

JOEL AUGUSTUS ROGERS: BLACK INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM, ARCHIVAL RESEARCH, AND BLACK PRINT CULTURE

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J. A. Rogers, international correspondent of the Negro press and research student in African and European history of Negroes, returned to the United States last Saturday aboard the SS *Albert Ballin* of the Hamburg American line after spending four years in the best libraries of Europe; and traveling throughout Europe and North Africa seeking facts on early Negro history. Mr. Rogers was met at the pier by George Schuyler, author, lecturer, journalist, and organizer of the Young Negroes Co-operative League. . . . Mr. Rogers returned with much material gathered during his long stay abroad, and plans a lecture tour of the United States to last seven months, during which he will discuss the startling information he found in his research work. He brought back 100 biographies of great Negroes, such as kings, statesmen, generals, philosophers, scientists, poets, etc; 150 photos of these notables of history; 24 photos of Negro kings of Egypt which he secured from museums in Cairo, and several prints of gods and goddesses of Egypt showing that they were unmistakably Negroes.

—Floyd J. Calvin, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1931

The published works of Joel Augustus Rogers, journalist, historian, and author of the two-volume *World's Great Men of Color*, and other important histories of African-descended people are known currently to only a handful of scholars. Even those historians and anthropologists who are aware of Rogers's self-published and popular scholarly works tend only to remember him for the biographical portraits of African and African American leaders, and his investigations of the history of "sex and race" in antiquity and in the modern era. Most contemporary college students have never heard of J. A. Rogers nor are they aware of his long journalistic career and pioneering archival research. Rogers committed his life to fighting against racism and he had a major influence on black print culture through his attempts to improve race relations in the United States and challenge white supremacist tracts aimed at disparaging the history and contributions of people of African descent to world civilizations.

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Born in Jamaica on 6 September 1880 in Negril, Westmoreland Parish, to Samuel Rogers and Emily Johnstone Rogers, we know little about Joel Augustus's childhood and early life in Jamaica. As an adult, Rogers was a private person and what is known of his early life comes mostly from his widow Helga Rogers-Andrews. According to Rogers-Andrews, Rogers's family moved to St. Ann's Bay where as a boy he met Marcus Garvey, who in 1913 founded the all-black Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which is considered the largest secular organization in the African Diaspora. After Rogers finished primary school, he applied for a scholarship to attend a university in the Caribbean, but was denied admission (where and why is not known). Writing in 1922 recalling his life in Jamaica, Rogers noted there were "few scholarships to universities in the British Isles and to local colleges." Rather than pursuing schooling, Rogers decided to join the British Royal Army and served with the Royal Garrison Artillery at Port Royal for four years. The exact years of service are unknown, but according to Rogers-Andrews, "When his unit was to be transferred abroad, a medical examiner revealed a heart murmur,

and Joel was considered unfit for foreign service. . . ."

In 1906 Rogers decided to emigrate to the United States, briefly living in New York City and then Boston before settling in Chicago in 1908. While living in Chicago from 1908 to 1921, Rogers worked much of the time as a Pullman porter to help pay for his studies in commercial art at the Chicago Art Institute. Rogers also mentioned that he tried to enroll at the University of Chicago, but was denied admission because he did not possess the necessary high school credits. He had planned on studying to become an interior decorator, but when he became aware of the racist information and published literature pervasive in American society, as well as the racial violence, Rogers's outlook on life in the United States changed. Evidently, Rogers decided to pursue a career in journalism once he landed a job as a reporter with the *Chicago Enterprise*. In 1921 Rogers relocated to New York City, and eventually found a temporary position as an assistant editor for Marcus Garvey's *Daily Negro Times*, a failed UNIA publishing project. In 1923 Rogers began writing columns for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *New York Amsterdam News*, which would become major contributions to black print culture in the 20th century."*

This essay seeks to highlight an important portion of Rogers's Africana research and scholarship in two major areas: Rogers's contribution to black print culture in the area of international journalism; and the scholarly black biographies and histories that were disseminated as multivolume texts, as well as through illustrated portraits and vignettes published in black newspapers around the country. It

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will also discuss how Rogers's scholarship was received by historians, social scientists, and public figures in the United States, England, and Africa in the first half of the 20th century. ^

