

REVIEW ESSAY

The Anti-Aryan Moment: Decolonization, Diplomacy, and Race in Late Pahlavi Iran

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In 1946, the entertainer and activist Paul Robeson pondered America's intentions in Iran. In what was to become one of the first major crises of the Cold War, Iran was fighting a Soviet aggressor that did not want to leave. Robeson posed the question, "Is our State Department concerned with protecting the rights of Iran and the welfare of the Iranian people, or is it concerned with protecting Anglo-American oil in that country and the Middle East in general?" This was a loaded question. The US was pressuring the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops after its occupation of the country during World War II. Robeson wondered why America cared so much about Soviet forces in Iranian territory, when it made no mention of Anglo-American troops "in countries far removed from the United States or Great Britain."¹ An editorial writer for a Black journal in St. Louis posed a different variant of the question: Why did the American secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, concern himself with elections in Iran, Arabia or Azerbaijan and yet not "interfere in his home state, South Carolina, which has not had a free election since Reconstruction?"²

The struggle for decolonization (*este'mar zeda'i* or *zedd-e este'mari*) consumed Iranians after World War II as they strove to define the political ethos of their generation. From Palestine and India to Angola and South Africa colonized communities fought tyrannical regimes to bring a measure of equality, freedom, and legal accountability to their lives. Decolonization embraced a wide array of causes: anti-imperialism and political liberation as well as racial and economic justice. It entailed a fundamental ideological reboot, without clear parameters. Decolonization was not only a "constructive revolutionary endeavor," but a humanitarian necessity. Colonial powers did not themselves disengage "to radically and holistically transform all aspects of life within an ethical global context," but began to do so because colonized societies pushed them to that reality.³ States like Iran without a direct history of colonialism engaged with this debate on two levels: state-to-state interactions and non-elite dissident activism. Nowhere did Iran's complicated and contradictory politics during the late Pahlavi era find better expression than in the debates about decolonization and race.⁴

Civil Rights and Race Relations

In 1961, the Iranian intellectual, Mohammad 'Ali Islami Nodushan (b. 1925) opined about the changing political currents of the day. A literary scholar, a poet, and a trained lawyer, Nodushan had grown up near Yazd and later moved to Tehran to complete his secondary education. He attended the College of Law in Tehran and then traveled to Paris to attend the Sorbonne, where he completed a law degree. Nodushan also spent time in London and gained familiarity with both French and English. Upon his return Nodushan became a professor in Tehran University's College of Literature.⁵ Considered a "dear friend" of

¹Paul Robeson, "Russia, The Symbol of Progress," *Negro: A Review* (St. Louis) 4, no. 8 (1946): 53.

²"Our Nation's Schools," *Negro: A Review* (St. Louis) 4, no. 10, (1946): 11.

³Cyrus Schayegh and Yoav Di Capua, "Why Decolonization?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, no. 1 (2020): 141.

⁴Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, "Colorblind or Blinded by Color? Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in Iran," in *Sites of Pluralism: Community Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Firat Oruç (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 172–74.

⁵Mehri Nasiri, Hosayn Khosravi, and Asghar Rezapourian, "Shenakht-Nameh-ye Doktor Mohammad 'Ali Islami Nodushan," *Motale'at Adabiyat-e Tatbiqi*, no. 54 (2020): 377–78. In another interview, Islami Nodushan was asked about his views of Yazdi philosopher Ahmad Fardid and supported Fardid's claim that he, not Al-e Ahmad, had first used the phrase *gharbzadegi* (Westernitis), which Al-e Ahmad then popularized. Nodushan used the term "Occidentalise" to translate *gharbzadegi*. See

Iranian dissident writer Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–69), Nodushan observed that at no point since the Suez War was the United States as “exciting” (*hayjan angiz*) a country. In Nodushan’s view, John F. Kennedy’s presidency could restore the “prestige” of the United States, a standing damaged by America’s foreign policy interventions across the globe. The decline of America’s popularity, especially in the decolonizing world, was rooted in the fruits planted by former US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his support for dictators and so-called friends of the “free world” (*donya-ye azad*).⁶ Nodushan believed that America now needed to move in lockstep with a changing global community. President Kennedy—a sailor and former naval officer—could not await a Noah-like rescue to survive the rising tides of global decolonization that threatened to engulf the United States.⁷

As Nodushan explained, the Kennedy administration tried to promote a foreign policy rooted in notions of international altruism. In the 1960s this strategy found expression in America’s support for Mohammad Reza Pahlavi’s social reform program dubbed the “White Revolution.”⁸ The shah, with encouragement from the Kennedy administration, honed in on land reform, women’s suffrage, and literacy, among other matters, to bring about a measure of social mobility and relief to disadvantaged populations. But on the issue of race Iran had proceeded at times as if color-blind.⁹ Like the rest of the world, Iran watched as mighty America continued to deprive its Black citizens of basic human and political rights. At the same time, Iranian intellectuals translated the works of Francophone writers who wrote about decolonizing societies, from Martinique to Mauritania. Through this process, Iranians became familiar with the experiences of slavery and systemic racism to which Blacks outside of Iran had been subjected in multiple contexts. Iranians also grappled with the prejudices endemic to their country, but not always in terms of phenotype discrimination. Although Iran had abolished slavery in 1929, public engagement with the subject often remained obscure and inchoate.¹⁰

As a postwar intellectual, Islami Nodushan belonged to a generation of Third World thinkers who did not rush to embrace America’s (or the West’s) image of political liberator. In a scathing essay, “Nabard-e Rang dar Ifriqa-e Jonubi” (The Color Battle in South Africa), Nodushan bemoaned the anemic response of the United Nations to the racial injustices taking place there. He dismissed South Africa’s claim that its racial problems were an internal affair. Rather, he considered it a ruse to justify the rule of “three million white people . . . over nine million Black people,” because they had access to “power, money and guns.” Nodushan expressed frustration that world leaders had stubbornly insisted on solving “the big problems of humanity” (*masa’el-e bozorg-e ensani*) with putative “legal frameworks” that had badly flouted the

Maryam Seyyed Hasani, “Zendege Sarshar az na gofteh-hast: Mosahebeh ba Doktor Islami Nodushan,” *Rudaki*, no. 12–13 (2007): 270. Most researchers have focused on Nodushan’s literary output, especially his work on the *Shahnameh*, but not on his travelogues, which for historical purposes offer many valuable insights. This special issue, edited by Javad Abbasi and Mahmood Fotoohi-Rudmajani, focuses on various aspects of Nodushan, though not in the contexts (or in reference to some of the works) discussed here. In particular, see: Javad Abbasi, “A Realist Iranophile: Reflections on Professor Nodoushan’s Contributions to Iranian Studies,” *Iran Namag* 3, no. 4 (2019), 3–22.

