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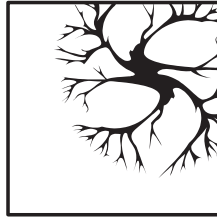
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Robert Trent Vinson
Washington University in St. Louis

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Beginning in 1890, African-American missionaries, entertainers, adventurers, sailors, and tradesmen were the subject of considerable commentary and scrutiny in the southern African region. Orpheus McAdoo's Virginia Jubilee Singers dazzled black and white alike with their virtuoso singing and theatrical performances and their cosmopolitan flair. Concurrently, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and the National Baptist Convention (NBC) both established an African-American institutional presence with rapidly expanding missions. African Americans like Horatio Scott alternately worked in the region's gold and diamond mines where American technology and expertise was so crucial and participated in the military conquests of the British South Africa Company. Hubert "Yankee" Wood founded the *Kokstad Advertiser*, and operated a hotel and restaurant.¹

The black American presence in the region sparked an ongoing American-South African diplomatic dialogue that sought to determine if South Africa's racially

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1. For the early African-American presence in the region that became South Africa in 1910, see James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in America and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); J. Mutero Chirenje, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883-1916* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Joyce F. Kirk, *Making a Voice: African Resistance to Segregation in South Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998); Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Keletso Atkins, "The Black Atlantic Communication Network: African American Sailors and the Cape of Good Hope Connection," in Lisa Brock, ed., *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 24, no. 2 (1996). Historians estimate that of the approximately 2,500 American citizens in the Transvaal on the eve of the South African War, black Americans in South Africa never exceeded one hundred. See also Enid DeWaal, "American black residents and visitors in the South African Republic before 1899," *South African Historical Journal* 6 (November 1974), and Clement Tsehloane Keto, "Black Americans and South Africa, 1890-1910," *Current Bibliography on African Affairs* 5 (July 1972). For the general American economic influence in the southern African region in the late nineteenth century, see Richard W. Hull, *American Enterprise in South Africa: Historical Dimensions of Engagement and Disengagement* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 58-115.

discriminatory laws extended beyond Africans to include Americans of color. This essay provides a unique view of American-South African diplomacy primarily through the case study of African-American missionaries, Herbert and Bessie Mae Payne and James and Lucinda East, who sought to proselytize in South Africa between 1910 and 1923. In doing so, this article responds to recent calls to embrace an interactive “homeland and diaspora” model that bridges the emergent historiography of the African diaspora with that of continental Africa. Simultaneously this article redresses the shortage of analysis on Africa and Africans within African diaspora and black Atlantic studies by centering a diasporic population *in Africa itself*. The transnational orientation of this work brings a global dimension to African-American history while also moving South African history beyond its occasionally parochial nature.²

By the time the Paynes arrived in South Africa in 1917 to replace the Easts, who had been there since 1910, American and South African diplomats had been wrestling with the question of whether South African racial laws should extend to American blacks for almost twenty-five years. Before the South African War, American consulates repeatedly sought to protect the citizenship rights of black Americans. Citizenship trumped race. For instance, in 1893, a white policeman in the Transvaal publicly whipped John Ross, a black American, for supposed “impudence.” The United States Department of State supported Ross in a claim against the Transvaal government for damages totaling ten thousand dollars. William Van Ness, the American consul at Johannesburg, demanded that the Transvaal government give the matter their “immediate attention,” stating unequivocally, “the laws of the United States make no distinction in citizenship between white and colored.”³ The American consulate in Johannesburg subsequently protested several other discriminatory incidents against African Americans whom white South Africans mistook for “natives.”⁴

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2. Patrick Manning, incorporating the longstanding methodological concerns of Africa-diaspora studies pioneers Joseph E. Harris and George Shepperson, invokes the term “homeland and diaspora model” to distinguish between scholars who give Africa and Africans prominent place in diasporic studies and those who use what he calls a “diaspora apart” model that privileges diasporic communities, and not Africa and Africans, as the focus of scholarly inquiry. Patrick Manning, “Africa and the African Diaspora: New Directions of Study,” *Journal of African History* 44 (2003), 487-506. See also Robin Kelley, “But a Local Phase of a World Problem: African American History’s Global Vision,” *Journal of American History* (2001).
 3. William Van Ness to Dr. Leyds, Transvaal Secretary of State, 15 January 1893, National Archives (hereafter NA): Consular Dispatches, Cape Town General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 Microfilm publications, T 191, roll 15. (Hereafter cited as NA: State, RG 59, T 191, 15). I am grateful for the assistance of Ken Hager, Ph.D., and Martin F. McGann, both archival consultants at the U.S. National Archives.
 4. George Hollis to Josiah Quincy, 9 May 1893. NA: State, RG 59, T 191, roll 15; See the AME’s foreign mission newspaper, *Voice of Missions*, 1 June 1898; Van Ness to Leyds, 18 September 1893; John Ross to Leyds, 16 September 1893. NA: Consular Dispatches, Johannesburg General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59. Microfilm publications, T 191, roll 15; Keto, “Black Americans,” 387-88; Henry M. Turner, “My Trip to South Africa,” reprinted in Edwin Redkey, ed., *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York, 1971); Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., “Black Americans and the Boer War, 1899-1902,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 75 (1976), 231.