BLACK INTERNATIONAL JOURNALIST

J. A. Rogers's journalistic and historical writings are considered part of the tradition that social scientist St. Clair Drake referred to as "vindicationist history." Rogers dedicated his life to advancing the view that people of African descent were throughout world history extremely influential in the building of ancient and modern civilizations which made significant contributions to human progress. Rogers understood "race" as a social construction and how white racialism functioned to advance the interests of whites in their contests with the so-called colored races; however, Rogers believed there was only one race—the human race. In surveying the totality of Rogers's research and writings, it becomes clear that it was not limited to African diasporic biographies or race mixture in the ancient and modern world. Rogers was an exceptional journalist, but is rarely given this recognition. In his journalistic reporting, Rogers also sought to vindicate the lives and experiences of Africans and people of African descent throughout the African Diaspora. Historians V. P. Franklin and Bettie Collier-Thomas argued that "race journalism" was an extension of African American 19th-century vindicationist journalism: "African American journalists and publishers in the black press often competed with the preachers and politicians for the position as 'the leading spokespersons for the race.' However, biographies of important black politicians and journalists reveal that they too engaged in race vindicationist activities.""

Rogers's vindicationist journalism in many respects mirrors the tradition associated with the 19th Pan-Africanist Edward Wilmot Blyden whose journalistic and literary writings aimed to vindicate people of African descent from white racist charges of cultural inferiority. One of the major themes in Blyden's writings was that sub-Saharan Africans had made significant contributions to both Christian and Islamic civilizations. While Blyden's intellectual and journalistic activities have been the subject of scholarly research, J. A. Rogers's international journalism and scholarly research, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s when he traveled extensively in Europe and Africa, has been overlooked. ^ Rogers spent most of his journalistic career working for the *Pittsburgh Courier*. From 1923 to 1966 Rogers's columns appeared in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and for a brief period simultaneously in the *New York Amsterdam News* and covered a wide range of social and political issues

concerning African Americans. For example, in 1926

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Rogers wrote about his experience posing as a Garveyite and interviewing John Powell and Ernest Sevier Cox, the white supremacist leaders of the Anglo-Saxon Club; and his attending the debate in the Virginia Senate over the revision of the "Racial Integrity Act of 1924," which banned interracial marriage. Rogers offered his views about black Caribbean women emigrating to the United States; his travels to lecture at historically black colleges in the South; and his support for A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, newly organized in 1925 after years of struggle with the owners of the nation's railroads. Rogers also reviewed books and movies for newspapers, and in 1923 the *Amsterdam News* serialized two of his three published novels. *From Superman to Man* (1917) and *Blood Money* (1923),»

Undated photo of J. A. Rogers in Europe. Courtesy of Fisk University, Special Collections, Nashville, TN.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s Rogers was employed as an international correspondent and travel journalist for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Amsterdam News*.[^] Rogers traveled throughout Europe on two different occasions in the
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1920s. His first trip began in June 1925 and he remained in Europe for five months. During this visit he traveled throughout the British Isles before spending a brief time in Paris. In London, Rogers began preliminary research on African history in the reading room at the British Museum, where he met the Jamaican-born scholar Theophilus Scholes (1854-1937), whose two-volume opus. *Glimpses of Ages* (1905, 1908), criticized the racialist and class ideologies underpinning British imperialist policies. Rogers recalled, "Dr. Scholes invited me to tea and we discussed the race situation for several hours. From his experience, he thought England was a bad place for a Negro, but when I told him of conditions in America, he admitted that the former was nothing in comparison.""" Rogers met other distinguished and undistinguished white and black people in London, including George Lansbury, MP; John Harris, secretary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society; Professor A. A. Chinappa of Egypt and Zanzibar; and Amanda Aldridge, daughter of the famous African American stage actor

Ira D. Aldridge (1807-1867)."

Rogers met with black intellectuals, white politicians, and others interested in the race problem in the United States and Britain and wrote about the nature of race and class relationships in England and France. During Rogers's first visit to England he encountered no racial animus and mistakenly concluded that there was little color prejudice and discrimination towards the black people living there. In fact, in the 25 July 1925 issue of the *Pittsburgh Courier* the headline announced: "No Color Prejudice in England,' Says J. A. Rogers."² In his defense Rogers related personal experiences of being treated with respect by the Britons he encountered and that led him to this highly questionable conclusion. "One hears much about instinctive race prejudice. But since I have been here I have come more strongly than ever to the conclusion that race prejudice is a thing that has been taught."[^] Although initially Rogers found that African-descended people in England were treated with courtesy, he did notice that looking for a job could be a serious problem. "In England, the Negroes are treated very courteously, but he is the last to be given a job; in France he gets both job and good treatment."^{***}*

Rogers's views changed during his second visit to Europe between 1927 and 1930. Then he came face to face with the hardships and racial discrimination African-descended people faced in England and other European countries. Rogers found Paris a more congenial place to live during his first and second visits because the French reminded him of African Americans. "They take time to live and get acquainted with life as they pass through it—a fact which no doubt accounts for their very high state of artistic development."[^] Rogers also felt more at home in Paris due to the large and diverse black population in the city.

