

Primary Source:

*Nnamdi Azikiwe, “The Future of Pan Africanism,” (1962)**



PRIMARY SOURCE

INTRODUCTION

THE FUTURE OF PAN AFRICANISM

Introduction

One of the central leaders of Nigerian independence, Nnamdi “Zik” Azikiwe was Governor General of Nigeria as a British colony (1960–1963) and then the first President of Nigeria (1963–1966).

Azikiwe experienced racial biases in his early life and while serving as a clerk in the treasury of the colonial government. In the 1920s, he traveled to the United States for university schooling. Deeply influenced by the Pan-Africanist ideals circulating at the time, upon returning to Nigeria he became active in the anti-colonial press and increasingly influential in politics.

As President, Azikiwe promoted a Pan-African ideal of regional or continental African unity, as well as anti-colonial nationalism. He was, for a period of time, even a spokesperson for Biafra, a separatist state that broke off from Nigeria during the late 1960s, although later supporting its rejoining the Nigerian state.

In this 1962 speech, Azikiwe speaks of the importance of Pan-Africanism to decolonization.

*Nnamdi Azikiwe, “The Future of Pan Africanism,” 1962, <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/speeches-global-african-history/1962-nnamdi-azikiwe-future-pan-africanism/>. Edited and annotated by members of the History for the 21st Century project.



Nnamdi Azikiwe, “The Future of Pan Africanism,” (1962)



Nnamdi Azikiwe, first President of Nigeria

HISTORY OF PAN-AFRICANISM

... The history of the continent of Africa in ancient, medieval, and modern times has followed a pattern which ignores the factor of race in its evolution. Whilst the white races of Assyria, Syria, Phoenicia and Israel developed their civilization, the brown races of Egypt and the black races of Ethiopia proceeded to develop their civilization contemporaneously. In medieval times, the Arab did not distinguish between the black or brown or white Hamitic, Semitic, Sudanic or Bantu-speaking converts of Islam. All that has come down to us shows that the civilizations which flourished in Africa at that time attached little attention, if any, to such an extraneous factor as race.... In other words, in spite of racial, linguistic and cultural differences, conscious efforts have been made at all known times of African history to form a political union either on a regional or continental basis...

FACTORS AFFECTING AFRICAN UNITY

Two factors which may be said to have intensified the problem of African unity are the vestigial attachments of African States with their former colonial rulers.... Since imperialism is all-pervading in its operations it envelops in its totality the very atmosphere of these former colonies. Consequently, their political, economic, social, educational, spiritual, cultural and religious institutions have been subjected to a terrific impact from which they may never recover....



PROBLEMS OF PAN-AFRICANISM

Whether the unity of African States is possible or not depends upon the ability of African leaders to resolve the problems created by the social intercourse of the inhabitants of Africa ... It is my candid opinion that if pursued in the right spirit, most of these problems can be effectively adjusted for the emergence of a fertile soil that will be favourable for the evolution of some sort of association of African States.

Pan-Africanism in action has proved the existence of deep-seated fears which exist in the minds of certain African leaders in some African States. The Principles of Monrovia[†] demonstrate the nature of these fears, to wit: the right of African States to equality of sovereignty irrespective of size and population; the right of each African State to self-determination and existence; the right of any African State to federate or confederate with another African State; respect for the principle of non-interference in the internal and domestic affairs of African States inter se[‡] and the inviolability of the territorial integrity of each African State. These are well-known accepted principles of International Law.

Explore More:

[Nnamdi “Zik” Azikiwe \(1904-1996\)](#)

[The Pan-African Congresses, 1900-1945](#)

[Organization of African Unity \(1963-2002\)](#)



*Egyptian President Nasser
at the 1964 Summit of the
Organization of African Unity*