⁶Mohammad ‘Ali Islami Nodushan, “Mard-e Javan va Darya,” *Yaghma* 150 (Day 1339/1960–61): 485–86. The title, “The Young Man and the Sea,” suggests a take on Ernest Hemingway’s novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*.

⁷Nodushan, “Mard-e Javan va Darya,” 488–89.

⁸See James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), ch. 4, for an indispensable history of this relationship, although not about Nodushan or race relations. For other important works on US-Iranian relations and Iranian student groups, see respectively: Matthew K. Shannon, *Losing Hearts and Minds: American-Iranian Relations and International Education during the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017); and Afshin Matin-Asgari, *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002).

⁹Kashani-Sabet, “Colorblind,” 153–80.

¹⁰For discussions of race in Iran, see Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions, Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). For discussions of slavery, media, and race in Iran, see Beeta Baghoolizadeh, “Seeing Race and Erasing Slavery: Media and the Construction of Blackness in Iran, 1830–1960” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2018). For a history of slavery until abolition in Iran, see Behnaz Mirzai, *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800–1929* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2017). For a study of race in Persianate literature, see Minoos Southgate, “The Negative Images of Blacks in Some Medieval Iranian Writings,” *Iranian Studies* 17, no. 1 (1984): 3–36. For anthropological discussions of Afro-Iranians, see Mahdi Ehsaei, *Afro-Iran: The Unknown Minority* (self-published, 2016). Also, Pedram Khosronejad, “The Face of African Slavery in Qajar Iran: In Pictures,” *The Guardian*, 14 January 2016. For related discussions, see Amirhossein Vafa, “Race and the Aesthetics of Alterity in Mahshid Amirshahi’s Dadeh Qadam-Kheyri,” *Iranian Studies* 51, no. 1 (2017): 141–60. These studies do not consider, however, Iran’s engagement with Black global politics in the contexts discussed here.

human rights of Black South Africans. He denounced the control of the country's precious mines by a small minority of whites of colonial British and Dutch descent. Apartheid, which he defined as "segregation" (*jodayi*), perplexed him, as it did other Iranian intellectuals who gravitated toward the struggles of dispossessed non-white populations in an era of decolonization.¹¹

Nodushan's essay was written in the midst of heightened political tensions in South Africa that had cemented apartheid as state policy. During the 1960s the governments of Iran and South Africa operated through informal diplomatic channels, which saw the increased isolation of South Africa because of its apartheid practices.¹² Following the assassination of South Africa's prime minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, on 6 September 1966, the Iranian press provided a dispassionate summary of South Africa's apartheid policies, many enacted during Verwoerd's tenure, which had insisted on "white supremacy" (*siyadat-e sefid pustan*) over a Black African majority.¹³

As witnesses to their country's fight for independence and political enfranchisement, Iranians showed solidarity with liberation movements that pursued similar objectives. Many Iranians observed the racial upheaval that consumed America with a mixture of consternation and curiosity. On 21 February 1965, the murder of Malcolm X in Harlem dominated headlines. Malcolm's "X," which reflected a rejection of his slave name, Little, was misidentified as "Tenth" (Malkom-e Dahom) in the venerable Persian daily *Ettela'at* (Information; Fig. 1).¹⁴ The newspaper portrayed Malcolm X as a separatist who believed that American Blacks needed to carve out a distinct state and government for themselves. Black Muslims in America were described as belonging to a unique faction of Islam whose beliefs diverged from those of Muslim orthodoxy. The escalation of racially inspired violence reinforced the intensity of social tensions in America, even as they demonstrated Malcolm's militant attitude (*mo'taqed beh khushunat va sheddad-e 'amal ast*).¹⁵ That Malcolm X belonged to a group called the "Nation of Islam" further piqued the curiosity of Iranian bystanders. A journal with a religious focus discussed the plight of Black Americans, whose sin consisted simply of being a "Black human" (*ensan-e siyah*), for which they were beaten.¹⁶

Iranians did not quite know what to make of American Islam and its Black adherents. The death of Malcolm X provided an occasion to familiarize the public with the movement that Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X had spearheaded. Despite the rifts between them, which had cost Malcolm X his life, these racial disturbances gripped Iranian readers. They came to recognize Betty Shabazz, the murdered activist's pregnant wife, who contended that the New York police had failed to provide him with adequate protection.¹⁷ Similarly, when Martin Luther King received the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, he appeared in a vignette as another Black American leader whose life was under threat.¹⁸

¹¹Mohammad 'Ali Islami Nodushan, "Nabard-e Rang Dar Ifriqa-e Jonubi," *Yaghma* 13, no. 3 (Khordad 1339/May–June 1960): 114–15.

¹²H. E. Chehabi, "South Africa and Iran in the Apartheid Era," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42, no. 4 (2016): 690–91, doi: 10.1080/03057070.2016.1201330.

¹³*Ettela'at*, no. 12074, 7 September 1966, 1, 3. For an interesting essay at the time about race relations in South Africa, see Hushang Moqtader, "Tab'izat-e Nezhadi Dar Ifriqaye Jonubi," *Khirda va Kushesh*, no. 2 (June–July 1969): 132–43.