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Rogers's second trip began in 1927, when Robert L. Vann, editor-publisher of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, sent Rogers to Europe and Africa as an international travel journalist. Rogers started out with a visit to northwest Africa and then headed northward to Europe through Spain and Italy. Rogers's travel journalism complemented the works of other African American and African travelers who wrote about their journeys to Europe in the 1920s. Upon arriving in Morocco, Rogers was fascinated and proclaimed, "Africa, or at least the part of it I have seen in the past few days, is astonishingly different from what I had imagined from my readings, that, indeed, I feel as if I had been taken bodily and put into another world."[^] Northwest Africa became emotionally therapeutic for Rogers because the Africa he encountered was very different from the one described in racist literature he had been exposed to throughout his life. The trip over the second time was much better because he traveled on an Italian ship. "The last time, when I went to Europe with those Americanized Nordies, it was 'Nigger, Nigger'; nothing of the sort this trip. It was 'colored lady' and 'colored gentleman' when they spoke of colored folk with whom they had worked on, or who had traded with them."[^] Literary critics Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish in *A Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African American Travel Writing* concluded that travel accounts about trips to Europe and Africa are part of a long tradition among African Americans, especially journalists and literary artists, who traveled abroad and documented their experiences in books, pamphlets, personal letters, diaries, and other published and unpublished texts.[^] J. A. Rogers's travel journalism for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and *New York Amsterdam News* was part of a tradition that began in the early 19th century when William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, and other black abolitionists wrote about their journeys throughout the United Kingdom and extended to journalist Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching crusade in England in the 1890s."[^]

During this second visit Rogers traveled throughout much of Europe and even interviewed a few celebrities such as the British writer Frank Harris, the author of *My Life and Loves* (1922). Rogers was invited to stay at Harris's villa in Nice, France, and during the interview Rogers learned how Harris felt about white racial violence in the United States. "It is difficult to believe that human beings can be so savage," declared Harris. "Such people keep up a tradition of stupidity that might again cost America very dearly."²⁰ Afterward Rogers traveled through the Cote d'Azur (French Riviera), and in Antibes he met up with the radical poet and novelist Claude McKay. In 1928 McKay's *Home to Harlem* caused much controversy among old

and "New Negro" intellectuals and artists. Back in Paris, Rogers interviewed one of the most famous musical artists of the decade, Josephine

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Baker. The interview centered on the allegations (subsequently confirmed) that she had married her manager Giuseppe Pepito di Albertini, who posed as an Italian count, but was really a Sicilian stonemason. In his reporting Rogers included the history and customs of the various ethnic groups he encountered, and what it was like to visit their cities, towns, and countryside. His *Pittsburgh Courier* and *Amsterdam News* readers were introduced to history and customs in places most African Americans would never get to see. For example, Rogers visited Vatican City in Rome and described its library.[^]

The Vatican Library is perhaps the largest repository of art treasures in the world, and one walks through what must be miles and miles of rooms so filled with them that it is almost difficult to fix one's attention on any one object. Nevertheless, one must be arrested by the paintings of Raphael in the rooms that bear his name; the Sistine Chapel, with Michael Angelo's famous painting "The Last Judgment"; the thousands of books with signatures sent to the popes from America and all parts of the world, one of which is said to contain the names of 33,000 French persons who declare themselves "ready to offer and die for the faith"; and Nero's bathtub which is big enough for five persons. Of special interest to me was the Egyptian Room, with one of the finest collections of Egyptian art and statuary in existence.^{^^}

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AND RACE VINDICATION

During his second trip to Europe, Rogers decided to live in Paris and conduct- ed anthropological and historical research on people of African descent at various museums and art galleries throughout Europe, taking numerous photographs of the materials collected there. In conducting anthropological-photographic research, Rogers used the camera to convey certain non-verbal truths about the artifacts under examination. This allowed Rogers to capture on film, scrutinize, and then write about the images and representations of people of African descent he found in the many museums he visited in Europe and Africa. These photo- graphic records provided Rogers's readers with additional support for the argu- ments he was making about African peoples' contributions to world history. These photographic images became significant primary sources that Rogers reprinted in his books *World's Greatest Men of African Descent* (1931); *World's Greatest Men and Women of African Descent* (1935); *Sex and Race*, three volumes (1940-44), *World's Great Men of Color*, two volumes (1946—47); and *Nature Knows No Color Line* (1952). In addition to museums, Rogers carried out his research at various galleries, libraries, antiquarian bookstores, and churches.^{^^}

Rogers's visits to these cultural sites in Europe influenced what he came to believe about Africa and included in newspaper columns from 1927 titled

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"Ethiopia and Egypt Made Nordic Civilization Possible," and "Roman Idea of Life Came from Ethiopians." Rogers argued that European civilization was very much influenced by the ancient civilizations in Africa.^{^^} While viewing the ancient ruins of Rome, Rogers observed.