To prevent further outrages, the American government required all African Americans to register at the Johannesburg consulate, where they were issued American passports if they did not already have one. The passports gave black Americans “honorary white” status and exempted them from the Transvaal’s racially exclusive laws that had a negative impact on Africans. AME bishop Henry McNeal Turner, cloaked with “honorary white” status during a 1898 visit to South Africa, asserted that there had been little trouble from the Transvaal government since “President Cleveland forced the Boers to pay \$25,000 because they beat some black American,” presumably Ross. Turner’s celebrity even attracted the attention of Paul Kruger, the Transvaal president, who told the ebullient bishop that he had never shaken the hand of a “colored person” before. Turner maintained that black Americans had unrestricted use of railroads and hotels in South Africa and declared that “prejudice does exist but it is not of the kind found in America. It is not race prejudice at all but prejudice of condition.”

American diplomatic intervention extended beyond the Boer republics to the British colonies of Natal and Cape Colony. In Durban, the American consul intervened and had the British suspend prosecution proceedings against Richard Collins, a member of the McAdoo troupe whom police mistakenly thought was an African violating Natal’s liquor laws. In the Cape Colony, African American sailor Harry Dean noted, “the American government, while not thoroughly honorable in all respects, will seldom endure...insults to its citizens.” Given the available evidence, U.S. diplomats clearly emphasized the American citizenship of African Americans, which effectively overrode South Africa’s racially exclusive laws. American diplomatic assertiveness was facilitated by the acquiescence of the Boer Republics, who desired to maintain friendly relations with the United States to offset the growing regional British influence.⁵

Africans were particularly intrigued with African Americans, whose “honorary white status” threatened to disrupt white claims that the supposed characteristics of civilization and modernity were racially exclusive. White segregationists justified racial discrimination with the claim that they were fully civilized persons, a state of modernity that could be measured by supposedly objective criteria. Europeans (particularly men) were modern citizens because they supposedly possessed modernist markers: nation-states, technological and scientific innovation, Christianity, Western education and clothing, the Protestant work ethic, and in many instances, facility in the English language. Conversely, darker races were supposedly “raw, primitive, tribalized, traditional, backward natives” because they had no nation-states, only “tribes,” no identifiable scientific innovation, little or no grasp of Christianity or Western education, wore shamefully few clothes, were lazy, and spoke “dialects,” not European languages. Such excessive categorization contrasted European enlightenment with the “dark continent” of Africa,

5. For the Durban example, see Veit Erlmann, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 22-23; for Cape Town, see Harry Dean, *The Pedro Gorino* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1929), 213. The specific incident that sparked Dean’s comment occurred sometime during the South African War (1899-1902). Both authors speak to the “honorary white” status of black Americans at this time. For more on the honorary white status of African Americans, see Dean, 78-79; Erlmann, 40-42; Hollis to Quincy, 9 May 1893. NA: State, RG 59, T 191, 15.

white reason with black irrationality, European civility with African primitiveness and exoticism, European dynamic progress with African static timelessness.⁶

This white segregationist narrative utilized a notion of “racial time.” They argued that the white-over-black social order was the natural result of a two-thousand-year climb from barbarism to an exalted civilization that proved whites belonged at the top of the global human pyramid. Such narratives presented white-over-black dominance as the “white man’s burden” to uplift barbarous blacks beginning their own two-thousand-year climb toward civilization under “benevolent” white tutelage. In other words, the darker races were two thousand years behind whites in the race toward civilization. The very presence of African Americans demonstrated the falsity of this “racial time” trope, for their honorary white status was a tacit acknowledgement that they acquired all the hallmarks of civilization *only a generation out of slavery*. The Virginia Jubilee Singers, onstage in South Africa both inside and outside the theater, as well as African-American missionaries like Turner, posited Christianity and education as the mechanisms that sparked the transition from barbarity to civilization. They impressed onlookers with their recounting of how American blacks had quickly established numerous religious, educational and socio-economic institutions during American Reconstruction on a scale unheard of in South Africa.⁷ Impressed Africans

[c]ould not quite understand what sort of people they were. Some of them hesitated to class them as *kaffirs*, as they seemed so smart and tidy in appearance, and moved about with all the ease and freedom among the white people that a high state of civilization and education alone can give.⁸

Imvo Zabantsundu proclaimed the racial unity between Africans and African Americans, proudly editorializing that the Jubilee Singers provided a tangible example of black civility, sophistication, and achievement that many whites were loath to recognize:

As Africans, we are, of course, proud of the achievements of those of *our race*. Their visit will do their countrymen no end of good. Already it has suggested reflections to many who, without such a demonstration, would have remained skeptical as to the possibility, not to say probability, of the Natives of this country being raised to anything above remaining as perpetual hewers of wood and

6. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997); Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 17; for a discussion of how some black South Africans responded to these narratives, see Ntongela Masilela, “The Black Atlantic and African Modernity in South Africa”, *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 90.

7. For the McAdoo Singers generally, see Veit Erlmann, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1994), ch. 2. The troupe was not immune to South African segregation as they encountered racial hostility in Worcester, KingWilliamsTown and Bloemfontein and several members ran afoul of pass laws. Though the white press consistently praised the troupe, some whites marveled at the exquisite singing: “and to think that black people should do it.” McAdoo to Samuel Chapman Armstrong, reprinted in the *Southern Workman* (November 1920) and Erlmann, “A Feeling of Prejudice.”

