The Journal of African History (2022), 63(1), 91–105
doi:10.1017/S0021853722000123

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exiles, Expatriates, and Malcolm X: Debating the Racial Politics of Liberation in the Black Star of Africa

Jean Allman*

Washington University in St Louis
*Corresponding author. E-mail: jallman@wustl.edu

(Received 25 March 2021; revised 29 July 2021; accepted 6 February 2022)

Abstract

On 10 May 1964, on his return trip to the United States from Mecca, Malcolm X landed in Accra for a weeklong visit to the capital of the 'Black Star of Africa'. This high-profile visit, which took place only nine months before Malcolm X's assassination, has assumed an important place in biographical accounts of his life, as key to understanding his religious and political transformation or 'conversion'. Yet we know surprisingly little about how Malcolm X's visit resonated locally, what kinds of meanings it generated, especially in the new nation's capital. Based on newspaper accounts, private paper collections, and written and oral reminiscences, this article explores Malcolm X's visit as a significant moment for accessing the conflicting interpretations of race and liberation politics that converged, cohered, and collided in Ghana during the first decade of independence.

Keywords: Ghana; West Africa; diaspora; race; pan-Africanism; postcolonial

> What all of us believed we understood . . . was that we composed a unique vanguard, that we were bit players in the second act of a world-historic drama, agents in sync with the Zeitgeist.[1]
>
> — David Levering Lewis

On 10 May 1964, on his return trip to the United States from Mecca, Malcolm X landed in Accra for a weeklong visit to the capital of the 'Black Star of Africa'. His visit was anxiously anticipated by many, especially members of the large African American exile community, who had settled in the wake of Ghana's independence in 1957;[2] it was clearly dreaded by others, especially members of the US government consular staff in Accra; and it was treated with a somewhat ambivalent curiosity by many others. Malcolm X's high-profile visit, of course, has assumed an important and well-deserved place in biographical accounts of his life, as a key component of his religious and political transformation or conversion, as some have termed it.[3] As Kevin Gaines has written, 'whatever impact the hajj had on Malcolm's racial consciousness, his visit to Ghana and his interaction with the so-called white as well as black revolutionaries enabled him to imagine coalitions with nonblacks and therefore to reject the NOI's [Nation of Islam's] parochial black nationalism'.[4] Thanks to private paper collections, which detail Malcolm X's visit (especially those of Shirley Graham DuBois, John Henrick Clark, and Julian

[1]D. L. Lewis, 'Ghana, 1963: a memoir', *American Scholar*, 68:1 (1999), 42.

[2]For the most thorough historical discussion of this community, see K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

[3]See G. Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York, 2000), 187–8. Horne is probably quoting H. M. Basner, 'The conversion of Malcolm X', *Ghanaian Times*, 29 May 1964.

[4]K. Gaines, *American Africans*, 187. Gaines credits Horne with this argument. See his *Race Woman*, 188. See also M. Marable, *Malcolm: A Life of Reinvention* (New York, 2011), 318–20.

Mayfield),[5] the 2014 publication of Malcolm X's 1964 diary,[6] and the work of scholars like James Campbell, Kevin Gaines, Gerald Horne, and Manning Marable,[7] we know a great deal about how Malcolm X's sojourn in Accra impacted his political trajectory and its specific significance for that small but important community of African American revolutionaries resident in Ghana at the time. We know far less about how Malcolm X's visit resonated in other quarters — among different refugee and expatriate communities or among Ghanaians themselves. What kinds of meanings might it have generated more broadly, especially across the new nation's capital?

Unfortunately, it is not possible to retrieve in any substantive way Ghanaian perspectives on Malcolm X's visit in 1964. Archival documentation, above and beyond newspaper accounts, is virtually non-existent, and many of those who encountered Malcolm X through his public appearances over a half century ago are no longer with us. Rather, my purpose here is to approach Malcolm X's visit as a key moment through which to access articulations of race, racial identity, and liberation politics that converged, cohered, but more often collided in Ghana during the first decade of independence. I am particularly concerned with the public discourse and politics surrounding race and racial formation — with what I will term 'race talk' — among members of the large and diverse expatriate and exile communities in Ghana, and how that talk intersected, or not, with Ghanaian understandings of Blackness and Whiteness.[8] Beginning in the 1950s and ending abruptly in 1966 with President Kwame Nkrumah's overthrow in a military coup, a substantial number of expatriates from across the globe settled in Ghana to assist in the work of nation-making, modernization, and African liberation. Some, as Gaines has powerfully demonstrated in his work, were African American activists drawn to Nkrumah's pan-African dream.[9] Many from among that group counted themselves as exiles, alongside African freedom fighters and White South African communists, who had fled the brutality of White supremacist colonial settler regimes. But they were not alone. There were countless others — Irish and Welsh nationalists, Caribbean Marxists, White American socialist dissidents, French peace activists, British Fabian socialists, to name just a few — who were drawn to this country of the future — a country, they believed, which 'faced neither east nor west', one that faced only forward.[10] Perhaps these women and men were all driven by what Robin D. G. Kelley has so powerfully termed 'freedom dreams', but their visions for a better world were multiple and often conflicting, even though Ghana provided a shared dreamscape.[11] Much like a flash of lightning illuminates the parameters and contents of a darkened

[5]The John Henrick Clark Papers (ScMG 572) and the Julian Mayfield Papers (ScMG339) are both on deposit at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Shirley Graham Du Bois's Papers (MC 476) are held at the Schlesinger Library. Windom's papers are not on public deposit, but her lengthy report on Malcolm X's visit to Ghana, 'An Account by Sister Alice Windom of Malcolm X's Visit to Ghana in 1964', dd. 21 May 1964, is included in Mayfield's papers, box 6, file 21.

[6]I. Al-Shabazz and H. Boyd (eds.), *The Diary of Malcolm X: El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz*, 1964 (Chicago, 2014, Kindle e-book).

[7]See J. T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787–2005* (New York, 2006); Gaines, *American Africans*; Horne, *Race Woman*; and Marable, *Malcolm X*.

[8]The capitalization herein of 'Black' and 'White' reflects my agreement with recent public commentary. See, for example, K. A. Appiah, 'The case for capitalizing the *B* in Black', *The Atlantic*, 18 June 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/, and N. I. Painter, 'Why "White" should be capitalized, too', *The Washington Post*, 22 July 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/07/22/why-white-should-be-capitalized/.