It is impossible to give an **idea of the colossal size of these ruins. This fact strikes one, espe- cially** after he shall have seen the Coliseum, the Aqueeducts, and the Baths of Caracalla: those old Romans built with robustness, a vastness far beyond us. They had a mightier conception of life. But of course, it will be recalled they inherited their idea from the Greeks, of whom Rome was once a province, while the Greeks in turn inherited from the Egyptians, who in turn got their ideas from the ^{^^}

Rogers based his conclusions about Africa's Nile Valley being influential to the foundation of ancient Greek and

Roman civilization from what he personally observed and found in repositories, museums, and ancient sites he visited. The period from 1927 to 1931 marked a new beginning for Rogers who committed himself to historical research on people of African descent.

Undated Photo of J. A. Rogers in Europe. Courtesy of Fisk University, Special Collections, Nashville, TN.

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From as early as 1912 Rogers was interested in African history, but by the late 1920s he was in a position to learn much more about the contributions people of African descent had made to world civilizations from antiquity to the modern era. Rogers's personal commitment to what would today be called Africana Diaspora research (without philanthropic or university support) was significant. In the late 1920s very few African American researchers, professionally trained or self-taught, engaged in anthropological or archival research in Europe or other locations outside the United States. The exceptions included historian Carter G. Woodson, who conducted research in libraries and at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, France. The singer, actor, and social activist Paul Robeson in the early 1930s carried out research on African music, art, and languages in London at the London School of Oriental Languages. Other African Americans who conducted research in Europe during those years were historians Anna Julia Cooper and Charles H. Wesley, philosopher Alain Locke, and anthropologist St. Clair Drake.^{^^} Rogers stressed his life commitment to research on African peoples when he asserted in the *Pittsburgh Courier*,

Since 1912, I have specialized in this field. I have looked into or read a vast number of books in six different languages in search of facts. Well read friends of mine George Schuyler, James W. Ivy, James Forbes, and John G. Jackson send me from time to time any remarkable fact they run across about Negroes. In addition I have gathered much information "on the hoof" I have actually walked over cities like Rome, Paris, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, London, Seville, Madrid, Lisbon, Casablanca, Cairo, and many others searching through libraries, museums, and old churches, catacombs, etc.²

Rogers did not have to engage in research at all, and could merely have concentrated on travel journalism. However, he recognized the urgency of combating racist propaganda and the falsifications about the history of people of African descent in Africa and throughout the African Diaspora. Based on the information he unearthed in Europe, Rogers informed the readers of the *Amsterdam News* in 1929 that he had completed a manuscript on "race mixing." The manuscript, "This Mongrel World: A Study of Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Countries," was an expansion of an earlier

work *As Nature Leads*, published in 1919, Rogers mentioned in 1944 that something unexpected prevented him from publishing "This Mongrel World," but in *Sex and Race*, volume III, Rogers also revealed, "Thirteen years later, due to much greater research I had done on the subject, I changed the title [of "This Mongrel World"] to 'Sex and Race.' Parts of the manuscript I used in Volume One and Two of that work and discarded most of the rest,"^{2*} During the 1940s Rogers became one of the most controversial and

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most important self-trained historians in the United States. In his assessment of the importance of Rogers's work as an independent scholar, St. Clair Drake, author of *Black Folk Here and There*, emphasized that, "endowed with unusual talent, Rogers advanced from menial pursuits he first engaged in as an immigrant to the United States from Jamaica to become one of the best-informed individuals in the world on black history, writing and publishing his own books without any kind of organizational or foundation support."²⁹

Historian Joyce Moore Tumer, the daughter of Harlem's radical scholar-activist and owner of the Frederick Douglass bookstore, Richard B. Moore, remembered seeing Rogers at her home while growing up. Joyce Tumer discussed the importance of Rogers's research and historical scholarship. | |

His writings were labeled "revolutionary" not because they espoused revolutionary politics, but because they broke with traditional scholarship in presenting topics on race and sex that were taboo, cited events that European and American historians ignored or misrepresented, and popularized historical accounts. He had to publish his works privately because he was not the typical academician with a degree from a recognized university. His early articles in the *Messenger*, his later books, and regular newspaper columns that included brief historic [al] facts were followed by a large audience."³⁰ | |