8. *Kaffrarian Watchman* (KingWilliamsTown, n.d.) quoted from the *Southern Workman* (20 January 1891).

drawers of water. The recognition of the latent abilities of the Natives, and of the fact that they may yet play a part peculiar to themselves in the human brotherhood, can not fail to exert an influence for the mutual good of all the inhabitants of this country.⁹ [italics added for emphasis]

As a result, Africans like Josiah Semouse, a Kimberley postal worker, used African-American achievement as a measuring stick for African development:

Hear! Today they have their own schools, primary, secondary and high schools, and also universities. They are run by them without the help of whites. They have magistrates, judges, lawyers, bishops, ministers and evangelists, and school masters. Some have learned a craft such as building etc. When will the day come when the African people will be like the Americans? When will they stop being slaves and become nations with their own government?¹⁰

The British victory in the South African War (1899-1902) and the subsequent incorporation of the region into a Crown Colony inaugurated a new era that marked the end of the honorary white status of African Americans. Race increasingly trumped citizenship. South African discriminatory policies toward Africans also began to affect black Americans because of three primary interrelated reasons that must be understood to contextualize the case of the Paynes and Easts. First, British colonial authorities, missionaries, and other citizens began to view African Americans as dangerous agitators that filled the heads of otherwise docile African with democratic notions of racial equality. These views crystallized particularly in the increased animus toward “Ethiopianism” or separatist African Christian movements. Second, the onset of Jim Crow legislation in the United States and the subsequently diminishing legal status of blacks in America made American diplomats more likely to accept South Africa’s racially exclusive laws. Third, British colonial authorities enacted a range of pro-British economic policies that had the effect of lessening the American political and economic influence that had leveraged American diplomatic assertiveness in protecting the honorary white status of African Americans.

By the early twentieth century, white South Africans associated African Americans with Ethiopianism, the growing separatist movement by African Christians to establish their own churches. Such African Christians, known as “Ethiopians,” imbued Ethiopia with multiple meanings: as the site of a historic black Christian nation who had also defeated the Italians and maintained its independence as the rest of Africa became colonized by European powers. Ethiopia was also a scriptural referent, as in Psalms 68:31, which stated “Princes Shall Come Out of Egypt and Ethiopia Shall Stretch Forth Her Hands Unto God.” Although primarily a religious movement, Ethiopianism rejected white authority, an implicitly political act that many whites viewed as a prelude to an eventual

9. *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 16 October 1890.

10. *Leselinyana* (1 October 1890) quoted in Erlmann, “A Feeling of Prejudice.” The McAdoo troupe inspired Semouse to join the African choir that toured in England. See “Inventing the Metropolis: Josiah Semouse’s Travel Diary and the Dilemmas of Representation,” in Erlmann, *Music, Modernity and the Global Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

African challenge to white political domination.¹¹ By 1893, several newspapers, white missionaries, and government officials began to refer to Ethiopianism as a dangerous political movement. The *Cape Times* was particularly perceptive in noting the political implications of the Ethiopian churches:

It is a patriotic movement, in that it seeks to enlist the sympathies and support of all natives qua natives; it is political in that one of the fundamental principles of the organization is to proceed much on the working lines of the Afrikaner Bond, though of course with directly opposite aspirations, and it is ecclesiastical, and for this reason exercises a disturbing effect upon the native mind.¹²

African Americans played a role in Ethiopianism. The most tangible link to the movement was the 1896 incorporation of the separatist Ethiopian Church of South Africa into the fourteenth district of the AME Church. Additionally, NBC missionaries like C. S. Morris offered sympathetic comments toward Ethiopianism. Certainly, some American blacks who observed similar racial discrimination in both countries forged a common bond with Africans and advocated pro-African programs that South African whites and some blacks saw as subversive. Two African-American journals, *The Colored American Magazine* and *The Voice of the Negro* regularly published aggressive pro-African articles and often employed the “Africa for Africans” slogan associated with the Ethiopian movement. The South African government, despite these isolated reports, grossly overestimated the black American involvement with Ethiopianism. Nevertheless, the supposed “subversiveness” of Ethiopianism was an impetus for the British, who organized the 1903-05 South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC) to establish a unified “native policy” among the four provinces. The SANAC hearings indicated that for the South African government and white missionaries, the image of black Americans had begun to change from leading participants in the “civilizing mission” to primary adherents of the separatist Ethiopian movement. A missionary for the Free Church of Scotland argued:

I would like to say that there is a danger of a great deal of evil happening through these blacks from America coming in and mixing with the natives of South Africa. These men from America for generations suffered oppression, and they have naturally something to object to in the white man and a grievance against the white man. These men from America come in and make our natives imagine they have grievances when there are no grievances.

Another missionary unwittingly forecast South Africa’s future immigration policy, suggesting that black Americans be declared prohibited immigrants for their supposedly

11. Chirenje, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans*; George Shepperson, “Ethiopianism: Past and Present”, in C. G. Baeta, ed., *Christianity in Tropical Africa* (London, 1968), 249-68, and Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London, 1961).

