

The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line. Cicero M. Fain III.

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*The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line.* by Roderick D. Bush. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009. 258 pp.

Barack Obama's historic election reaffirmed the conundrum of the race in America. On the one hand, it embodied the long-sought convergence of the democratic vision articulated by intellectuals, activists, and citizens comprising the civil rights movement. Inarguably, his election shifted and edified the nature of discourse on history, democracy, race, and power in contemporary America and the international arena. Yet, overwhelmingly Blacks still see race and racism as constitutive of American society. In contrast, many saw Obama's singular achievement as an allegory for an eventual post-racial society in which Blacks are no longer considered inferior and whites are no longer racists. In effect, signaling the long-sought completion of the democratic vision of the movement.

In *The End of White World Supremacy: Black Internationalism and the Problem of the Color Line*, Roderick D. Bush offers a sophisticated, ambitious, and expansive rebuff to those embracing a vision of racial idealism. Revisiting and grounding his thesis in Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois' prophetic declaration in *The Souls of Black Folks* that "the problem of the 20th century is the color line," Bush believes "racism is systemic" and "foundational to the modern-world system (218)" that originated with European colonial expansion and metastasized into global proportions with American and European imperialism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Employing multiple perspectives to examine the Black American experience and its international dimensions, Bush utilizes two differing literatures—world systems analysis and

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radical black social movement theory to contextualize the tradition of black activism and black radicalism used to confront the racist forces of the capitalist world economy and provide a corrective to global social injustice. In his mind, the civil rights movement encompasses a crucial ideological and political platform within a broader historical continuum in which white liberals, the working class, women, and Black Americans coalesced into an assault on white supremacy and reconfigured global power relations.

In the Black intellectual tradition, Bush utilizes a diverse and substantive evidentiary base of historical, theoretical, and secondary literature to construct an authoritative analytical foundation. By embracing a "more sophisticated use of the concept of social time (13)," and interdisciplinary theoretical foundation, Bush expands the periodization of the civil rights movement (and the actors within it) to the nineteenth century, and re-conceptualizes and broadens our understanding of the historic centrality of the civil rights movement, the Black radical tradition, and race-based social movements to the political aspirations of Black Americans and those of the African descent throughout the world. Consequently, he brings fresh perspective and vitality in his analysis of the lives, insights, and commonality of and contractions in the aspirations of Du Bois, George Padmore, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Kwame Nkrumah, and a host of other Black radical intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Locating them within the Black American tradition of activism, institutional development, and Pan-Africanism, Bush illuminates the criticality of Black solidarity and Black internationalism to developing greater democratization of America and the global environment and economic system. In

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effect, he strives "to locate the New Negro, civil rights and Black Power phases of the Black freedom struggle in a larger tradition with sites in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa and among the social and national movements of the Three Continents (12)." In this manner, his study "seeks to determine the overall impact of these movements, their impact on the social forces, and the resultant transitions in U.S. society as a whole (12)."

A former activist in the Black Power and radical movements of the 1960s through the 1980s and current associate professor of sociology and anthropology at St. John's University, Bush contends that the fates of Black Americans and those dark, oppressed, and powerless of the African Diaspora are inextricably linked by the racist commonality of their historic antecedents in the new world: the European conquest of the Americas, the obliteration of the Amerindian civilizations, and the enslavement of Africans. Likewise, the aspirations of Black people everywhere are linked by their efforts to ameliorate the racist, classist, and gendered impulses embedded within the international economic system. Bush's scholarly grounding in Black Nationalism and world-systems theory provide authority to his examination of race and class and their relation to capitalism, imperialism, and the concomitant historical oppression of the darker peoples of the world.

Critical to his analysis is an investigation is the unique role of Black women in the Black freedom struggle and how the character of their leadership in the construction of social resistance within the African American experience remains underappreciated. The works of Patricia Hill Collins play a prominent position in his examination of the role of black

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feminism and the “intersectionality” of its critique of “racism, patriarchy, capitalism, and Eurocentrism (132).”

Despite the racist, classist, and sexist nature of American society and its relation to global injustice and inequity, Bush ultimately suggests that the prescription to curing America’s continuing racial troubles and the racial divide globally is to be found in the forthright application of the American creed, domestically and internationally.

Bush recognizes the enormity and idealism of the task ahead but suggests its realization as a natural consequence of the changing demographics of America and the globe. The force of this reality compels a reversal of the historical processes undergirding white supremacy. Only through “the decolonization of the U.S. Empire, internally and externally (219),” can America embrace social justice as a model and blunt the thrust of the rise of the oppressed peoples of the world that is clearly underway and in the process of reshaping global power relations.

*The End of White World Supremacy* is an exceptional work of great intellectual scope, interdisciplinary methodology, and scholarly rigor that challenges and engages, while simultaneously issuing a bold call to action. It will doubtless prove daunting for the uninitiated, but it will reward scholars and students through the command and force of its scholarship.

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