[9]In addition to Gaines, *American Africans*, a recent and important contribution to the scholarship on African American migration to Ghana is S. J. L. Taylor's *Exiles, Entrepreneurs, and Educators: African Americans in Ghana* (Albany, NY, 2019), which compares the 'politicals', who came as 'returnees' to Nkrumah's Ghana in the early 1960s, with the entrepreneurs and educators who have made Ghana their home since the 1980s.

[10]This is a reference to Kwame Nkrumah's oft-quoted axiom, 'We face neither East nor West, we face forward'. See Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana (PRAAD), K. Nkrumah, opening speech, Positive Action Conference for Peace and Security in Africa, 7 Apr. 1960, https://bit.ly/3rktZq7.

[11]R. D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, 2002). As Kelley explains in his preface, 'the desires, hopes and intentions of the people who fought for change cannot be easily categorized, contained, or explained'. Nor

room, Malcolm X's visit, I want to suggest, threw into instant and sharp relief the competing freedom dreams of these exiles and expatriates, as they debated the role and place of race and racial discourse in the liberation politics of what was fast becoming, by appearances anyway, a postcolonial world. It is a debate as critical for the 2020s, I'd like to suggest, as it was for the 1960s.

With the important exception of work on the former colonial settler states of southern Africa, few scholars have traced histories of racecraft or racial formation in Africa (as opposed to ethnic formation) into the postcolonial period.[12] While historians like Jonathan Glassman, Bruce Hall, and Carina Ray have begun to center discussions of race in histories that move from the precolonial through the postcolonial periods, for the most part, the 'postcolonial' seems to conjure into simultaneous being the 'postracial' for much of the continent.[13] This is not to ignore the profoundly important global discussions about the racial landscape of knowledge production about Africa that have flourished in the wake of the #Fallist movements across the globe, discussions that often include important historical perspectives.[14] But it is to question where and how race appears or disappears as a central analytic in historical reconstructions of postcolonial African history, especially outside of the former settler states.

In Ghana, for example, much historical work is silent on issues of race and racial formation for the recent postcolonial past. The same cannot be said of anthropological work, where Black scholars like Bayo Holsey, Laurian Bowles, and Jemima Pierre have taken the lead in centering race as an essential analytic for probing the transnational postcolonial world of contemporary Ghana.[15] Pierre is particularly pointed in her response to what she terms 'the continent's ironic exclusion from contemporary analyses of race and racialization processes', with a powerful exploration of the ways in which 'local discourses and practices that index race and raced relations resonate and are in dialogue, both with the global political economy and transnational/diasporic identity politics and formations'.[16] Though framed historically, my thoughts in the following pages are shaped by a similar concern, as well as by my particular intellectual autobiography. Like Pierre (and perhaps as a result of studying African history and African American history at Northwestern University, where the two fields long co-existed in uneasy tension), I have been confounded by the 'astonishing irony' that the broad field of African history has rarely (outside of the former White settler states) grappled with race and processes of racial formation in postcolonial Africa, while scholarship on race has dominated histories of the African diaspora.[17] Thus, part of the Malcolm X story I seek to engage in these pages includes some reflections on my own training in African history and on an early lesson in the legibility or translatability of US racial categories in African postcolonial contexts.

should their ideas be judged solely on the basis of whether they succeeded or failed. Quite simply: dreams matter. 'Without new visions', Kelley writes, 'we don't know what to build, only what to knock down' (*ix–xii*).

[12]I am borrowing here from K. E. Fields and B. J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London, 2012).

[13]J. Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones* (Bloomington, IN, 2011); B. Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960* (New York, 2011); and C. Ray, *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex and the Contested Politics of Colonial Rule in Ghana* (Athens, OH, 2015).

[14]It is impossible to provide a full or representative listing of this recent literature, but an excellent starting point is S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (London, 2018). An early and compelling intervention can be found in A. Mbembe. 'Decolonizing knowledge and the question of the archive', Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research, Public Lecture, University of the Witwatersrand, 2015, https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille%20Mbembe%20-%20Decolonizing%20Knowledge%20and%20the%20Question%20of%20the%20Archive.pdf.

[15]See L. R. Bowles, 'Black feminist ethnography and the racial politics of porter labor in Ghana', *Feminist Anthropology,* 2 (2021), 65–77; B. Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Durham, NC, 2008); J. Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (Chicago, 2013).

[16]Pierre, *Predicament*, *xii* and *xv*. See also her 'Structure, project, process: anthropology, colonialism and race in Africa', *Journal of Anthropological Sciences*, 96 (2018), 213–19.

[17]Pierre, *Predicament*, *xiv*, and borrowing from J. L. Matory, 'Afro-Atlantic culture: on the live dialogue between Africa and the Americas', in K. A. Appiah and H. L. Gates (eds.), *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* (New York, 1999), 36–44.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

So, let me begin: what was the historical context in May 1964, which renders Malcolm X's visit such a significant moment for race talk, for observing the postcolonial politics of race and the collision of 'freedom dreams'? A number of events stand out, some of special relevance to the University of Ghana and the status of exiles and expatriates in the country. While there had been several attempts on Nkrumah's life in the previous two years, on 2 January 1964, a police officer within the walls of Flagstaff House, where Nkrumah worked and had his residence, fired five shots at him. The assassination attempt failed, but in its aftermath an almost impenetrable cloud of fear and suspicion descended over the country, with 'rumors of spies and plots' abounding.[18] Nkrumah himself was convinced, and not without reason, that the US Central Intelligence Agency was behind the attack. In the days that followed, there were protests outside of the US Embassy, which greatly heightened tensions between the US and Ghanaian governments. During one such protest, a demonstrator tried to pull down the American flag, but an African American embassy worker intervened, clutched the flag to his chest, and then hoisted it back up the pole. In the weeks that followed, the Ghanaian press was filled with editorials warning Ghanaians to 'Beware, Brother'! especially of 'These American-Negro rascals'![19] As one particularly vitriolic column warned,

> There appears to be emerging from the negro community in Ghana, and possibly in other parts of Africa, dangerous Afro-American elements who appear to have mortgaged their consciences for neocolonialist dollars and favours in the service of collective imperialism.
>
> We call upon our people to beware of the subversive activities of these negro agents of neocolonialism in our universities and colleges and elsewhere who operate with cunning and C.I.A. villainy among our youths. . . .
>
> Beware, brother, for there is an enemy at your doorstep . . . who is as equally dangerous as the peaceful looking white peace corps meddler or white C.I.A. agent or embassy stooge.[20]