12. *Cape Times* editorial (16 July 1893), in Chirenje, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans*, 24. The Afrikaner Bond was a culturally oriented political movement by Afrikaners, the descendants of seventeenth century Huguenot settlers.

destabilizing views.¹³ Although the SANAC officially concluded that African-American missionaries were not espousing rebellious doctrine, many whites in South Africa and America still regarded African Americans as primary causative agents of African discontent and rebellion against white rule. The fearful perception of an incipient African uprising, encouraged by black Americans, became known in South Africa as the *swaart gevaar* or “black peril” and led to hardened societal sentiment against both African Americans and Africans.¹⁴

The South African government’s increased aversion to African Americans only intensified racial discrimination against them. South African segregation policies now included African Americans, who, like their African brethren, could not use public transportation, walk on public sidewalks, or purchase liquor. In 1904, pro-segregationist author Roderick Jones illustrated the South African growing resentment toward American blacks and maintained that “American Negroes, whose teachings, if not deliberately seditious, implant in the native mind crude ideas about the brotherhood of man, and fosters a separatist spirit wholly incompatible with strict loyalty to...white rule.” Jones also noted that South Africans had a growing willingness to “bundle the American Negro, bag and baggage, out of the country, under a law excluding undesirables.” The 1906-08 Bambatha rebellion also increased white fears of the supposed African-American threat. Some contemporary accounts erroneously attributed much of the blame for these uprisings to American blacks. In response to the rebellion, government restrictions became even more stringent. By 1906, standard South African policy was to deport most black Americans and refuse admittance to incoming blacks.¹⁵

Meanwhile, South African authorities converted several SANAC recommendations into draconian laws that accelerated the course of segregation. These laws included the Native Regulation Act (1911), the Mines and Works Act (1911), the Natives Land Act (1913), and the Immigration Act Number 22 (1913). The government designed these laws to control the African majority within a segregated system that codified white-over-black racial hierarchies and provided a ready supply of African labor. The Immigration Act intensified existing laws and was used to deny non-whites, including the Paynes, and white undesirables entrance into South Africa. American consular officials regularly fielded discriminatory complaints from black Americans,

13. Morris arrived in Cape Town in 1899 and eventually presided over seventeen congregations boasting over twelve hundred new members. He sympathized with Ethiopianism, but when the NBC heard reports of their missionaries having Ethiopian ties, Morris was chosen to investigate. Not surprisingly, Morris reported no NBC connection to Ethiopianism. See L. G. Jordan, *Negro Baptist History, USA* (Nashville: National Baptist Convention, 1930), 124.

14. For instance, the report blamed black Americans for providing financial assistance to the Ethiopians. See Thomas Noer, *Briton, Boer, and Yankee: The United States and South Africa, 1870-1914* (Kent: Kent State University, 1978), 120. For black American disapproval, see “American Negroes Making Mischief in South Africa”, *Missionary Review of the World* (May 1903), 396-97. The “black peril” also referred to the supposed sexual threat that black men posed to white women. See Timothy Keegan, “Gender, Degeneration, and Sexual Danger: Imagining Race and Class in South Africa, ca. 1912,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 2001).

15. Roderick Jones, “The Black Peril in South Africa,” *Nineteenth Century and After* 55 (May 1904), 712-23; *ibid.*, “The Black Problem in South Africa,” *Nineteenth Century and After* 56 (May 1905), 770-76; and Noer, *Briton, Boer, and Yankee*, 115-18.

several of whom the South African government prosecuted for violation of segregationist laws.

After the British victory in the South African War, the British government reassured local South African authorities that there would be no interference with the dominion's domestic racial policies:

Your fate is in your own hands...Do not anticipate any other meddling on the part of Downing Street, or of any section of the British people...the good sense of the British people will never tolerate any intermeddling in the purely domestic concerns of the people to whom it has conceded the fullest liberties of government.¹⁶

With this autonomy, a Transvaal court convicted Thomas Brown, an African American, for attempting to buy liquor, an illegal act for Africans. Brown had based his case on his American citizenship, "a man who is entitled to the vote in his own country is surely entitled to have a bottle of sherry in this country." The presiding judge disagreed and ruled that Brown's skin color overrode the rights and privileges of his American citizenship. Initially supportive of Brown, the American consulate ultimately refused to intervene.¹⁷

In another case, William Henry Sampson complained to the American consul in Pretoria in 1906 that he was prohibited from purchasing liquor. Upon inquiry to the South African Secretary of Native Affairs, the American consul assented to the country's stipulation that local law "applied to all coloured persons without exception, and that no provision is made for the exception from its operation of any coloured citizens of America."¹⁸ The Brown and Sampson cases illustrated the increasing willingness of American diplomats to acquiesce to South Africa's discriminatory treatment toward black Americans. One American consular agent assuaged his conscience by noting that South Africa's segregationist policies were not appreciably different from American Jim Crow laws, which should have made segregation more familiar and natural to African Americans in South Africa.

Increasingly, the South African government made fewer legal distinctions between Africans and African Americans. Indeed, James Thompson, an American black working in South African mines, successfully sought medical compensation for silicosis under the government's 1911 Miner's Phthisis Act, which defined a native as being "a member of the aboriginal races or tribes of Africa." This definition now included American blacks who "undoubtedly sprang from an aboriginal African race, the Negro race of Africa."

16. Noer, *Briton, Boer, and Yankee*, 115.

17. Proffit to Loomis, NA: Consular Dispatches, Pretoria, August 8, 1904, RG 59, T660 Roll 3. The judge suspended Brown's sentence.