¹⁴*Ettela'at*, no. 11618, 22 February 1965, 1, 4.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁶Seyyed Hadi Khosroshahi, "Mosalmanan-e Siyah va Nehzat-e Rahayi Bakhsh dar Amrika," *Falsafeh va Kalam*, *Maktab-e Tashay'o*, no. 11 (May–June 1964): 44–48. Khosroshahi wrote another article that referenced a *New York Times* article and discussed Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam. His writings reflected the intellectual distinctions in Iranian society regarding the narratives of Black American Muslims and racial tensions in America. See Seyyed Hadi Khosroshahi, "Islam behtarin panahgah-e siyahan-e Amrika," *Falsafeh va Kalam*, *Dars-hayi az Maktab-e Islam*, no. 6 (Jan.–Feb. 1964): 40–44. After the revolution, Khosroshahi (d. 2020) served as the Islamic Republic's ambassador to the Vatican. For related writings on Khosroshahi and Algeria in connection with Iranian revolutionaries, see Naghmehe Sohrabi, "The 'problem space' of the historiography of the 1979 Iranian Revolution," *History Compass* 16, no. 11 (2018): 1–10. The issue of race, however, is not problematized in Sohrabi's essay. For important discussions about Iranian intellectuals and their engagement with events in Algeria and elsewhere, see Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996); and Negin Nabavi, *Intellectuals and the State in Iran: Politics, Discourse and the Dilemma of Authenticity* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2003).

¹⁷*Ettela'at*, no. 11619, 23 February 1965, 4.

¹⁸*Ibid.*



Figure 1. “Malcolm the Tenth: The Leader of America’s Black Muslims Was Killed,” *Ettela’at*, no. 11618, 22 February 1965.

The assassination of Dr. King on 4 April 1968 by “a white extremist” (*sefid pust-e efrati*) made front-page news, as did the ensuing race riots (*eghteshashat-e nezhadī*). The coverage mentioned King’s philosophy of nonviolent “peaceful protest” (*mobarezeh-e mosalemat amiz*), and the shah also expressed condolences to President Lyndon Johnson and the American people about King’s murder.¹⁹ Another article covered the global reaction to King’s killing and noted the resounding support of African countries at the United Nations for his cause.²⁰ One piece discussed the significance of the passage of the historic Civil Rights Act in 1964 and included the iconic photograph of President Johnson offering Dr. King a pen that represented the signing of the act.²¹ At the same time, Iranians confronted racial injustice in America when reading about organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan (“the opponents of Blacks” [*mokhalefan-e siyahan*]) and the group’s declared “sacred war” (*jang-e moqaddas*) against President Johnson.²²

Through figures such as Dr. King, other civil rights advocates, and sports icons, Iranians came to know prominent global Black icons. In 1965, Kenyan long-distance runner Kip Keino set the world record in the 5,000 meters and was featured in the popular Persian sports magazine, *Kayhan-e Varzeshi* (Sports Universe). The article recounted the race in detail and touted Keino’s achievement as “the world record falls at the feet of a Black man.”²³ With even more excitement, Iranians followed the rise of Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay), who enjoyed immense popularity in Iran during the peak of his career. Clay’s victory over Sonny Liston in February 1964 (he had not yet changed his name and announced his conversion to Islam) made front-page news (Fig. 2).²⁴ Journalist Parviz Khorsand, writing for a religious-leaning journal, found special meaning in Clay’s victory, which gave the boxer a platform to express his support for

¹⁹ *Ettela’at*, no. 12552, 6 April 1968, 1–2, 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18. This article discussed the reaction of Pope Paul VI to Dr. King’s death. King had visited the Vatican in 1964, seeking support for the civil rights struggle in the United States.

²¹ *Ettela’at*, 7 April 1968, 1.

²² *Kayhan*, no. 6494, 08-01-1344/1965. University scholar and historian, Khanbaba Bayani, had translated an excerpt from André Siegfried’s *Les Etas-Unis d’Aujourd’hui* (Paris, 1927) that discussed the history of the Ku Klux Klan. This is one of the earliest known Persian discussions of this group; Khanbaba Bayani, “Ku Klux Klan,” *Adabiyat va Zabanha, Nashriyeh-e Zaban va Adabiyat Farsi*, no. 4 (1948): 18–27.

²³ *Kayhan-e Varzeshi*, no. 549, 11 December 1965, 17. In the next issue, American boxer Emile Griffith was highlighted for retaining his middleweight title; *Kayhan-e Varzeshi*, no. 550, 18 December 1965.

²⁴ *Ettela’at*, no. 11327, 26 February 1964, 1. Muhammad Ali’s victory over Floyd Patterson also made front-page news in another Persian newspaper: *Kayhan*, no. 6691, 23 November 1965, 1, 11.



Figure 2. "In the Exciting Clay-Liston Fight for the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship, Liston Was Defeated and Clay Screamed: I Am the Winner!" *Ettela'at*, no. 11327, 26 February 1964, 1.

Islam in pursuit of racial parity.²⁵ Over a year later, Ali's TKO victory over Floyd Patterson again raised his stature in Iran. The public was particularly intrigued by the champion's taunting manner during the fight. Clay also stood out for his outspoken views about the Vietnam War, a conflict that polarized Persian intellectuals.²⁶

Iran tracked the various phases of the Vietnam War with interest. Unlike the monarch, Iranian writers gravitated to Third World causes that cast America as an imperialist intruder on the world stage, and they commiserated with its battered enemies.²⁷ In 1973, the Iranian Students Association of Washington-Baltimore communicated with Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) to share "some important materials about the real situation in Iran."²⁸ This apparently included information about the arrest and killing of dissidents. Iranian students in the US found sympathetic ears among VVAW members who denounced the shah.²⁹

Yet the images of the Vietnamese were replete with racist stereotypes. These caricatures reinforced the ways in which Iranians "othered" East Asian communities, even when trying to express sympathy.³⁰ The satirical journal *Towfiq* pushed the limits on propriety and social norms, including race, which emerged as an important part of its messaging. Its illustrations suggested that many Iranians understood race and racial difference in simplistic, often ignorant and derogatory terms (Fig. 3).³¹ Still, Iranians were finally beginning to see the Vietnam conflict in color and as part of a global decolonization struggle. The

²⁵Parviz Khorsand, "Cassius Clay: Champion of Boxing," *Falsafeh va Kalam, Nashriyeh-e Ma'aref-e Ja'fari* No. 1 (Mehr 1343/September–October 1964): 49–55. This fascinating piece references Langston Hughes and boxer Jack Johnson's victories and challenges, in assessing the experiences of Black Americans.