Historian David Levering Lewis, the prize-winning biographer of W. E. B. DuBois, who taught European history at the University of Ghana from 1963 to 1964, recalls of those tense months, 'African Americans were skewered as fifth columnists, black people who served the imperialist ends of their white masters while pretending to be soul brothers and sisters to Africans'.[21]

But this was not only and simply a war of words, waged in the local newspapers. In early February, in addition to the arrests of alleged suspects and opposition political leaders, Nkrumah's Convention People's Party government orchestrated demonstrations 'by the masses', including onto the University of Ghana campus.[22] That same week, deportation orders were issued against a number of expatriate faculty for plotting to overthrow the government of Ghana. At least two of those deported, Robert Seidman, a senior lecturer in law, and Wendell Pierre, a lecturer in French literature, were considered by their colleagues politically progressive, staunchly anti-imperialist, and supportive of Nkrumah and his government.[23] The deportation of Pierre hit the African American community in and around the university especially hard, although very few

[18]Campbell, *Middle Passages*, 353. See also Gaines, *American Africans*, 188–9 and Marable, *Malcolm X*, 315.
[19]The two headlines are from editorials in the Evening News *Evening News*, 6 Apr. 1964.
[20]*Ibid*.
[21]Lewis, 'Ghana', 57. Lewis tendered his resignation from the University of Ghana in July 1964.
[22]*Evening News*, 10 Feb. 1964.
[23]Gaines, *American Africans*, 175–6; L. A. Lacy, *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro* (New York, 1970), 180–5; Lewis, 'Ghana', 14. For an extremely detailed account of campus life during the time of these deportations, see also M. Legassick, 'Situation in Ghanaian Universities: February 1963 [*sic* 1964]', The National Archives (United Kingdom), Dominions Office [DO] 153/62.

spoke out in Pierre's support. (The exceptions were Julian Mayfield, Leslie Lacy, and Preston King.)[24] As Lacy later wrote,

> The overwhelming majority of our tribe members refused to form a defense committee because we were convinced of Wendell's guilt. Now, that was odd. Yesterday, the day before, all the days of their lives with Wendell, such a thought would have offended them, and if anyone of them accused him, the accuser would have found his neck on the block. With the exception of . . . Mayfield, who wrote a letter to the President in Wendell's defense, every other soul was on ice.[25]

But the situation for African American exiles, as Kevin Gaines has argued, was extremely precarious during this time. They could not openly critique the government and 'many had sacrificed everything, including U.S. passports and citizenship, to come to Ghana'.[26] Thus it was, in an intensely charged moment of geopolitical intrigue, which found expression in a racialized discourse of loyalty and liberation, espionage and subterfuge, that Malcolm X stepped onto the tarmac in Accra. For the African American community, as Campbell has written, news of Malcolm's arrival 'fell like rain on parched ground, nourishing spirits and reviving hope'.[27]

Because it is so well-documented in a number of scholarly works,[28] I will not recount in detail all the events that transpired during Malcolm X's time in Accra.[29] While his visit was anticipated for several weeks by members of the African American exile community, his arrival on Sunday, May 10 came unannounced. That Monday, May 11, Malcolm X contacted Julian Mayfield and thus began his whirlwind visit. By the close of that evening, spent at the house of Mayfield and his wife, Dr. Ana Livia Cordero, a full week of activities was finalized. According to Alice Windom, that first evening was arranged as the '"refugee night" so that Afro-Americans would have an opportunity to meet and talk with Malcolm. People were rounded up and that night 30 or 40 of us congregated at Julian's house'. Windom, along with Maya Angelou, Victoria Garvin, Mayfield and Cordero, Robert and Sarah Lee, and Leslie Lacy quickly formed the 'ad hoc Malcolm X Committee'.[30] Again, according to Windom's account, members of the local press corps were extremely helpful in making Malcolm X's visit such a success, especially the editor in chief of the *Ghanaian Times*, the managing director of the Ghana News Agency, and Cameron Duodu, editor of *Drum* magazine (Ghana edition). On Tuesday, Malcolm held a press conference, which was extensively covered in the papers the following day. The *Daily Graphic* headline, for example, read: 'Help U.S. Negroes – Malcolm X'. According to the account, Malcolm X had declared that 'the struggle by Negroes for civil rights in the United States should be switched for a struggle for human rights to enable Africans to raise the matter at the United Nations. . . . He described the U.S. as the "master of imperialism" without whose support France, South Africa, Britain and Portugal could not exist'.[31] The *Ghanaian Times* account added that 'The Muslim leader

[24]See Gaines, *American Africans*, 175. See also, Lacy, *Rise and Fall*, 183.

[25]Lacy, *Rise and Fall*, 183

[26]Gaines, *American Africans*, 353. See Lacy's very different perspective in *Rise and Fall*, 183–4 and 'African responses to Malcolm X', in A. Baraka and L. Neal (eds.), *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (Baltimore, 2007 [1968]), 24–6.

[27]Campbell, *Middle Passages*, 353

[28]See, especially, Gaines, *American Africans*, 179–209; Campbell, *Middle Passages*, 324–56; Marable, *Malcolm X*, 314–20.

[29]Most of the secondary sources reference Alice Windom's very careful and detailed report of the visit, which she sent to a wide range of people in the US, in a letter dd. 21 May 1964. See Mayfield Papers, box 6, file 21. Some of the wording Windom uses is replicated verbatim in *Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1964), 352–60, which suggests that Alex Haley probably had access to it as he worked on the autobiography. See also Interview with Alice Windom, Item 72194, 2 tracks, Henry Hampton Collection, Washington University in Saint Louis and Al-Shabazz and Boyd, *Diary*, 10–17 May 1964.

[30]Windom, 'An Account', 2.