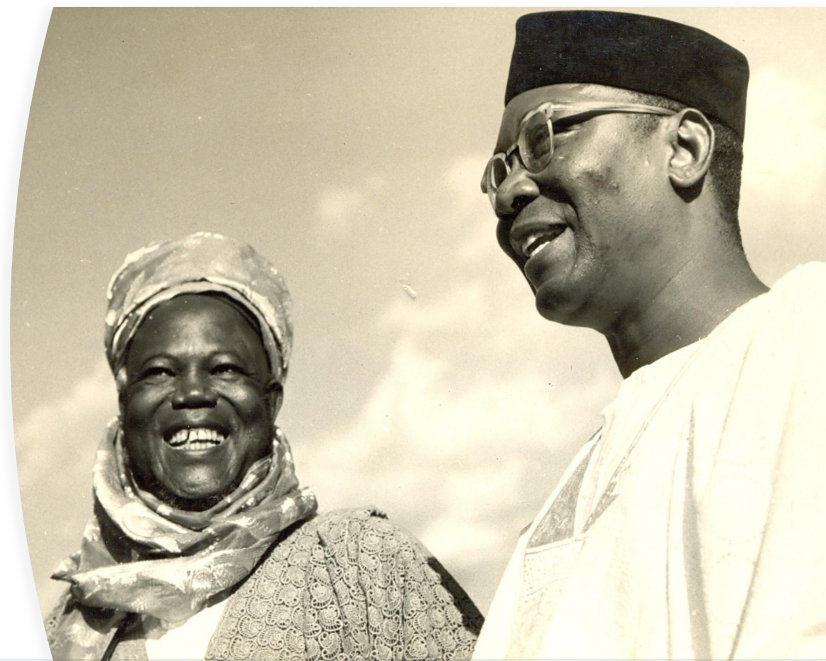
[†] A year before Azikiwe's speech, the Conference of Independent African States met in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, to articulate a vision for an association of independent African states. Member states included Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey (later Benin), Ethiopia, Gabon, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Somalia, Togo, Tunisia, and Upper Volta (later Burkina Faso). Many of its members had participated at a meeting in Brazzaville, Congo in 1961, which was called the Brazzaville Group.

[‡] 'Inter se' is a Latin phrase often used in legal settings meaning 'among themselves' or 'between themselves.'

The proposal to integrate Togo and Ghana has been a source of anxiety to the Ghanaian, Togolese and other friends of Pan-Africanism.[§] The claim of Morocco to sovereignty over Mauritania is a denial of the right to self-determination to the Mauritians according to those who believe in Mauritania.^{||}

The refusal of Sudan to attend the Monrovia Conference because Mauritania was invited shows the nature of the cleavage between the Casablanca and Monrovia Powers...^{**} The fact that the Casablanca Powers support the claim of Algeria to self-determination, on the one hand, and, on the other, deny the right of Mauritania of self-determination, indicates the gravity of these problems.

If the issues mentioned in the preceding paragraphs are secondary, it is essential that we also examine the primary ones. First, the inhabitants of the African continent are not racially homogeneous. In North Africa, the majority of the population belong to the Mediterranean group of the Caucasoid race. In Africa south of the Sahara, the majority are Negroid, with the exception of a small minority of European settlers in southern Africa who are either members of the Alpine or Nordic groups of the Caucasoids ...



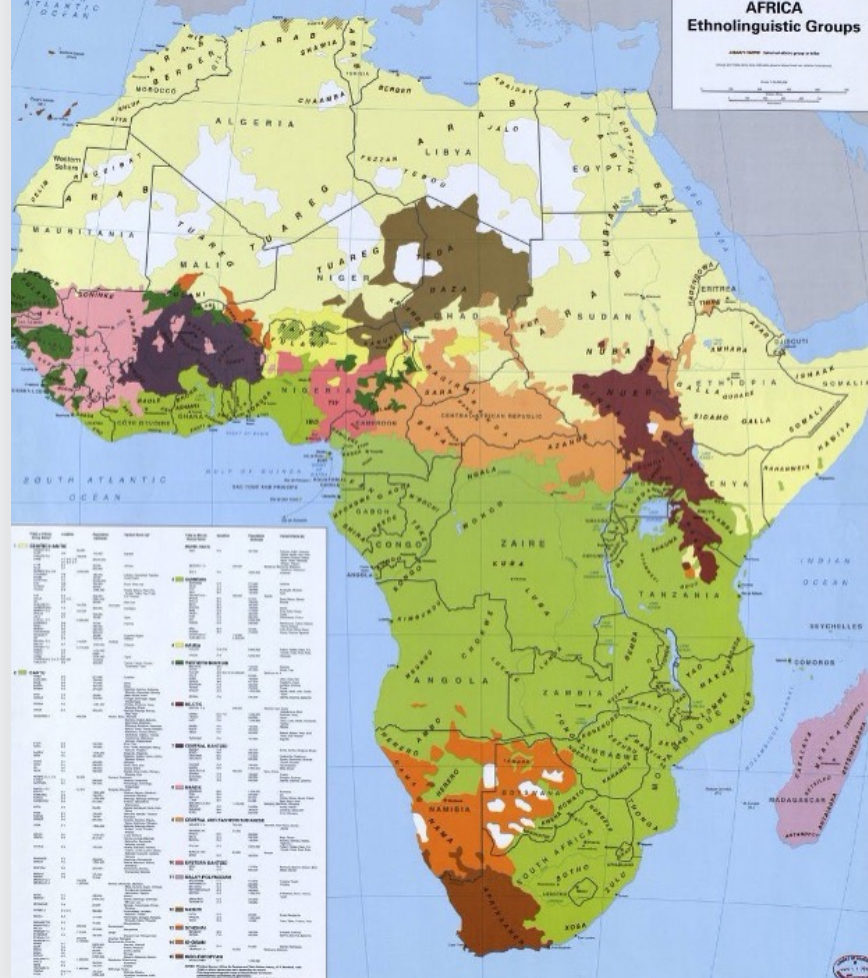
*Nnamdi Azikiwe (right) premier
of the Northern Nigeria region*

