

What is Pan-Africanism?

History, Leading Figures, Current Landscape

Africa Program Factsheet: 5 March 2021  
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What is Pan-Africanism?

- Pan-Africanism is the idea that people of African descent share a common culture, interests, and an overall collective experience while confronting similar problems. The core belief is that unity is necessary for economic, social, and political progress and for the people of African descent to reach their full potential.
- It is often a political or cultural movement that aims to bring together all individuals from the African diaspora around the world.
- The early features of Pan-Africanism opposed the idea of Black inferiority, racism, and colonialism, which were all intertwined.



First Pan-African Conference, 1900

Leading Figures

Leading Figure	About
Edward Wilmot Blyden	One of the most prominent fathers of Pan-Africanism, a St. Thomian politician and educator who lived primarily in Liberia. He called for African unity and the need for people in the diaspora to return to the continent. He also emphasized the uniqueness of the African race.
Henry Sylvester-Williams	A Trinidadian lawyer and writer who also called for Pan-African unity in the late 19th century by forming the African Association in England. He believed that Africans and the diaspora needed a forum to address their common problems.
Martin Delaney and Alexander Crummell	African Americans who were also among the early Pan-Africanists. Delaney advocated for the Diaspora to establish their own new nation where they can flourish and coined the term “Africa for the African race”, a phrase that Marcus Garvey later used. While Crummell, a minister, and educator, first agreed with Delaney, he later fused Christianity into the liberation movement.
W.E.B. Du Bois	One of the most notable leaders of Pan-Africanism. He challenged the notion of skin colors that caused a divide and was concerned with racism and other problems faced by the diaspora in the U.S. but also with colonialism in Africa. He organized the first four Pan-African Congresses to unite those who support the liberation of Africa from colonialism.
Marcus Garvey	a Jamaican who grew up in the U.S., he rejected the idea of Africans staying in the U.S. and the possibility of a non-racial society. He emphasized the need for Africans to return to Africa by forming the ‘Back to Africa’ movement in the 1920s. He founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association.
George Padmore	born in Trinidad, he was an advisor to Kwame Nkrumah and led the 5th Pan-African Congress. He emphasized the connection between the struggles of African Americans and liberation movements in Africa. He founded and formed the International African Service Bureau and Pan-African Federation, which organized the Pan-African Congress in 1945.
Kwame Nkrumah	Ghana’s first president, he was an influential Pan-Africanist in Africa and called for cooperation among Africans and the unity of an independent Africa in the 1950s and 60s. He was also one of the founders of the Organization of African Unity in 1963, which is now known as the African Union.
Others	Additional prominent figures of Pan-Africanism include Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, Anna Julia Cooper of the U.S., Anna H. Jones of the U.S., Charlotte Manye Maxeke of South Africa, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, and Ida Gibbs Hunt of the U.S.



## Women Leaders within the Movement

- Audley Moore and Dara Abubakari were activists who advocated for the integration of Black women in initiatives and were committed to Pan-African organizing.
- Amy Ashwood Garvey, a Jamaican Pan-Africanist and Marcus Garvey's first wife, was the co-founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) a mass organization of the 20th century that mobilized Africans for the fight against colonialism and imperialism. She also co-founded of The Negro World, UNIA's internationally circulated newspaper, wherein she spread the ideals of Pan-Africanism around the world and the role of women in Pan-Africanism.
- Amy Jacques Garvey, a Jamaican and Garvey's second wife, also played a central role in the Pan-Africanism. She was an editor and columnist of The Negro World and her column "Our Women and What They Think" urged black women to be active in the Pan-African movement.
- Jeanne Martin Cisse of Guinea was the founder and the first Secretary-General of the Pan-African Women's Organization, a movement that aimed to address the exclusion of women in politics and to advance unity amongst African states.

## Pan-African Association & Congresses

- The Pan-African Association was formed in 1897 by Sylvester Williams and was initially focused on the struggles of Africans under British rule but quickly broadened its focus to include people of African descent worldwide.
- Following the first conference, the Association dissolved and the Pan-African Congress emerged, hosting a series of meetings in 1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, 1945, 1974, 1994 and 2015.
- The Congress held discussions and passed resolutions on the social, political, and economic conditions facing Black people and promoted anti-imperialism and self-government of Africans.
- The Pan-African Association and Congress helped to create ties between the diaspora and Africans in the continent.

## Pan-Africanism from 1960s & onward

- There was a resurgence of Pan-Africanism in the Black Power movement in the 1960s and 1970s.
- TransAfrica, an organization founded in 1977 by Randall Robinson led the Free South Africa Movement. They fought to end apartheid in South Africa through direct action protests targeting change U.S. government support for the racist regime and worked with the Congressional Black Caucus to pass the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, imposing economic sanction on South Africa that helped force the release of Nelson Mandela.
- The Movement for Black Lives also known as M4BL was created in 2014 as a way to mobilize Black organizations in response to increased violence against Black communities. The movement includes Black Lives Matter and others.
- Today, Pan-Africanism is manifested at the state level through the African Union and articulated in the goals of the AU's Agenda 2063. Organizations such as the African Union, African Development Bank and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa are inter-state Pan-African institutions that promote unity through economic integration and development across the continent.
- Some argue that the current state of the continent shows that it is time to redefine what the movement means for Africa and its descendants amidst the social, economic, and political crises it's facing.

By Temi Ibirogba and Sifa Kasongo