[31]*Daily Graphic*, 13 May 1964

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

condemned what he described [as] the "shrewd attitude aimed at dividing Afro-Americans and their age-long brothers in Africa" and declared "The establishment of good relationship between Afro-Americans and Africans at home is bound to have far reaching results for the common good"'.[32]

The following evening, Wednesday, 13 May, Malcolm X spoke to the largest audience he would encounter in Ghana — an audience of faculty and students in the Great Hall at the University of Ghana. The event was organized by the Marxist Study Forum, a student group founded by Lacy, Harold Duggan, and Lebrecht Hesse shortly after the deportations of expatriate faculty in February.[33] According to Malcolm X's own account of his speech: 'Before this audience I tried my best to demolish the false image of American race relations that I knew was spread by the U.S. Information Agency. I tried to impress upon them all the true picture of the Afro-American's plight at the hands of the white man'.[34] In her widely circulated 'An Account by Sister Alice Windom of Malcolm X's Visit to Ghana in 1964', which she wrote shortly after Malcolm X's departure from Accra, Windom reported:

> University lecturers and others said later that they never before saw the students respond with such enthusiasm to any speaker . . . Malcolm X brought home in vivid language the problems of African countries struggling to free themselves from the psychological and cultural, as well as economic and political legacies of colonialism. He thoroughly destroyed the U.S.I.S. image of America and exposed the plight of the Afro-American in terms new to many of the students.[35]

Lacy would later recount in his memoir, *The Rise and Fall of a Proper Negro*, that 'The students loved him. They cheered and they chanted. They shouted at the top of their voices songs of praise in different Ghanaian languages'.[36]

The following night, Minister of Defense Kofi Baako hosted a dinner for Malcolm X and a group of government officials at his home. Plans were finalized at that gathering for Malcolm X to address the National Assembly the following morning. Unfortunately, by the time Malcolm X arrived, the Assembly had adjourned, though representatives were still in the building, so he was able to address them in the lounge. By his own account,

> I made my remarks brief – but I made them strong: "How can you condemn Portugal and South Africa while our black people in America are being bitten by dogs and beaten with clubs"? I felt certain that the only reason black Africans – our black brothers – could be so silent about what happened in America was that they had been misinformed by the American government's propaganda agencies.
>
> At the end of my talk, I heard, "Yes"! We support the Afro-American . . . morally, physically, materially if necessary"![37]

Malcolm X's appearance before members of the National Assembly was only the first in a series of important meetings throughout the day. After that session, he was driven to Winneba, where he made a presentation before the staff and the entire student body of the Kwame Nkrumah

[32]*Ghanaian Times*, 13 May 1964.

[33]See Lacy's account in *Rise and Fall*, 191 and in 'African responses', 19–38. Duggan was an undergraduate student in economics from the Virgin Islands. Hesse was from Accra and a student in Law. He would also go on to work with Alphaeus Hunton on W. E. B. DuBois's *Encyclopedia Africana*.

[34]Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 355–6.

[35]Windom, 'An Account', 2–3.

[36]Lacy, *Rise and Fall*, 206.

[37]Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 356.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Ideological Institute. From there, he returned to Accra, where Chinese Ambassador Huang Hua and his wife hosted a state dinner in his honor. Other dignitaries included the Cuban and Algerian ambassadors, as well as Shirley Graham DuBois, who would be instrumental in arranging Malcolm X's meeting with Nkrumah at Christiansborg Castle the following morning. After this meeting on Saturday, May 16, Malcom X spent his last full day in Accra attending a lunch hosted in his honor by the Nigerian High Commissioner and visiting Shirley Graham DuBois at the Cantonments house she had shared with her husband, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, before his death in 1963. The final formal event on Malcolm X's schedule was another dinner, this one hosted by the Cuban ambassador. The following morning, as he would later write,

> 'the Malcolm X Committee' was waiting at my hotel to accompany me to the airport . . . I knew that after what I had experienced in the Holy Land, the second most indelible memory I would carry back to America would be the Africa seething with serious awareness of itself, and of Africa's wealth, and of her power, and of her destined role in the world.[38]

Brief though it was, Malcolm X's week in Ghana in 1964 had a profound impact on the African American exile community in Accra — an impact recounted in detail by several historians and preserved in the memoirs of some of those who were in Accra at the time. In the wake of rising anti-American sentiment following the January attempt on Nkrumah's life, 'Malcolm's timely visit', as Gaines has written, 'promised to deliver African American supporters of the Ghanaian government from the suspicion of disloyalty'.[39] In his memoir of 1963, Lewis makes a similar point about the timing of the visit, especially with regard to the university: 'A fine institution's spirit was dying, and in the midst of our disorientation, Malcolm X appeared'.[40] Malcolm X's message of racial unity and the primacy of pan-African struggle — a message he repeated in every public and private event — worked to unify and revitalize the refugee community. 'For people living in exile', Campbell observes,

> grappling with doubts about the Ghanaian revolution and their own political relevance, the whole experience was utterly exhilarating. By the time Malcolm departed, the exiles had formed the first African chapter of the O.A.A.U. [Organization of Afro-American Unity]. . . . After decades of struggle and repression, all the pieces were finally in place for a global black revolutionary movement: a militant, charismatic African American leader with a mass political following; revolutionary governments in Africa; and a cohort of black internationalists ideally positioned to connect the two.[41]

Indeed, for the African American exile community, Malcolm X's message of international unity in the face of a common enemy — White supremacy in both its national and imperialist forms — spoke back in powerful ways to recent newspaper editorials that had warned Ghanaians not to be fooled by skin color and to be wary of the 'negro agents of neo-colonialism' in their midst.[42]

But what did Ghanaians make of Malcolm X and his message? This is, of course, a difficult question to answer; the sources are slim and fragmentary, at best. Windom's and Lacy's accounts describe elated, enthusiastic receptions at every public gathering, particularly after Malcolm X's speeches at the Great Hall and at the Winneba Institute. While there was fairly extensive press coverage of the visit and Malcolm X's accommodations at the Ambassador Hotel were paid for by the Ghanaian press corps, the published accounts are largely descriptive and give little indication

[38]*Ibid*., 359–60.
[39]Gaines, *American Africans*, 189.
[40]Lewis, 'Ghana', 58.
[41]Campbell, *Middle Passages*, 355.
[42]*Evenings News*, 6 Apr. 1964.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the reporters' impressions. One exception can be found in the 'Life is Tedious' editorial column by Cassius Nimbus. Here Nimbus writes,

> The more I talk to him [Malcolm X], the more I feel I should talk to him. He has a reception few human beings can claim to have in their possession.
>
> Malcolm X has not come to Africa or rather Ghana to spread hatred for the Whites in America.
>
> He has indeed come to reveal to everyone whose skin is black what his life on this planet should mean to him.
>
> It is true he has talked mainly about the plight of the black skinned people in the United States of America, but it would be wrong of any of you my countrymen to imagine that this plight is one limited to America alone. . . .
>
> Whether we admit it or not, the fact is that at the moment this is essentially a whiteman's world: in which we set our pace and tune our minds and bodies according to the whiteman's standards. . . .
>
> Let me make it plain that I am not declaring a racial war far from it. Like my friend Malcolm X, I would like to arouse your consciousness, an aliveness to a true situation. Our message is that of love not hatred, love for mankind.[43]