18. *Ibid.*; initially, Proffit, the U.S. consul, insisted that, "I am quite certain that the consular officers in this country have not brooked nor will they permit indignities to our citizens without protest to the proper authorities," Proffit to Loomis, NA: Consular Dispatches, Pretoria, December 28, 1903, RG 59, T660 Roll 2; South African Government Archives (hereafter SAGA), Secretary of Native Affairs, Transvaal Colony 1906, 310: 101, 106, 108, 109. I am grateful to Amanda Kemp for sharing this reference with me.

Several consulates, noting the hostile racial climate, urged black Americans to avoid South Africa altogether.¹⁹

In addition to racial considerations, American acquiescence also reflected declining American economic influence in the region after the South African War. Between 1886 and 1902, Americans had significant influence in the region's burgeoning mining industry. By 1896, American engineers operated over half of South Africa's mines. Led by the mercurial John Hays Hammond, the American mining community facilitated the dominance of American mining equipment on the Witwatersrand and aggressively sought to widen American commercial influence. In addition, the non-mining American commercial influence greatly increased during this time, with companies such as Singer (sewing machines) and Kodak (cameras) dominating the regional market by the century's end. Even the notorious British imperialist Cecil Rhodes found American influence disconcerting.²⁰ This increased American commercial involvement before the war led to the establishment of a Pretoria consulate in 1898, the assignment of more experienced consuls to Cape Town, and an extradition treaty with the Orange Free State that sought to protect the rights of American businessmen in South Africa. This economic and technological influence probably contributed to the region's policies, particularly in the Transvaal, that granted African Americans the honorary-white passports that exempted them from the harsh measures affecting Africans.²¹

However, American economic influence declined significantly during South African Reconstruction. Concerned about American commercial competition, the British government erected protective tariffs, limited the mobility of American businessmen, and encouraged the replacement of American mine managers and engineers with South African and British citizens. In addition, South African banks, dominated by British capital, often refused to provide American businessmen with loans. By 1903, South Africa also virtually eliminated its dependence on American cotton and turned to cotton imports from Egypt and India.²² As a result of these measures, the American commercial presence declined precipitously. In 1903, American exports to South Africa totaled thirty million dollars; in 1904, British tariffs effectively reduced American exports to just fourteen million dollars. Declining American economic presence translated into lessening political strength, making American diplomats less willing to endanger relations by protecting the citizenship rights of American blacks. The postwar British government overtly and successfully limited the American commercial and, by extension, political influence. This policy was in direct contrast with the pre-war Boer republics, which

19. SAGA, February 1913, Department of Justice, 1/136. Phthisis, known also as silicosis, causes a hardening of lungs through undue exposure to dust. In 1907, rock-drilling miners had an annual mortality rate of one hundred deaths per thousand. See Elaine Katz, *The White Death: Silicosis on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, 1886-1910* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University, 1994). Of course, the personal racial prejudices of some American diplomats contributed to their unwillingness to protect the citizenship rights of black Americans.

20. Hull, *American Enterprise in South Africa*, 58-107; James T. Campbell, "The Americanization of South Africa," Andrew Offenburger, Scott Rosenberg, and Christopher Saunders, eds., *A South African and American Comparative Reader: The Best of Safundi and Other Selected Articles* (Nashville, 2002), 29-32.

21. Noer, *Briton, Boer, and Yankee*, ch. 3.

22. *Ibid.*, 100.

openly sought closer relations with Americans and were more likely to acquiesce to American protests on behalf of African-American citizens.²³ The acquiescence to South African racism remained the American diplomatic position as the Paynes entered a racially and politically hostile environment in February 1917. Though aware of South Africa's racial antagonisms, they could not anticipate that they would become casualties of the government's strong aversion toward black Americans, a deep distrust rooted in the tenuous African-American link to Ethiopianism.

African Americans, in the minds of South African authorities, had transformed from honorary whites to "black perils," a fact that the Reverend Herbert A. Payne of New York and his wife Bessie Mae were aware of when they left the United States in January 1917, bound for South Africa via England. The Paynes were Baptist missionaries under the auspices of the 2.5 million-member National Baptist Convention (NBC). They received instructions from the NBC Foreign Mission Board to relieve the Reverend James East and his family at the NBC's Eastern Cape mission in Middledrift.²⁴ The Paynes, upon arrival in London, consulted authorities in the British Colonial Office and the British Home Office regarding South Africa's immigration policy. Neither office indicated any expected difficulty, but the Colonial Office recommended that the Paynes consult with W. P. Schreiner, the High Commissioner of Affairs for South Africa. Schreiner did not meet with the Paynes but personnel from his office reviewed South Africa's 1913 Immigration Act with the missionaries. Neither party found any written clause that banned African Americans from South Africa. Somewhat relieved, they endorsed their passports at the American embassy and prepared for their voyage to South Africa.²⁵

After making the necessary travel arrangements, the Paynes sailed aboard the S.S. Galway Castle en route to East London, the port town closest to Middledrift. During a stopover in Cape Town, South African immigration authorities informed the disbelieving missionaries that they could not enter the country. At best, the Paynes could obtain a one-month temporary residence permit with a security deposit of eighty pounds (four hundred dollars), while awaiting the first available American-bound vessel.²⁶ Fortunately for the Paynes, Solomon Plaatje, a prominent member of the African National Congress who had been in England protesting South Africa's discriminatory policies, was also on board. The Paynes had become friendly with Plaatje during the voyage, and he intervened successfully on their behalf. Louis Botha, the South African Prime Minister, and Thomas Watt, the Minister of the Immigration Department, were both in Cape Town because Parliament was in session, and Plaatje appealed successfully to both to reverse the decision to immediately deport the Paynes and instead allow them time to appeal their case.²⁷

23. *Ibid.*, 186.