²⁶*Kayhan*, no. 6691, 23 November 1965, 1.

²⁷Iran's literati became similarly engrossed in the war. The literary journal *Sokhan* published a series of articles on Vietnamese art, poetry, and antiquity. A particularly moving section included the vignettes of Vietnamese children who had become the unfortunate and innocent victims of the conflict. These vignettes, collected by a French journalist and translated into Persian for an Iranian audience, voiced in simple and poignant language the hardship that Vietnamese children endured. See the issue of *Sokhan*, no. 22 (1972).

²⁸History Vault, File 201748 009 0050, Collection: Vietnam Veterans Against the War Records, 1967–2006; Source: Vietnam Veterans Against the War Records, 1967–2006 (Mss 370; PH 4580; M2012-012; M2013-174), Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin Iranian Student Association in Washington-Baltimore to Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 20 November 1973.

²⁹History Vault, File 201748 009 0050, Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization, Inc., "Statement of VVAW/WSO in Solidarity with the Iranian Students Assoc.," 6 September 1975.

³⁰*Towfiq*, no. 50, 4 March 1971. For other images of Vietnam, see *Towfiq*, 16 September 1969; *Towfiq*, 22 October 1970; and *Towfiq*, 12 November 1970. For discussions of Iran and Vietnam in the context of race and decolonization, see my book, *Heroes to Hostages: America and Iran in a Troubled Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Elements of these arguments also were presented as "America's Vietnam in Iran" at an online workshop on Pahlavi Iran, 19 March 2021, UCLA.

³¹*Towfiq* 49, no. 50, 4 March 1971.



Figure 3. “The army of South Vietnam, which had sent troops to Laos to take back the main [Ho Chi Minh] trail from the Communists, suffered difficult defeat and heavy casualties, and fled in flocks from the Viet Cong.” South Vietnamese General to Viet Cong: “We have given up on the Main Trail. At least show us a back road so we can escape and save our lives.” *Towfiq* 49, no. 50, 4 March 1971.

coupling of the Vietnam War with the fight for racial parity in South Africa and the United States alienated a skeptical Persian reading public that increasingly regarded American interventions around the world as abetting racial and economic injustice.

Decolonization and Anti-Aryanism

In 1962, the influential writer, Jalal Al-e Ahmad published his scathing pamphlet against cultural imperialism called *Gharbzadegi* (Westernitis), which became a clarion call for cultural reidentification. Born into a religious family, Al-e Ahmad studied literature at the Tehran Teachers College and in 1944 briefly joined the communist Tudeh party. In the 1960s he rediscovered Islam as a cultural force and performed the hajj.³² His sympathy for decolonized communities explained in part his critical view of the United States. Around the same time that Al-e Ahmad produced his work, Mohammad Reza Shah published his manifesto, *Mission for My Country*, an odd mix of memoir, history, and annual report. The shah touted his administrative successes and his efforts to “stamp out corruption.” The king explained his political philosophy and notion of democracy by making a peculiar analogy: “Political democracy can never operate like an electric refrigerator; you cannot just turn it on and let it run.” Instead, he argued, Iranian democracy necessitated a paternalistic approach that recognized the need for “maturity and tolerance,” and, referring to himself, “a sense of mission.”³³

Through educational and cultural endeavors, America tried to find a way to mediate these incongruities. One of these programs brought Al-e Ahmad to the United States in 1965 on a trip that lasted approximately three months. While visiting Harvard University, Al-e Ahmad encountered James L. Farmer, founder and first director of the Congress of Racial Equality as well as a civil rights activist and proponent of nonviolent protest. Farmer had been invited for a lecture, in which he discussed the necessity of moving past the tropes of Black and white in conversations about race relations in America. Farmer emotionally recalled his trip to Africa, his personal experiences of imprisonment,

³²For an informative and indispensable discussion of Al-e Ahmad’s background and prominent writings, see Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 39–80. Also, Golnar Nikpour, “Revolutionary Journeys, Revolutionary Practice: The Hajj Writings of Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Malcolm X,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no. 1 (2014): 67–85. For Al-e Ahmad’s hajj travelogue, see *Lost in the Crowd*, trans. John Green (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1985).

³³Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for My Country* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), 175, 178.

and his views of African American Muslims, including Malcolm X.³⁴ At another session, Harris Wofford, Special Assistant to the President (JFK) for Civil Rights and one of the founders of the Peace Corps, mentioned that approximately 200 volunteers were serving in Iranian villages and that they were being trained for future service in the State Department. The encounters at the seminar enabled participants to consider American responses to racial injustice and social inequality; however, the Peace Corps and other comparable educational exchanges failed to generate significant goodwill or understanding. Iranian students abroad rallied around anti-Vietnam War protests and remonstrated against America's support for a monarch they considered out of touch with populist concerns.