Unfortunately, beyond published newspaper accounts and the odd editorial, it is difficult to assess directly what most Ghanaians thought of Malcolm X's message. Lewis remarks on the huge crowd that assembled at the Great Hall for Malcolm X's lecture, but suggests that most Ghanaians did not receive Malcolm X's message in the same way the editorialist Nimbus had. They 'seemed emotionally unready for the personal intensity of his professions of faith', Lewis writes,

> Striding nervously back and forth on the stage, like a lean, young lion his voice cadenced to a stream of terrible evocations running from childhood through prison to solitary combat in diabolical White America, Malcolm X spoke movingly of his recent epiphany in Mecca. Not all white people were devils, he now realized. Racial justice could be achieved only in coalition with people of all colors who believed in equality. But Malcolm X had lost nothing of his old ferocity, and many of the Ghanaians, civil and moderate to a fault, recoiled as he lacerated white hypocrisy and malevolence.[44]

Yet the fact that Malcolm X was hosted by Minister of Defense Baako and was received by the National Assembly suggests that there was certainly a positive reception by some government officials, though Lacy postulates after Malcolm X's speech at Legon that the 'CPP-ites seemed annoyed. A bloodless war with the university was over – they had lost the last round'.[45]

Unfortunately, there is, for the most part, only contradictory speculation as to what Nkrumah himself thought of Malcolm X, since no account by Nkrumah of this meeting has survived. Malcolm X wrote of it only briefly, 'We agreed that Pan-Africanism was the key also to the problems of those of African heritage. I could feel the warm, likeable, and very down-to earth qualities of

[43]*Ghanaian Times*, 16 May 1964.
[44]Lewis, 'Ghana', 59.
[45]Lacy, *Rise and Fall*, 206.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dr. Nkrumah. My time with him was up too soon'.[46] Several accounts, including Maya Angelou's, mention that it was far from a foregone conclusion that Nkrumah and Malcolm X would even meet. Only after Shirley Graham DuBois engaged with Malcolm X on Friday evening at the Chinese ambassador's dinner did she agree to intervene: '"He must meet Kwame", she decided, and then arranged the appointment with Nkrumah for the following morning, Malcolm X's last full day in Accra'.[47] Alice Windom wrote that she and Lacy waited an 'interminable time' while Malcolm X was with Nkrumah: 'we could not ask what transpired between them, it was apparent that Malcolm was moved and gratified by the experience'.[48] Interestingly, Lacy himself reports a much shorter meeting: 'Malcolm went in alone and in no time at all returned. . . very elated',[49] and Julian Mayfield, who actually accompanied Malcolm X to Christiansborg Castle, offers a far less positive (Gaines calls it 'cryptic') spin on the meeting and events leading up to it. In his unpublished memoir, 'When Ghana was Ghana: the Nkrumah era', he writes that 'it was only with considerable difficulty that the President was persuaded to grant Malcolm an interview . . . [and it was] extremely brief. . . . I delivered Malcolm and collected him afterwards, and I know that there was no love lost between the two men'. In part, as Mayfield writes, this may have been due to the economic difficulties Ghana was facing. 'During Malcolm's . . . visit', he continues,

> a representative of the Kaiser Corporation was also in Accra to talk business, and representatives of the U.S. controlled International Monetary Fund were expected shortly to talk about Ghana's economic troubles. Furthermore, the U.S. press had portrayed Malcolm as an extremely violent person, and this, true or not, would surely have gone against the President's grain.[50]

And what of the responses of White expatriates to Malcolm X's visit, especially to his speech at the Great Hall? The written first-person accounts I have at hand come primarily from the African American exile community and from Malcom X himself. '"I worked on those whites there in the audience"', he recalls, telling them,

> I've never *seen* so many whites so nice to so many blacks as you white people here in Africa. In America, Afro-Americans are struggling for integration. They should come here – to Africa – to see how you grin at Africans. You've really got integration here. But can you tell the Africans that in America you grin at the black people? No you can't! And you honestly don't like these Africans any better, either – but what you do like is the minerals Africa has under her soil.
>
> Those whites out in the audience turned pink and red. They knew I was telling the truth. 'I'm not anti-American, and I didn't come here to *condemn* America – I want to make that very clear'! I told them. 'I came here to tell the truth – and if the TRUTH condemns America, then she stands condemned'.[51]

[46]Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 357.

[47]Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (New York, 1986), 141–2. Angelou was not pleased with the fact that Graham DuBois waited until the last moment to arrange the meeting. See, esp., 141–5. See, also, Horne, *Race Woman*, 189.

[48]Windom, 'An Account', 3. Windom says that she and Lacy waited at the Mayfield house for Mayfield and Malcolm X to return from their meeting with Nkrumah. Lacy reports (31) in 'African responses', that he accompanied Malcolm X to the meeting with Nkrumah.

[49]Lacy, 'African responses', 31.

[50]J. Mayfield, 'When Ghana was Ghana: The Nkrumah Era', Mayfield Papers, box 14, file 5, p. 194 of the manuscript.

[51]Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 355–6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Windom's account very much echoes Malcolm X's, though it adds that 'many of the whites had come to be "amused". They were in for a rude surprise and faces turned from "white" to pink to flamingo red before the night was over'.[52]

As a graduate student at Northwestern University in the 1980s, I heard many a story about Nkrumah and those heady days in the wake of independence from those who had been in Ghana in the 1960s as resident or visiting faculty. One story I heard several times was about Malcolm X's speech at that very packed Great Hall. These firsthand accounts, by White former expatriate scholars, were strikingly similar. They all mentioned that the space was absolutely packed, standing room only, and that the excitement of Ghanaian students was palpable as they anticipated hearing from this leader of the African American freedom struggle. However, when Malcolm X took the stage, so the account continued, the students were shocked. They were expecting a Black man, but Malcolm looked White to them. This narrative, which I heard at least three times, never spoke directly to the storyteller's own reactions to Malcolm X; rather it focused on Ghanaians and Ghanaians' seeming inability to comprehend Malcolm X, to make sense of his appearance or his rhetoric. Malcolm X was, in other words, racially illegible or incomprehensible to most in the audience. What I suppose is also implicit in this narrative is that the storytellers recognized and understood this 'incomprehensibility' in ways that Malcolm X was unable to. The moral of the tale seemed to be that African American understandings and experiences of race did not translate; they were completely out of place in or out of sync with a newly postcolonial, postracial (non-racial?) Africa.