24. Jordan to Lansing, 15 June 1917; Jordan to Hughes, 13 April 1921, NA: Department of State Records of British Africa, (hereafter British Africa) Microfilm 583, Record Group 59, Roll 14; *Mission Herald* (January 1919).

25. In Britain and former British territories, the term High Commissioner is roughly commensurate with the American diplomatic title of Ambassador.

26. The deposit would serve as a guarantee to the South African government that the Paynes would leave the country and would be refunded upon the missionaries' departure.

27. Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist* (London, 1978), 205.

While awaiting the Galway Castle's departure from Cape Town to East London, Payne wrote the American consulate in Cape Town and informed them of their detention as "undesirable immigrants." Payne appealed for advice and intervention and thanked the consulate "in advance for the assistance you will give us as *American citizens*" (emphasis added). George Murphy, the American consul-general at Cape Town, quickly responded. An unidentified source informed him that the Paynes' detention was due to their black skin. Murphy wrote to the South African Department of Interior to confirm this information and to ascertain the particulars of the Paynes' anticipated deportation. In the first of a protracted American-South African diplomatic correspondence spanning five years, the Department of the Interior confirmed that "Under a Ministerial order, no coloured person is permitted to land in the Union of South Africa and it is in terms of this general order that the Reverend Payne and his wife were prohibited by the Minister."²⁸

The Department of Interior further asked the consulate to advise the American government of the non-white ban "so that in future, booking in regard to such people from America can be stopped." The Department also noted that this exclusionary policy was not public knowledge "for obvious reasons." The South African decision to ban African Americans reflected the insecurity of a white minority dwarfed by an African majority. In a consular dispatch to the State Department, Murphy summarized this fear and noted, "The natives in the Union so far exceed in number the white population that the question of permitting the admission of other negroes is considered a serious one, requiring a strict enforcement of the law."²⁹

Murphy, continuing the fifteen-year pattern of American diplomats, accepted the Interior Department's explanation as domestic policy that was not subject to international debate and pledged to forward this information to the American Department of State. A discouraged Murphy, mindful that the South African government had recently jailed two African-American seamen, Timothy Johnson and Ewart Gibson, for almost two months while they awaited an America-bound ship, sought to at least make the Paynes' detention more comfortable. He requested successfully that the Paynes, in consideration of their apparent good faith and Bessie Mae's gender, not be detained in jail or dock-detention barracks while awaiting a returning ship.³⁰ Meanwhile, the Paynes argued that the British Colonial Office and the Immigration Act provisions did not ban African Americans from South Africa. However, Mr. Brande, the Principal Immigration Officer, flatly stated that the British Colonial Office had no authority to render binding decisions regarding South African immigration policy. He also noted that the basis for the Paynes' detention was a clause of the 1913 Immigration Act that stipulated that "any person or class of persons deemed by the Minister on economic grounds or on account of standard or habits of life to be unsuited to the requirements of the Union or any particular Province thereof." This loosely worded section obviously gave Thomas Watt, Minister of the Interior, wide

28. Payne to Murphy, NA: British Africa, 22 February 1917; Murphy to South African Department of Interior, *ibid.*; Department of the Interior to Murphy, NA: British Africa, 26 February 1917.

29. Department of Interior to Murphy, NA: British Africa, 26 February 1917; Murphy to American Department of State, NA: British Africa, 7 July 1917.

30. Murphy to Department of the Interior, NA: British Africa, 1 March 1917.

discretionary powers. In fact, the minister invoked the clause to exclude “all colored people” from entering the country, including British subjects.³¹

Along with Murphy’s inquiries, Plaatje and Reverend East interceded on the Paynes’ behalf. Plaatje remained in Cape Town for two weeks to rally support against legislation that eventually became the Native Administration Bill and also maintained an active interest in the fate of the Paynes. East journeyed to Cape Town and argued that Payne’s temporary permit should extend to six months so that he could evaluate Payne’s ability to lead the mission. But East, who had lived in South Africa since 1910 with his wife and his four South African-born children, was also under government attack. The government wanted him to renounce his domiciled rights, which he earned after three years residence in South Africa and prevented his forcible deportation, upon his departure and promise never to return to South Africa. East refused to relinquish these rights and instead desired to remain in South Africa until April 1918, citing the recent birth of a child and the desire for his wife and children to avoid the frigid North American winter.³²