Like his friend Al-e Ahmad, Islami Nodushan also was invited to attend a seminar at Harvard in 1967. This seminar, which lasted about six weeks, included writers and activists from thirty countries. George Lodge, the son of Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., and Henry Kissinger oversaw the gathering. According to Nodushan, participants openly discussed all the complex crises facing the United States, from race to Vietnam. Outside the academic setting, Nodushan had the opportunity to meet Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and Senator Robert Kennedy. Nodushan wrote that knowing America as a country was a necessity, given its weight in the world. Yet he recognized that America's size and diversity made it difficult to reach facile judgments about it.³⁵

As a rich country, Nodushan contended, America attracted false friends and envy. It spent ample sums of money to promote a positive self-image, but with mixed results. Americans were "naive" (*sadeh del*) and lacked a sophisticated worldview. Only three of its countless newspapers offered global perspective. Television provided most Americans with the daily sound bites they craved. Advertisers (and therefore big business) had a strong hand in communicating the news, which was managed privately. In several paragraphs Nodushan summed up the dilemmas and contradictions of America: "After spending two minutes watching the bloody scenes of the war, the swamps and jungles of Vietnam, the way Viet Cong sympathizers squirm in their blood, the crumbling cottages, and mothers with naked children in tow run for cover. . . suddenly the scene changes." Americans could carry out crimes out of naivete, yet they held a deep love of liberty. The media (television) controlled America: "Today television is America's king" (*padeshah*), but Americans "like nothing more than freedom." Nevertheless they accustomed themselves to a system of freedom built on money—as manifested in the electoral process. At the same time, Americans were deeply self-critical. Nodushan referenced the writings of William Lederer, who coauthored *The Ugly American* (1958), and cited passages from his *A Nation of Sheep* (1961), in which the author lambasts the American public for its ignorance of the situation in Laos. That overconfidence, said Nodushan, compelled America to meddle and turn every global conflict into a personal fight.³⁶

The year, 1968, stood out as a time of turbulence. The fight for civil rights played out in different ways. The consequential Writers' Association of Iran (*Kanun-e Nevisandegan-e Iran*) came into existence, despite state censorship, and identified the "defense of freedom of expression" as a primary objective.³⁷ The association reflected the cultural influence of a new group of nonconformist intellectuals who often identified with global anti-colonial struggles.³⁸ In April 1968, Tehran hosted the United Nations Conference on Human Rights, a gathering that fell short of its lofty ideals.³⁹ Roy Wilkins, head of the

³⁴Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Safar-e Amrika* (Tehran: Ferdows, 2003), 212–18. This section provides an extensive and important discussion on Farmer and the African American civil rights movement. Before the complete publication of this work, parts of Al-e Ahmad's US travelogue were published in the journal, *Mahnameh-e Jahan-el Now*.

³⁵Mohammad 'Ali Islami Nodushan, "Azadi-ye Mojassameh: Gozareshi az Safar-e Amrika," *Yaghma*, 20th year, No. 8 (Aban 1346/Oct.–Nov. 1967), pp. 393–394.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 394–399. Also, Islami Nodushan, "Azadi-ye Mojassameh: Gozareshi az Safar-e Amrika," *Yaghma*, 20th year, No. 11 (Bahman 1346/Jan.–Feb. 1968), pp. 561–573. For Nodushan's other related publications, see *Azadi-ye Mojassameh* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Tus, 2536/1977); and *Iran ra az Yad Nabarim*, 4th ed. (Tehran: Entesharat-e Tus, Bahman 1351/1973).

³⁷Islam Kazemiyeh, "Dar Barehyeh Yek Zorurat," *Arash* (1968), 4.

³⁸Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, "Protest and Perish: A History of the Writers' Association in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 18, no. 2–4 (1985): 189–229.

³⁹Roland Burke, "From Individual Rights to National Development: The First UN International Conference on Human Rights, Tehran 1968," *Journal of World History* 19, no. 3 (2008): 275–96. See also A. S. Thompson, "Tehran 1968 and Reform of the UN Human Rights System," *Journal of Human Rights* 14, no. 1 (2015): 84–100; Sarah B. Snyder, "The 1968 International Year for Human Rights: A Missed Opportunity in the United States," *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 5 (2018):

NAACP, represented America at the gathering at the behest of President Johnson, who had appointed him to replace Ambassador Averell Harriman, then engaged in talks with North Vietnam.⁴⁰ As Wilkins spoke, the shah's sister, Princess Ashraf, who was presiding over the conference, looked on. A royal reception that included the shah and his queen awaited Wilkins once the speeches concluded. The conference, coming on the heels of the tragic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King on 4 April 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee, served as a sobering reminder of the labors that lay ahead in realizing the ideals of racial equality and universal enfranchisement.

In June 1968 the shah received an honorary degree from Harvard University. Henry Kissinger, a Harvard graduate, and chairman of Harvard's Board of Trustees David Rockefeller likely had a hand in convincing the powers that be to confer the recognition upon the shah. During his commencement address, the monarch proposed the creation of the Universal Welfare Legion, an international organization similar to the Peace Corps. Harvard ignored the signs of controversy that had beset the shah. Coretta Scott King, the deceased civil rights leader's widow, was also at Harvard. She delivered the class day speech and overshadowed the shah.⁴¹

Iran's Response to Global Racial Justice

In the aftermath of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war Iran was trying to connect the dots among America's civil rights crisis, its domestic unrest, and its regional role. Iran's split identities—secular and religious, national and regional, imperial and colonized—became reflected in the fractured political writings of the post-Mosaddeq era. Intellectuals with progressive, and at times socialist, leanings continued to watch happenings in Africa and other formerly colonized states with interest. Expressions of ethnic and racial acceptance or opposition grew strident as Iranians engaged with global crises that brought the politics of race heatedly into their backyard. Although the theme of ethnicity had endured as a subject of anthropological and political interest, race and racism rose to the fore as writers of different stripes considered their political affiliations and proclivities. Persian high and popular culture grappled with notions of race and skin color in contemporary society, and ideologies such as “Third Worldism,” Islamism, and socialism informed these intellectual and public debates. Iran also expanded its network of international relations. By 1976, it had pursued diplomatic engagements with several African nations. Iran expanded trade with African countries, in particular South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, and Zambia, and forged more modest exchanges with Sudan, Ethiopia, and Angola.⁴²

Writers of the post-Mosaddeq years explored other facets of race and decolonization. It was during these decades, from the 1960s on, that Iranian intellectuals hungrily read and translated the writings of, Francophone writers such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Patrice Lumumba, and Frantz Fanon. In a special issue of the influential journal *Jahan-e Now* (New World), which was dedicated to African culture and liberation struggles, translator Fariborz Majidi delved into the thought of Senegalese president-poet Senghor. Majidi's essay spawned a new Persian vocabulary to express racial pride and *négritude* (*siyah-e zangi budan*)—the affirmation of Black African heritage—as articulated by Senghor.