Several years ago, when I was corresponding with the famed Ghanaian novelist and journalist, Cameron Duodu, we touched on the Great Hall lecture. In 1964, Duodu was the editor of the Ghanaian edition of the South African magazine, *Drum*, and covered Malcolm X's visit extensively. He was also in attendance at the Great Hall lecture. Duodu questioned the veracity of the stories I had been told, pointing out, first and foremost, that for centuries there had been 'mixed-race' people or 'mulattos' in Ghana. 'I would dispute the idea that Ghanaians in the audience regarded him as a "white man"', he wrote. 'Many Ghanaians went to school with 'mulattos' who spoke the same indigenous languages as themselves'. Moreover, Duodu recalled, 'Malcolm had gone to great lengths to explain the complexities that he thought dogged the relations between Africans and African-Americans'.[53]

Interestingly, Duodu's recollection and some of the White expatriate stories of racial incomprehensibility that I was told find some corroboration in *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, where Maya Angelou recounts a particular incident during the Great Hall speech.[54] She writes that during the question and answer portion of the event, a Ghanaian student stood up and asked, "'Mr. Malcolm X, what I don't understand is why you call yourself Black. You look more like a White man than a Negro'". Angelou reports that Malcolm responded, "'Little brother, I've been waiting for that question since I landed in Africa, and while many people thought it, you're the first person who had the nerve to ask. I commend your courage. Well let's look at it'". What Angelou then recounts is Malcolm X's lengthy explanation of the history of slavery and the slave trade, of the rape of enslaved African women by White masters, and of the enslavement of the children born to those women. "'[If] Whites who should know don't claim me and Blacks who should know do claim me, I think it's clear where I belong'", he concluded. "'I am a Black Man. Notice, I don't say Black American, I don't consider myself a democrat, a republican, or an American. I am a Black Muslim man of African heritage'".

Angelou's is the only firsthand observer account, of which I am aware, that corroborates, in part, what I heard in graduate school about Ghanaian student engagement with Malcolm X in the Great Hall. While I am somewhat intrigued by the absence of similar accounts in other written sources,

[52]Windom, 'An Account', 2.

[53]C. Duodu, email correspondence with author, 29 Mar. 2015. For Duodu's contemporaneous account of Malcolm X, see 'Malcolm X: prophet of Harlem', *Drum* [Ghana edition], Oct. 1964.

[54]Angelou, *All God's Children*, 137–8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

what I am most struck by is how differently that engagement is characterized by Angelou. She describes a patient, thoughtfully delivered American history lesson by Malcolm X, a lesson that Duodu also recalls. Not only did the accounts I heard as a graduate student not include Malcolm X's reply, they seemed to transform one student into many or all students and to thus extend racial incomprehensibility to postcolonial Ghana generally. Admittedly, these graduate school story-tellings were brief and unfolded in informal contexts. But for years they troubled me. Read alongside and against the documentary grain, especially Angelou's account, they seem aimed at conjuring up for me a postcolonial and postracial Ghana, where Whiteness and Blackness have been divested of all meaning, all power to signify, and where it was conceivable, even believable, that Malcolm X might be mistaken for White.

Yet these very different accounts, of exiles and of expatriates, do share some similar terrain, in that they tend to deploy Ghanaians to ventriloquize non-Ghanaian understandings of racial meaning: in the one instance, Ghanaians do not comprehend race; in the other they embrace Malcolm X enthusiastically and unequivocally as a brother come home.[55] Both accounts avoid the messiness of that space where the local meets the diasporic or global. It is in that place — where things 'intimately familiar and jarringly different', in Pierre's words, cohere and collide, 'where local discourse and practices that index race and raced relations resonate and are in dialogue, both with the global political economy and transnational / diasporic identity politics and formation'.[56] Angelou's published account of the Great Hall speech thus stands as one of very few which actually complicates the encounter between local and diasporic understandings of race by detailing a critical moment of what Shohat and Stam have termed 'race in translation'.[57]

Angelou is not, however, entirely alone. Although he does not specifically include the story of the inquiring student in the Great Hall, in 'African responses to Malcolm X', Lacy offers a rather sharply critical account of what may have been lost in that race translation. Speaking of his own community of exiles, Lacy wrote,

> Malcolm had not made them *think*, but rather, had mesmerized their world of confusion and put them in a state of tranquility. And this was unfortunate, because they considered themselves revolutionaries.
>
> They were indeed a strange breed of political expatriates. Unable or unwilling to deal with racist and imperialist America from within, these black Americans had come to Ghana to help other black people achieve their revolution. After discovering that they could not lead the revolution and becoming critical of those Ghanaians and leftwing Europeans who did lead, they settled down into a state of psychic self-righteousness and became either overly solicitous or hopelessly mystified. . . .
>
> What they needed from Malcolm's speech was something no revolutionary should need or want. They wanted and needed a kind of psychological underpinning to support the understandable inadequacies in their own lives and, at the same time, provide them with a new sense of cultural euphoria which would make life with malaria, inefficiency and corruption that much more bearable. . . . Their reasoning went something like this: All black people will respond favorably to Malcolm regardless of what they believe.[58]

[55]Lacy, 'African responses', 23. In his account, for example, 'one young lady wiped Malcolm's face free of sweat and said to him, "Go, Brother Malcolm and rest, you are safe – you are home"'.

[56]Pierre, *Predicament, xv*.

[57]See E. Shohat and R. Stam: 'French intellectuals and the U.S. culture wars', *Black Renaissance*, 3:2 (2001), 90–119, and *Race in Translation: Culture Wars around the Postcolonial Atlantic* (New York, 2012).

[58]Lacy, 'African responses', 24–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

One does not have to agree with Lacy's biting and bitter analysis of the exile community to appreciate his attempt here — an attempt not unlike Angelou's — to situate Malcolm's visit in the messy interstices between the local and the diasporic. Admittedly, the point I am making here may largely be a discursive one. It doesn't *really* matter whether one Ghanaian student thought Malcolm looked 'White', all students thought Malcolm appeared 'White', or none did and embraced him immediately and unequivocally. But what does matter, as we try to think *historically* about the ways in which race talk converges, coheres, or collides across various local and transnational or diasporic registers, is that those who made Ghana their home in the early 1960s, whether as exiles or expatriates, often and vociferously debated the racial politics of liberation. Ghanaians were seldom central in or to those debates, except when invoked via a strange kind of ventriloquism.