[§] After World War I, the former German colony of Togoland had been divided in two, with the eastern and western halves overseen by France and Britain, respectively. After Ghana gained its independence from Britain in 1951, governments in Ghana and Britain aimed to integrate British-rule Togoland into Ghana. Some nationalists from the Ewe ethnicity, however, remained committed keeping Togo united. In 1956, however, a majority of residents of British Togoland voted to join Ghana, which it did the following year.

^{||} After independence from France, Moroccan leaders claimed that before colonialism, that lands of Mauritania belonged to something they called Greater Morocco, which they sought to reunite. Mauritanian nationalists strongly rejected such claims and defended Mauritanian independence.

^{**} A group of seven African states (Morocco, Mali, Libya, Guinea, Ghana, Egypt, and Algeria) that met in the Moroccan city of Casablanca in 1961 that offered a more radical Pan-Africanist vision than the Monrovia Group. The government of Sudan recognized Morocco's claim to rule Mauritania, and thus refused to attend because the Monrovia Conference because its organizers invited Mauritania as an independent state.

*Ethno-linguistic
map of Africa*



Secondly, the existence of various linguistic groups in Africa has intensified the problem of communication and human understanding. Whilst those who live on the fringe of the Mediterranean are Hamitic-speaking, the Africans of the west are mainly Sudanic-speaking. The indigenous central and southern Africans are Bantu-speaking. The inhabitants of eastern Africa are partially Sudanic, Bantu, Hamitic and Semitic. The small European elements in southern Africa speak either English or Afrikaans. Emerging out of this milieu is the fact that to millions of Africans either English or Arabic or Swahili or Hausa is the lingua franca, whilst the rest have to manage as best they can.

Thirdly, the impact of various cultures on African society has created basic problems of social unity. One example is the activities of the Pan-Arab League which seeks to unite under one fold all the Arabic-speaking peoples not only of Africa but also of the Middle East. Another example is the attempt being made in certain quarters to create an Islamic Confederation which will cut across racial, linguistic and cultural lines. Then there is the move to interpret Pan-Africanism purely in terms of race and to restrict its membership and activities to the Negroids and thereby exclude other races who live in Africa who are not black...

My conclusion is that parochialism in the realms of race, language, culture or religion has often led to social disintegration. Therefore, it constitutes a social and psychological barrier which must be hurdled if Pan-Africanism is to become a reality.

Nnamdi Azikiwe and Uche Ehwa, c 1972



Image Citations:

Page 1:

Official portrait of the former President of Nigeria Nnamdi Azikiwe, 1963, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nnamdi_Azikiwe_PC_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nnamdi_Azikiwe_PC_(cropped).jpg)

Page 2:

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Egypt's president Nasser at the African Summit conference in Cairo, 1964, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nasser_at_African_Summit_1964_Cairo.jpg

Page 4:

Pan-African flag, created 1920, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_the_UNIA.svg
Nnamdi Azikiwe (right) and Ahmadu Bello, the first and only premier of the Northern Nigeria region, Face2Face Africa, <https://face2faceafrica.com/article/nnamdi-azikiwe-from-stowaway-to-nigerias-first-president-and-african-nationalist>

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