The Department of Interior accepted East’s request for a six-month permit for the Paynes, but stipulated that either the Paynes or East had to leave the country by August 25, the date the permit expired. If the Easts left and Paynes stayed permanently, then East would forfeit his domiciled rights. East then asked Mr. Whitaker, the Middledrift magistrate, to appeal on behalf of the mission to Minister Watt. In his appeal, Whitaker acknowledged the government’s concern with the supposed Ethiopianism of black American missionaries, noting, “It is known that some of this class of immigrants in some parts of the Union have been preaching the doctrine that this is a blackman’s country.”³³ In his correspondence to the NBC, Payne also recognized the government’s opposition to Ethiopianism and acknowledged the “strong effort to break up the independent native churches led by colored pastors.” Yet the NBC had little or no involvement in Ethiopianism. Throughout the Payne affair, NBC representatives consistently disavowed Ethiopianism. East asserted that he harbored “no connection with the so-called Ethiopian movement, he being connected with the regular Baptist Church.” The New York Baptist Ministers Conference issued a resolution on the Paynes’ behalf that asserted that “no charge of preaching Ethiopiaism (sic) or arraignment race against race has ever been charged against our organization.” In fact, the *Mission Herald*, the newspaper of the NBC Foreign Board, consistently attacked Ethiopianism and the Africa for Africans slogan as “a growing menace.” The Paynes were not only anti-Ethiopian, but he also warned the South African government of the potential dangers of Garveyism, which soon took South Africa by storm. In summation, there is no evidence that indicates that the Paynes or other NBC representatives were involved in the Ethiopian movement at this time.³⁴

31. Murphy to State, NA: British Africa, 12 March 1917; Pisar to State, NA: British Africa, 27 November 1922; Murphy to State, NA: British Africa, 12 March 1917.

32. Willan, *Sol Plaatje*, 205-06. Murphy to Department of the Interior, NA: British Africa, 16 March 1917; East to Department of the Interior, NA: British Africa, 26 March 1917, East to Brande, 12 April 1917.

33. Murphy to Secretary of the Interior, NA: British Africa, 16 March 1917.

34. East quoted in *ibid.*; New York Baptist Ministers Conference, NA: British Africa, n.d.; see for example, J. M. Springer, “The Task of Tomorrow,” *Mission Herald* (June 1919); Gregory A. Pirio and Robert A. Hill, “Africa for the Africans: The Garvey Movement in South Africa, 1920-1940,” in Shula Marks and

Payne continued to send letters to the NBC that detailed his difficulties and asked for funds necessary to appeal the Interior Department's decision. The NBC responded by instructing the Foreign Mission Board to be persistent in its appeals to the American Department of State to guarantee the rights of their missionaries, as American citizens, to spread the gospel in South Africa. J. Milton Waldron, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., began an intensive NBC letter writing campaign with a June 13 letter to Assistant Secretary of State William Phillips. L. G. Jordan, the NBC Foreign Missions Corresponding Secretary, followed with a June 15 letter to Secretary of State Robert Lansing.³⁵

Two themes emerged from the numerous letters sent by NBC representatives. First, NBC leaders consistently stressed their loyalty to the United States and repeatedly reminded the Department of State that African Americans were entitled to the rights, protections, and privileges of any other American citizen. In other words, they continued the longstanding African-American argument with white America that citizenship should override race. Second, the NBC mistakenly perceived that Britain mandated and enforced South African immigration policy. Several letters demanded that Britain show a measure of appreciation for the recent American entry into World War I by allowing the Paynes to remain in South Africa. Apparently, the NBC did not realize or ignored the fact that South Africa legislated and enforced its own domestic laws, including immigration policy. Britain represented the dominion nations like South Africa in foreign affairs but not in domestic policy.³⁶

The Department of State, in response to a deluge of NBC letters, instructed the Cape Town consulate to renew inquiries into the matter. The Department of the Interior responded by reiterating the necessity of the Paynes' August 25 departure unless East left and signed away his domiciled rights, promising never to return to the Union. Upon receiving this information, the Department of State notified the NBC and Platt of the South African government's continued intransigence.³⁷ Meanwhile, the Paynes and Easts were concerned about the safety of sailing to America because of the submarine warfare in the Atlantic Ocean. Both families sought South African permission to remain in the Union until the cessation of hostilities. The Department of the Interior refused this request, noting that other persons were traveling directly to America.

Stanley Trapido, eds., *The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (New York: Longman Inc., 1987), 224.

35. Waldron to Phillips, NA: British Africa, 13 June 1917. Before Waldron's letter, the NBC appealed to the Foreign Mission Conference of North America for intervention. An umbrella organization of many Christian foreign missions, the Mission Conference advised the NBC to lobby the American government in hopes of successful intervention.
36. Besides the NBC correspondence, Lansing also received a letter from New York congressman Edmund Platt. Platt was acquainted with Bessie Mae's parents, John and Tillie Harden, who often served as a waitress in Platt's home during special occasions. Platt urged Lansing to relieve the Paynes of any unjust discriminatory treatment, noting that Bessie Mae and her parents were among the "most useful colored people in Poughkeepsie", Platt to Lansing, NA: British Africa, 21 June 1917.
37. State to Murphy, 21 August 1917; Murphy to State, 22 June 1917; Lansing to Platt, 23 June 1917; Murphy to Department of the Interior, 22 June 1917; Secretary of the Interior to Murphy, 25 June 1917, NA: British Africa; Phillips to Jordan, 3 July 1917; Lansing to Platt, 3 July 1917; Tillie Harden to Lansing, July 1917, NA: British Africa.