831–58; and Andrew S. Thompson, “The First World Conference on Human Rights and the Challenge of Enforcement,” *Iran Namag* 3, no. 4 (2019), 72–90. Also, for criticism of the human rights discourse and the shah, see Roham Alvandi, “Late Pahlavi Iran and its Global Entanglements” (lecture), University of Pennsylvania, 12 November 2018. For conversations about race, human rights, and civil rights, see Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, “Global Civil Rights in Iran: Gender, Poverty, Race” (lecture), Iran and Global Decolonization symposium, University of Pennsylvania, 20 May 2021. My arguments are excerpted from *Heroes to Hostages*.

⁴⁰“Roy Wilkins to Head U. S. Delegation,” *Milwaukee Star*, 27 April 1968, 12 (available from Readex: African American Newspapers).

⁴¹Suzanne R. Spring, “Year of the Shah,” *Harvard Crimson*, 5 June 1980, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1980/6/5/year-of-the-shah-pthe-big>. Also, Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (London: Oneworld, 2008), p. 334.

⁴²National Library and Archives of Iran (hereafter NLAI), File 245-004425-0049, “Mobadelat-e Bazargani-ye Iran ba Keshvarhaye Ifriqa-i dar Salhaye 1350/51.” See also NLAI, File 245-004425-0070, for a comparison of the trade figures from the first six months of approximately 1969 and 1970. For economic relations with Ethiopia, see NLAI, File 245-004204-0034, “Ravabet-e Bazargani-ye Iran dar 5 Mahe Avval-e Sal-e 1348 va Moqayeseh-e an ba Moddat-e Moshabeh-e Sal-e Qabl.” This folder contains very detailed and extensive trade figures for several years.

Majidi referenced Senghor's speech at Oxford in 1961, in which Senghor described the impact of French colonialism and its failed policy of "assimilation" (*hamanand-sazi*).⁴³ Another piece referred to the struggles of Angola, as articulated by the refrain of its poet-president António Agostinho Neto (d. 1979), "Victory is certain."⁴⁴ Through translations of Francophone works, pan-Africanism, Afro-Asian movements, and nonalignment, Iranians molded their conceptions of *négritude*, bondage, and decolonization.⁴⁵

The writings of Caribbean psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in particular roused young Iranian thinkers drawn to postcolonial discourses. Fanon's seminal works were translated into Persian prior to the Islamic Revolution. In 1970, Mohammad Amin Kardan put forth a Persian rendition of Fanon's *Toward An African Revolution (Inqilab-e Ifriqa)*, published in 1964 after Fanon's death.⁴⁶ In 1973, a literary journal, *Sokhan* (Speech), introduced Fanon's background and works to the Persian reading public, including his scathing polemic on race relations, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Pust-e Siyah, Surat-haye Sefid).⁴⁷ A towering intellectual of those years, 'Ali Shariati (d. 1977) famously contributed to the translation of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (Duzakhiyane Ruye Zamin).⁴⁸ Shariati showed an affinity for the politics of decolonization and fulminated against the oppressive policies that had accompanied imperialist regimes in Africa and elsewhere.⁴⁹ Never entirely comfortable with Iran's history of slavery and racism, many Iranian intellectuals of this era remained silent about this past, which only recently has become a topic of focused academic research.

In Iran, debates surrounding race remained complicated. For much of its modern history, Iran desperately strove to cast itself as an "Aryan" nation and people who belonged to the "white" race. Although European travelers to Iran such as Lady Mary Sheil, wife of the British minister to Persia, saw Iranians as "swarthy," some Persian writers of the interwar era cast themselves as white.⁵⁰ Like other ethnic groups, Iranians had intermingled with migrating populations, including Africans. In the 1930s, the Third Reich had appropriated the meaning of Aryanism and abused the linguistic distinctions between Aryan and Semitic languages to claim an insidious and false racial superiority for Germans. Regrettably, some Iranian thinkers and bureaucrats tried to follow suit.⁵¹

After 1945, with the defeat of Hitler's Germany and the demise of Nazism, the Aryan label fell out of vogue. It seems that message failed to reach Iran's sovereign, who, in 1965, took on a grandiose title, *Arya Mehr* (Light of the Aryans) to project an image of pomp and majesty. In 1965, the parliament had bestowed the title on the shah prior to his coronation two years later.⁵² He followed this move in 1971 with a lavish celebration of Iran's pre-Islamic history and a glorification of the Achaeminid

⁴³Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Farhang-e 'Zangi' Chist?" *Jahan-e Now* (1970–71): 48–50. This volume includes many translations and pieces on African film and theater, including by Bakary Traoré and Paulin Soumanou Vieyra.

⁴⁴Agostinho Neto, "Piruzi Hatmi Ast," trans. Ahmad Karimi, *Jahan-e Now* (1970–71): 45–47.

⁴⁵Fatemeh Qassemzadeh, "Idehayeh Mo'aser va Qavi dar Ifriqa" (trans. from *Le Monde*, June 1970), *Jahan-e Now* (1970–71): 103–9.

⁴⁶*Sokhan* 20 (1970): 510.

⁴⁷*Sokhan* 22, no. 7–12 (1973): 1013–14. Also, see David Caute, "Pust-e Siyah va Maskhaye Sefid," trans. Kazem Zar'eiyan, *Negin*, no. 73 (1971).