This was perhaps nowhere more evident than in the days immediately after Malcolm X left Accra. Hiram Basner, a White South African Marxist, who had been a lawyer and politician in South Africa, but fled in 1960 after time in detention, wrote a lengthy, scathing critique of Malcolm X's Great Hall speech in his weekly column in the *Ghanaian Times*. (David Levering Lewis describes him as 'the white South African expatriate who served as Nkrumah's fire-and-brimstone press lord [who] supplied editorials for the *Ghanaian Times* that helped push the citizenry of the capital into a state of paranoid hysteria'.[59]) Here Basner criticized Malcolm X for being a narrow nationalist, who did not appreciate the 'economic motivations and the class function of all racial oppression'. 'If Malcolm X believes what he says', Basner wrote, 'then both Karl Marx and John Brown are excluded by their racial origin from being regarded as human liberators.'[60] Foregrounding race and 'racial conflict' on a global scale, Basner argued, plays right into the imperialists' hands.[61] The following day, both Julian Mayfield and Shirley Graham DuBois responded to Basner's column in what the *Times* called a 'debate on the racial issue'.[62] The editor of the paper included a headnote, which introduced Mayfield as an 'Afro-American writer who shares the ideas of Malcolm X', and explained that he hoped the debate 'would help not only the Afro-American people, but the whole black race in their struggle against racial discrimination wherever it might exist'. In his hard-hitting reply, Mayfield defended Malcolm X's position:

> By making a passionate appeal to Afro-Americans to unite on the basis of racial self-interest and identify more closely with their African brothers, Malcolm X is not being racialist, anti-Marx nor showing disrespect for the memory of John Brown. He is merely using common sense. . . Anybody from South Africa, of all places, ought to know that.

Mayfield then reminded readers of the central point of Malcolm X's message: 'that the U.S. is the stronghold of world capitalism and imperialism, and that the 22 million Afro-Americans properly united with their African brothers, are in a singular position to exploit the contradiction of the capitalist system and to hasten its downfall'. Graham DuBois' response was not as lengthy as Mayfield's, but it offered a similar critique: 'Mr. Basner seems to ignore the fact that Malcolm X['s] vigorous protests and denounciations are against the White Government and the White Ruling Class of the United States'.[63]

Basner would, in the end, have the last word in the debate, as Nkrumah and the CPP Central Committee shut down 'the debate' shortly after Basner published another column on 29 May 1964 entitled, 'The Conversion of Malcolm X'. Here Basner applauded a speech Malcolm X had

[59]Lewis, 'Ghana', 50.

[60]H. M. Basner, 'Watching the world from Accra: Malcolm X and the martyrdom of Rev. Clayton Hewett', *Ghanaian Times*, 18 May 1964. The political memoir that Basner's wife, Miriam Basner, assembled after his death in 1977 is entitled, *Am I an African? The Political Memoirs of H.M. Basner* (Johannesburg, 1993).

[61]Basner, 'Watching the world', 18 May 1964.

[62]*Ghanaian Times*, 19 May 1964.

[63]*Ibid.*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

made upon his return to the U.S. about his experiences on the hajj and in Africa and how those experiences had convinced him that 'some white people are truly sincere, that some truly are capable of being brotherly toward a black man . . . a blanket indictment of all white people is as wrong as when whites make blanket indictments against blacks'.[64] Basner concluded from what he had read that Malcolm X,

> must have seen in Africa. . . the political leadership of men like Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta; Africans who have slept in white men's prisons, who have felt the lash of white supremacy over their continent and over their people; and who, in those very prisons reached an understanding that it is the lust for profit not racial differences which make the white man behave in colonial Africa as he does.

In other words, Malcolm X must have finally realized, in Basner's eyes, that non-racialism was the only way forward.

* * *

By the time Malcolm X landed in Accra in May 1964, Ghana was the undisputed epicenter of what at the time was termed the 'African Revolution'; Africa's 'Black Star' drew not only the attention of, but had become a magnet, a sanctuary, for a dizzying array of transnational actors and a significant site for imagining, dreaming, and debating an entirely new, non-aligned, postcolonial, and postracial world. It was a place where activists from across the globe, with their Ghanaian hosts, cooperated, colluded, and collided over how to construct a way forward toward a fully decolonial, nuclear-free, postracial world. In no way were their freedom dreams bounded by the borders of the new Ghanaian nation state. Malcolm X's presence, even for that short week, both shaped and amplified these transnational debates and exposed the deep political divisions, especially among exiles and expatriates, over race and space, decolonization and time.

In a recent contribution to *Time & Society*, social and political philosopher Charles W. Mills explores what he calls the 'chronopolitics of racial time', with chronopolitics intended to capture the relationship between one's perspective on time and the political decisions one takes.[65] The chronopolitics of racial time, therefore, treats political decisions and political visions as products of the very different ways race is time-mapped, for example: race has existed since early antiquity vs. race first emerged in the Middle Ages vs. race is a product of modernity.[66] I'd like to suggest, by way of conclusion, that Mills's theoretical intervention helps us make sense of the content and context of what was being debated in Accra in 1964, of the 'race talk' that filled the media, and to appreciate its historical significance.

'Chronopolitical contestation by its very nature', Mills writes, 'is likely to encompass past, present and future'.[67] And, indeed, the heated debates that filled the Ghanaian media in May 1964 had everything to do with pasts, presents, and futures, framed by conflicting chronopolitics. White South African communists, like Basner, viewed processes of racialization as being directly rooted in and harnessed to the historic development of capitalism. To mobilize, to organize on the basis of racial solidarity, which is what Basner considered Malcolm X's agenda to be, was 'racialist' in a postcolonial and therefore postracial context; it was to reify categories produced by capitalism. Liberal White expatriates, some of whom were in the audience at the Great Hall, may not have agreed with Basner that only a socialist revolution could rid the planet of capitalism (and therefore

[64]See Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 361–2 for Malcolm X's recounting of his speech on his return. See also, Gaines, *American Africans*, 198–9 and 309n43. Lacy also notes that 'it was rumored that Nkrumah had ordered the dispute discontinued': see Lacy, *Rise and Fall*, 211. See *Ghanaian Times*, 29 May 1964 for Basner's last word.

[65]C. W. Mills, 'The chronopolitics of racial time', *Time & Society*, 29:2 (2020), 297–317.

[66]Mills borrows 'time maps' from E. Zerubavel's *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago, 2002).

