where each citizen has the right to work with a just reward and adequate leisure and to enjoy the fruits of that labor in civil peace and social security, can there be a sound economy with useful citizens living in a practical freedom.⁷⁰

In a 1949 letter to President Truman Bethune stressed the internationalist commitment of the NCNW and suggested black women who could be sent as delegates to international conferences – especially the Inter-American Conference on Peace and Security to be held in Rio De Janeiro – based on their skills and interests in the field of international relations and their familiarity with South America, international jurisprudence and public affairs.⁷¹ That same year Bethune announced the Council's commitment to double its efforts to strengthen ties of friendship between women of 'darker races' through information exchange and publications that could lead to common projects to improve the conditions of women,⁷² and recommended Edith Sampson as president of the Town Meeting Seminar Group. This role led Sampson to travel the world during the early Cold War years, not only in support of the cause of democracy against communism⁷³ but also to promote the work of the NCNW and thus spark the interest of women in India, Japan and Pakistan. It was during this time that Sampson attended the annual meeting of the Pakistan Women's Organization, which would become an honorary member of the NCNW.

69 Letter from Mame Mason Higgins, secretary of the Board of the NCNW, to Frieda S. Miller, director of the Women's Bureau, 29 April 1946, and Miller's answer to Higgins 2 May 1946, NABWH-NCNW, Records of the National Council of Negro Women, series 5, box 34, folder 9.

70 National Council of Negro Women, *Findings National Conventions, 1941-1950*, MMLBP, reel 19, 16.

71 Bethune to Harry S. Truman, 19 February 1946, NABWH-NCNW, series 5, box 8, folder 134.

72 National Council of Negro Women, *Findings National Conventions, 1941-1950*, 19 February 1946, 22.

73 F. Fasce, "Democracy of Color on the Airwaves: America's Town Meeting of the Air and the Cultural, Diplomacy of Race in the Early Cold War", *Beyond the Nation*, eds. Fasce, Vaudagna, Baritono, 141-161.

The need to orient part of the Council's international work toward anti-communism did not significantly undermine its political work, which continued unabated. Bethune herself visited Haiti and Liberia several times and in 1952 was nominated to represent the U.S. government at the ceremony to re-elect President William Tubman. Three years later, in 1955, Bethune died. A year prior she had attended the World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament in Switzerland and had spoken at length with Fadhil Jamali, the former premier of Iraq and a delegate at the upcoming Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, about her firm belief that African and Asian nations, united by common politics, could give an important response to the world and influence the conference, whose echoes would reach her shortly before her death.

IV. CONCLUSION

The NCNW would continue its internationalist work for several years, recovering the legacy of the ICWDR and of some of the African American women who had founded it and had spoken at and attended the Columbian Exposition of 1893. In fact, Materson refers to the ICWDR as a place of transition between nineteenth-century strategies of racial uplift and “newer global race consciousness ideas”,⁷⁴ tying together the contributions of African American women to the Columbian Exposition with the foundation of the NCNW in 1935 and its future internationalist developments. However, the ICWDR clearly had a much more significant function, albeit within the limitations described above. Often, its leaders not only supported the Pan-African movement but also organized related events, most importantly the 1927 Pan-African Congress in New York. While the ties between African American women's organizations like the NACW, the WILPF and the NCNW and their participation in universal expositions remain largely to be investigated, we can imagine a study of the period stretching from the Columbian Exposition in 1893 to the first Conference of African Women and Women of African Descent in 1960 in Accra (after Ghana had become a republic), in which many African American women took part. One of these women was Dorothy Height, then president of the NCNW.⁷⁵

74 See Materson, “African American Women's Global Journeys”, 6.

75 D. Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), especially chapter fourteen, “Citizen of the World”.