⁴⁸Ali Shariati, *Duzakhiyan-e Ruye Zamin* (Ahvaz: Intisharat-e Talash, 1957). For an informative essay on Shariati's translation, see Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, "Who Translated Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* into Persian?" *Jadaliyya*, 13 August 2020, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41564/Who-Translated-Fanon's-The-Wretched-of-the-Earth-into-Persian>. For a useful biography of Shariati, see Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

⁴⁹For more about Shariati on Fanon, see Farzaneh Farahzad, "Voice and Visibility: Fanon in the Persian Context," in *Translating Fanon Across Continents and Languages*, ed. Kathryn Batchelor and Sue-Ann Harding (London: Routledge, 2019), 129–50.

⁵⁰Lady Mary Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia* (London: J. Murray, 1856), 78; Kashani-Sabet, "Colorblind."

⁵¹Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, ch. 7; Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, "Cultures of Iranian-ness: The Evolving Polemics of Iranian Nationalism," in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Rudi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 162–79. For related discussions, see David Motadel, "Iran and the Aryan Myth," in *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Ali M. Ansari (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014). For another related study, see Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

⁵²For a recent study of the subject, see Robert Steele, "Crowning the 'Sun of the Aryans': Mohammad Reza Shah's Coronation and Monarchical Spectacle in Pahlavi Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53, no. 2 (2021): 175–93. See also Ali Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 174, for implications of the title. For related discussions, see Roham Alvandi's introduction to *The Age of Aryamehr: Late Pahlavi Iran and its Global*



Figure 4. “Musical Group Staple Singers” at the Shiraz Arts Festival. *Sokhan* 20 (1970): 471.

sovereign, Cyrus the Great. To bolster his image, the shah had hoped to bank on the dual legacies of Cyrus: as grand monarch and as advocate of human rights. Unlike the state, however, Iranian writers and activists shunned Aryan discourses and found meaning instead in the stories of dispossessed Blacks in Africa and America and in the anti-colonial struggles of the Third World.

Comparisons between Black liberation movements and modern Persian politics made sense, given the shared histories of oppression and imperialism. In turn, Black activists supported the cause of Iranian students who fought against the shah’s regime. The Black Panther Party newspaper adopted an anti-imperialist stance against America’s foreign policy interventions, including in Iran.⁵³ In 1970, when forty-one Iranian students awaited trial in San Francisco for having stormed the Iranian consulate to protest the visit of Princess Ashraf, the shah’s sister, the Panthers wrote in their support.⁵⁴ The princess had come to the United States to participate at the United Nations, where she was elected chairwoman of the UN Human Rights Commission. The Panthers lambasted the police for its aggressive tactics in breaking up the protests, which left a student wounded in one eye.⁵⁵

In the realm of the arts, African American musicians became cultural ambassadors to Iran. In August 1970, the gospel group the Staple Singers performed at the Shiraz Arts Festival (Fig. 4).⁵⁶ Critics noted that the musicians “stole the thunder” from such luminaries as Ravi Shankar of India, the Julliard String Quartet, and the Senegal National Ballet. Reportedly at the concert “shouts of ‘vive les Noirs’ (translation: long live the Blacks) could be heard above the stomping, whistling and yelling throng that gave the Staple Singers standing ovation after standing ovation.”⁵⁷ A Persian review observed that the Staple Singers had earned “a special spot” (*makan-e khassi*) in the festival and that their music gave voice to their deepest pain and joy. This piece poignantly interpreted the doleful messages embedded in the songs the group performed, including the “beautiful” and “sad” tune, “Why Am I Treated So Bad?”

Entanglements, ed. Roham Alvandi (London: Gingko, 2018). For historical background, see *Iran: A Country Study*, ed. Richard F. Nyrop (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1978), 65.

⁵³“It Is Time for Us to Return to Our True Stand with Our Brothers and Sisters,” *Black Panther* 5, no. 23 (1970): 6.

⁵⁴“International Protest Supports Iranian Students,” *Black Panther* 5, no. 8 (1970): 6. See also “It Is Time for Us To Return,” 6.

⁵⁵“International Protest Supports Iranian Students,” 20.

⁵⁶*Sokhan*, Vol. 20 (1970): 471.

⁵⁷“Staple Singers the Hit of Iranian Arts Festival,” *Jet*, Vol. 38, No. 26, 1 October 1970, 60.

Iran opened itself to African American culture through its embrace of gospel music and international sports.

Still, the shah and his Iran remained a bundle of contradictions. Even as the monarch took on the sobriquet *Arya Mehr*, he expanded Iran's ties with numerous African countries. In the 1970s, he embarked on an ambitious project to develop petrochemical technologies with Senegal.⁵⁸ In 1976, when President Senghor visited Iran, at the University of Tehran an evening was devoted to his writings and to Senghor's identity as a poet rather than politician. Senghor was awarded an honorary degree from the College of Literature of Tehran University.⁵⁹

Islami Nodushan gave a speech in which he compared Senghor's ideas with themes in Persian mysticism and contributed to a Persian vocabulary for talking about Blackness (*siyah budegi*) and African colonial struggles. Nodushan began his talk by recognizing the brave struggles for independence that were unfolding on much of the African continent. He explained Senghor's concept of *négritude* as a desire to embrace the Black identity and to help it blossom. Citing Jalal al-Din Rumi, Nodushan argued that Persian mysticism, although distinct from the expressions of sensuality of Black culture, also differentiated itself from the Aristotelean philosophy of rationality. In his poetry Rumi juxtaposed the outward meaning of truth (*zāhir*) with its hidden or inward meaning (*bāṭin*). In contrast to Senghor's explanations about the importance of sensuality in Black experiences, Nodushan viewed Rumi's mysticism as suggesting that senses could deceive and reason thus prevailed. Despite these differences, Nodushan concluded that in the context of illumination and revelation the similarities between the philosophy of *négritude* and Persian mysticism remained undeniable.⁶⁰

Conclusion: #Black Lives Matter

The connection between Iranian politics and race relations is not of recent vintage. Despite the state's desire to cast Iran as a "civilized" and "white" nation, Iranians would never be accepted in the commonwealth of (white) Western nations. This realization provided the impetus to Iranian intellectuals, and even to the shah himself, to find common cause with non-Western or colonized communities, from Africa to the Americas. Paul Robeson, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, 'Ali Shariati, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and Ruhollah Khomeini each recognized that modern experiences of dispossession united communities of color through their familiar struggles for liberation and equality.