[67]Mills, 'Chronopolitics', 312.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

racism), but they did share his conviction that to mobilize along racial lines, in a postcolonial and therefore postracialized context was, in and of itself, to reproduce and reinforce 'racialism'. The chronopolitics of radical Black internationalists like Julian Mayfield were informed by a completely different time map: racial time was global; the United States and Ghana co-existed on the same time map; it was simply not possible to imagine Ghana's present or its future as detached or detachable from centuries of global White supremacy and ongoing struggles against it, whether on the African continent or in the United States. And what of Ghanaians? Again, the sources are fragmentary, but clearly for some, like Cassius Nimbus or the students who filled the Great Hall, Malcolm X's visit was revelatory. As Nimbus wrote in his 1964 column, he shared his impressions in order to create 'an aliveness to a true situation'. Malcolm X had opened new vistas for understanding the connections between battles against White supremacy in the US and battles against White supremacy, as manifested in colonialism and neocolonialism, across the African continent. He thereby introduced Ghanaians to what Mills would term a 'new mapping that redraws both the time and space of the modern world order, and admits how crucial transcontinental racial exploitation has been to it'.[68]

Malcolm X's short week in Accra not only surfaced 'race talk' and chronopolitical debates about racial time through the country's newspapers, it pushed that talk, those debates much further into the public realm — on to street corners and buses, into chopbars and dinner parties, and into the classrooms and residence halls of the university. Less than a year after Malcolm X departed Accra, on 21 February 1965, he was assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in New York. And almost a year to the day after Malcolm X died, Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup.[69] Most of the exiles fled Ghana or were deported; the expatriates repatriated. Public debates about race and racial time, about pan-Africanism, the African Revolution, and the ties that bind seemed to evaporate completely.

But the seeming disappearance of race talk from the public realm, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s, is not evidence that race, racialization, or the chronopolitics of racial time are without meaning, without contemporary relevance, without history. The 'racialized time of white modernity', as Mills terms it,[70] can be more or less in evidence, might surface or submerge, depending upon the chronopolitics of the moment, but it never disappears. For Ghana, the ethnographic work of anthropologists like Bowles, Holsey, and Pierre, as I noted earlier, has been decisive in this regard — exposing the content and context of contemporary racialized scripts: Holsey's excavations of Black subjectivities via tours of the castles at Elmina and Cape Coast, time spent in history classrooms, and interviews with families living in the shadows of those castles; or Bowles's careful reading of the gendered and racialized language that describes the women migrants from the Sahel who work as *kayayei* (head porters) in Accra — language that reveals how 'anti-Blackness is deployed in Ghana'.[71]

Pierre's *Predicament of Blackness* is especially poignant in demonstrating the centrality of Africa to the production and articulation of contemporary postcolonial racial formations and to the intersection of diasporic and local registers. Take, for example, her discussion of the contemporary use of the term 'obruni' in Ghana, which can be translated as 'foreigner', but is most often applied specifically to Whites. The fact that it is sometimes used to reference foreign-born people of color, including Blacks from the diaspora, has, as Pierre notes, 'led many people from outside of Ghana to make the now very popular case that Ghanaians consider diaspora Blacks to be White'.[72] As Pierre demonstrates, this constitutes a very superficial reading of a complicated and nuanced form of naming, which at the bottom 'signals a thoroughly racialized discourse in Ghana… about Whiteness and

[68]Mills, 'Chronopolitics', 314.
[69]The coup occurred on 24 Feb. 1966.
[70]Mills, 'Chronopolitics', 297.
[71]Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance*, and Bowles, 'Black feminist ethnography', 67.
[72]Pierre, *Predicament of Blackness*, 77.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the articulations of White power and privilege'.[73] Its repeated deployment up to the present moment, I would add, including in the story I was told years ago of Malcolm X's momentous Great Hall speech, demonstrates the strong investment many Whites, including White scholars, have in the idea that postcolonial Africa exists outside of global currents of racial formation. Indeed, as Pierre has persuasively argued, the academic world of African Studies in the US and Europe, seems especially unwilling to 'address the complexity of race making, particularly key distinctions between race, racialization processes, and practices of racism'.[74] It is precisely that investment in what we might call 'non-racial' or postracial race talk and its implications for the production, reproduction, and sustenance of White supremacy (including in academia) that needs to be interrogated and historicized, and not only vis-à-vis Malcolm X's visit to Accra in 1964.

The challenge this recent ethnographic scholarship poses for historians of Africa is how to think *historically and across local and global registers* about the chronopolitics of racial time. What translates and what does not? When? Who is talking? Who is listening? Who is silent or silenced? Whose voices are amplified and why? I have sought to take on some of these questions here, through a focus on Malcolm X's brief sojourn in Accra. Over a half century later, in the wake of George Floyd's murder in the US, the demand that 'Black Lives Matter' resonated across the African continent, from Accra to Nairobi, from Dakar to Johannesburg. A decolonial or decolonized history-writing would urge us to think through the connections between Malcolm X's Great Hall speech in 1964 and the youth on the streets of Accra in June 2020. How might our history work actually contribute to what Mills calls an 'oppositional racial chronopolitics, guided not by race as racism but race as a recognition of the racial structuring of the modern world and the concomitant need for corrective racial justice'?[75]

Acknowledgements. I have lived with this paper and its many iterations for far too long. I am grateful to the librarians and archivists at the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Northwestern University), National Archives (UK), Public Records and Archives Administration (Ghana), Schlesinger Library (Harvard Radcliffe Institute), and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for their boundless patience and assistance. Thanks to my co-panelists on the 2013 African Studies Association conference panel, 'The African Revolution in Transnational Perspective', and to Michael Gomez, Alaina Morgan, and the 2016 participants in New York University's African Diaspora Forum. A special thanks to Shefali Chandra, Wendell Marsh, Jennifer Pierce, Carina Ray, and the anonymous reviewers at the journal for helping me get this out the door.

[73]*Ibid.*

[74]Pierre, 'Structure', 213. For my recent reflections on Whiteness and African Studies, see '#HerskovitsMustFall? A meditation on Whiteness, African studies and the unfinished business of 1968', *African Studies Review*, 62:3 (2019), 6–39.

[75]Mills, 'Chronopolitics', 312.

Cite this article: Allman J (2022). Exiles, Expatriates, and Malcolm X: Debating the Racial Politics of Liberation in the Black Star of Africa. *The Journal of African History* 63(1), 91–105. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853722000123