In July 1917, Murphy declared the matter closed and argued to the Department of State that his repeated inquiries to immigration authorities could provoke South African enmity. In defense of his position, he erroneously stated that the South African Immigration Act excluded persons of color. At any rate, the Department of State agreed with Murphy's decision and duly informed the NBC that the matter was closed. The NBC continued to demand that the Department of State "permit these American citizens to remain in Africa until travel from there to this country is better." They also argued that the Paynes were missionaries, not immigrants, a seemingly salient point that the Department of State answered by continued acquiescence to South Africa's exclusionary policies.³⁸

The Paynes, upon the advice of Murphy, began to seek passage for America. Their quandary deepened. British ships going directly to America refused to offer passage to prospective black customers. In addition, since the Pretoria authorities prohibited women and children from sailing to England because of submarine warfare, the Paynes could not reverse their initial America-Britain-South Africa route. The Paynes probably recognized the irony of the situation. Their skin color threatened to preclude them from residing in *and* leaving South Africa. The Department of the Interior, mindful of the situation, informed Brande to extend the Paynes' temporary permits on a month-to-month basis until they or the Easts could secure a steamer that accepted blacks.³⁹ Indeed, even South African and American officials acknowledged the complications imposed upon the missionaries because "they are Negroes." Brande acknowledged that the Paynes could have a long wait, noting that the "Ellerman-Bucknall line, which has a good steamer going next month directly to the U.S., refuses to accept colored passengers either in the 1st or 2nd class." While awaiting a departing ship, the Paynes and Easts continued their mission work at Middledrift. The missionaries were busy responding to an influenza epidemic, drought, and the alarming rise in food costs during and immediately after World War I. In March 1920, Lucinda East and the children secured passage home; James followed in September. James and Lucinda never returned to South Africa. James became the NBC's Foreign Mission Board Corresponding Secretary and editor of the *Mission Herald*, a position he maintained until his death in 1934.⁴⁰

The departure of the Easts seemed to shield the Paynes from further deportation threats. However, the South African government, in a panic about Garveyism and "American Negroes," mandated that the Paynes leave the country by June 1, 1921, or face imprisonment and the equivalent of a hundred dollar fine. With this news, the NBC

38. Jordan to Polk, 26 July 1917; Carr to Jordan, 2 August 1917, NA: British Africa.

39. Murphy to the South African Governor-General, SAGA: Pretoria, 15 January 1918; Governor-General Department, File 3/2542/36 vol. 124; Murphy to State, NA: British Africa, 26 September 1917.

40. East to Jordan, 24 November 1919 in *Mission Herald*, January 1920. For the influenza epidemic, see East to Jordan in *Mission Herald*, January 1919; oral interview: Gladys East, 26 December 1995, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. East was the eldest daughter of James and Lucinda East's seven children. She was born in South Africa in 1910 and lived there until her parents left in 1920. In the late 1960s, she returned to Middledrift for a short visit and maintained regular contact with that mission throughout her life. For more on the cooperative activities of James East and D. D. T. Jabavu, see Farieda Kahn, "Rewriting South Africa's Conservation History: The Role of the Native Farmers Association," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 20, no. 4 (December 1994), 499-516.

resumed their appeals to the Department of State. The Department directed Alfred Winslow, the new Cape Town consul-general, to investigate the matter, but extant records do not indicate that this occurred. At any rate, the Paynes were able to stay after the imposed deadline, remaining in Middledrift until 1923. The South African government refused to allow another African-American missionary family to replace the Paynes.⁴¹

“American Negroes,” in ever-lessening numbers, continued to enter South Africa. African-American bishops presided over Southern African AME missions until 1948, when the Nationalist government refused the further entry of African Americans. African-American visitors like Ralph Bunche and Eslanda Robeson were virtual celebrities during their brief visits to South Africa during the 1930s. Despite the increasing difficulty for African Americans to enter South Africa, the “American Negro” remained an iconic figure in South Africa. Black South Africans were particularly avid readers of Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery*, W. E. B. Du Bois’ *Souls of Black Folk*, the wry musings of Langston Hughes, and periodicals like the NAACP’s *Crisis* and the UNIA’s *The Negro World*. They remained enthralled with entertainment figures like Florence Mills and Paul Robeson, along with sporting heroes Joe Louis and Jesse Owens, both of whom defeated German athletes at a time when Adolf Hitler was trumpeting his particularly noxious brand of white supremacy. The pages of South African newspapers like *The Bantu World*, the *Cape Standard* and *Umteteli wa Bantu* were replete with admiring articles of “American Negro” progress and stern admonitions for Africans to follow suit.

Indeed, black South Africans like ANC leader James Thaele and ICU General Secretary Clements Kadalie affected American accents and trumpeted their connections to American Negroes as a means to enhance their legitimacy amongst their followers. Wellington Butelezi and Enoch Mbinjana were two South Africans who *actually assumed* American Negro identities in the service of their millennial brand of Garveyism. The South African government’s harassment of the Paynes, Easts, and other African Americans were ultimately futile, for the genie was already out of the bottle. Since the 1890s, black South Africans had viewed African Americans as proof that modernity and “civilization”—and the full citizenship rights that such a status implied—were not the exclusive preserve of whiteness. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the “American Negro” would remain a signifier of black modernity and the tangible refutation to white supremacist notions of trusteeship and “racial time.” This article has traced the transition of African Americans from “honorary whites”—when citizenship trumped race—to the post-South African war period when their race overrode their citizenship and they were deemed to be “black perils.” Ultimately, however, it was the **combination** of race and citizenship that made African Americans, in the minds of many white South Africans, the ultimate *swaart gevaar*.

41. Jordan to Hughes, 13 April 1921; Hughes to Winslow, 23 April 1921, NA: British Africa; *Mission Herald* (April 1923); East, oral interview, 8 September 1996.