In May 2020, the killing of George Floyd by Minnesota police officers unleashed a maelstrom of protest across America. The murder sparked Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, to tweet in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. As Zarif, who had spent about eleven years in the United States as a student, expressed it, "Some don't think #BlackLives Matter. To those of us who do: it is long overdue for the entire world to wage war against racism." Zarif had seized the opportunity to hit on America's sensitive nerve. No sooner had Zarif tweeted his message than the former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, delivered his salvo: "You hang homosexuals, stone women and exterminate Jews."⁶¹ This was not a flattering portrayal of either country. America's appetite for racism had badly marred its civilizational legacy, whereas the Islamic Republic's intolerance of social difference, and its penchant for the power-grab, had sullied its lofty revolutionary ideals.

Whatever Zarif's intention, his solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement hearkened back to a strand of political thought that Iran's prerevolutionary intellectuals had voiced. Iranian memories of decolonization appeared in unexpected places. Persian poet Mahmud Mosharraf Azad Tehrani (d. 2006), known as "M. Azad," recalled in his poem, "Bar Bolandtarin Qalehhayeh Donya" (Upon the World's Tallest Castles), Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of the Republic of the

⁵⁸Robert Steele, "The Keur Farah Pahlavi Project and Iranian-Senegalese Relations in the 1970s," *Iranian Studies* 54, no. 1–2 (2020): 1–24, doi: 10.1080/00210862.2020.1792768.

⁵⁹*Majalleh-e Daneshkadeh-e Adabiyat, Daneshgah-e Tehran* 23 (1976): 1.

⁶⁰Mohammad 'Ali Islami Nodushan, "Afriqa az Nazar-e Sedar Senghor," *Majalleh-e Daneshkadeh-e Adabiyat, Daneshgah-e Tehran* 23 (1976): 1–10. When discussing Senghor's ideas, the newspaper *Ettela'at* translated *négritude* by using the less palatable term *kakayi*; *Ettela'at*, 27 June 1976, 9.

⁶¹Secretary Pompeo (@SecPompeo), "You hang homosexuals, stone women and exterminate Jews," Twitter, 30 May 2020, <https://twitter.com/secpompeo/status/1266875321590087685?lang=en>.

Congo.⁶² These bystanders watched as the United States and the Soviet Union seemingly divided Africa and the rest of the world into zones of manipulation and control during the Cold War, with ill effects for societies in the crosshairs.

Race relations provided an unanticipated and missed opportunity for collaboration. Although diplomats like Henry Kissinger recognized that Iranian intellectuals—a class often maligned by a suspicious shah—might be harnessed to advance America’s image as the beacon of democracy, they failed to engage them deeply in conversations about race and decolonization. At home, Iranians’ desire for equality and upward mobility converged with these broad global movements and led to reforms and outright revolt. The shah, with nudging from the Kennedy administration, addressed disparities in Iranian society, but with mixed results. His reforms did not acknowledge adequately a changing world. As in America, Iranians yearned for new opportunities, economic advancement, and the freedom to shape their country’s political future. But their often dissenting voices went in one ear and out the other, and the Pahlavi state did not sufficiently resolve socioeconomic disparities. At that time, the Pahlavi record could not be compared with the shortcomings of a post-Pahlavi regime that would widen some of these chasms in unforeseen ways.

The shah stayed tone-deaf about the underlying roots of discord. But race mattered, even to him. In 1979, as the revolution unfurled, Ayatollah Khomeini pointedly assented to the early release of African American hostages and justified his decision by speaking to their persistent persecution in America: “Blacks for a long time have lived under oppression and pressure in America.”⁶³ Khomeini catenated the disenfranchisement of African Americans with the suffering of Iran’s weak and dispossessed classes (*mostaz’af*). In doing so, he too targeted America’s vulnerable past. Race relations, although rarely the lead story in Iranian diplomacy, gripped the middle classes. Iran’s new generation saw beyond the West’s white ambassadors and found affinity instead with the world’s Black citizens.

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⁶²M. Azad, “Bar Bolandtarin Qalehmayeh Donya,” in *Nameh-e Kanun-e Nevisandegan-e Iran* (Tehran: Mu’asseseh-e Entesharat-e Agah, 1980), 91. For an interesting article on Lumumba translated from a French piece in *Historia*, see Abdollah Kowsari, “Payan-e Zendegeye por Majera va Ghamangiz-e Lumumba,” *Khavandaniha* 28, no. 76 (1967–68): 21–27. In addition, a Persian translation of Lumumba’s *My Country, Congo*, appeared in 1970: *Mihan-e Man, Kongo*, trans. Amir Fereyduun Gorgani (Tehran: Morvarid, 1969). For reporting on congressional investigation of the CIA’s role in alleged plots against foreign leaders, including Fidel Castro and Lumumba, see *Sokhan* 20 (1970): 232; and *Kayhan*, 22 November 1975.

⁶³Jonathan C. Randal, “Women, Blacks Ordered Freed in Iran,” *Washington Post*, 18 November 1979, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/11/18/women-blacks-ordered-freed-in-iran/66947cbd-c9b1-4933-ac10-0e400c67e215>. To read about the recollections of an African American marine, Westley Williams (d. 2020), held hostage in Iran, see: Chris Churchill, “Black, Female Iranian Hostages Excluded from Deal,” *Times Union*, August 20, 2016: <https://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-local/article/Churchill-Black-female-Iranian-hostages-9175262.php>. Williams’ release is plausibly described here as a “publicity move.” For a discussion of activist Angela Davis in a women’s magazine just before the revolution, see “Hamaseh-e Zendege-ye Yek Zan-e Mobarez: Amrika dar Ayineh-e Angela Davis,” *Zan-e Ruz*, no. 706, 23 Day 1357/13 January 1979, 22–23.