Rogers revealed some of his historical findings in his newspaper columns and as a result, many African Americans wrote him in Paris to find out more about his research. Rogers's columns about life in Europe, as well as his biographical portraits, were not limited to newspapers in the 1930s; he also wrote many brief historical essays that were published in African American magazines. For example, the article "The Negro in European History" was published in the National Urban League's *Opportunity* magazine in June 1930 and discussed the important contributions that people of African descent made in the evolution of European arts, sciences, and military campaigns. "Rome had a large number of Negro soldiers, who fought her battles as far north as Britain. One of the most noted of her generals was St. Maurice (St. Moor in English)." Rogers praised the great General Alexander Dumas (1762-1806) who led Napoleon's cavalry at the Battle of the Pyramids in Egypt in 1798. Rogers concluded that "Napoleon in his own way, admired Dumas. He told him on one occasion: 'What I like about you is not only your courage, but your humanity.'"³¹ Rogers believed that Africans' contributions to European societies were enormous. "This history, which dates back to the dimmest antiquity, would fill one or more large volumes, and the best that can be done in a short article is to give barest outlines and to mention some of the leading individuals."³² ; ,

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Rogers's research generated interest and excitement among African Americans and many wrote to him after reading his articles and columns. In response to the numerous letters Rogers received at the *Pittsburgh Courier* office, the editor Robert Vann published this notice:

Mr. Rogers writes the **editor he has received many letters from** *Courier* readers concerning his trip, and will devote a special article to answering questions asked by these inquiries. He will be glad to get further letters from persons interested in his trip. He may be addressed J. A. Rogers, **11 Rue Scribe, care of** American Express Company, Paris, France. Postage five cents to Paris. **His mail will be forwarded to him from there.**³³

Working for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *New York Amsterdam News* as a travel journalist provided Rogers the opportunity to comb through important archival repositories in Europe. This is not to suggest that Rogers would not have eventually traveled to Europe or North Africa, but being an international journalist provided the opportunity to pursue his scholarly research interests. *Pittsburgh Courier* columnist Floyd J. Calvin explained the importance of Rogers's research overseas, and his setting the record straight about the history of people of African descent:

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He says the twisting of historical facts by white writers to keep the Nordic idea dominant is one of the most unfair of the many wrongs perpetrated against the Negro. In one library [Rogers] discovered 6,000 volumes, filled with valuable history on the Negro, which have been either ignored or deliberately suppressed by white writers. He did not divulge where he found these books, saying he expects to return to Europe for further research and wants to keep his work as original as possible. He says other writers have heretofore taken advantage of original discoveries he made regarding the history of the Negro and published them as their own. Mr. Rogers pointed out that in the extensive bibliography compiled by Monroe N. Work of Tuskegee, the books he found were not listed, which strengthens his belief that they were unknown to present day writers. -"

"YOUR HISTORY": NEWSPAPER ILLUSTRATIONS AND HISTORICAL PORTRAITS ! . In one of his illustrated portraits in 1949 for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Rogers praised the young John Hope Franklin as an "exceptionally trained historian" who was then a professor at Howard University. Amazingly, for most of his career Franklin was unaware that Rogers had featured him in his weekly illustrated portraits included in the *Pittsburgh Courier* titled "Your History." When the newspaper portrait and illustration was presented to Franklin by this author at the meet-
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ing of the Organization of American Historians, held in San Jose, California, in 2005, he smiled and found it hard to believe that J. A. Rogers had thought so highly of him when he was a young historian. Franklin had met Rogers only once, in the 1940s in Washington, DC. Franklin believed that Rogers has made an immeasurable contribution to popularizing the field of "Black History."""^

The historical research and publications from Europe in the late 1920s and early 1930s laid the groundwork for another of J. A. Rogers's major contributions to black print culture. With the help of newspaper illustrator George L. Lee and cartoonist Samuel Malai, between 1934 and his death in 1966, Rogers produced illustrated lessons about "Your History." These illustrated portraits and commentary were published weekly in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. The illustrations usually included the portrait of an important historical or contemporary figure from "Negro History," along with one or two smaller drawings depicting some scene from that person's life or career.^^

Robert Vann's decision to move forward in 1934 with the "Your History" illustrated series represented a new attempt at the popularization of Black History. This was certainly an advancement beyond the illustrations of African Americans that appeared in mainstream daily or weekly newspaper comic strips. In 1905, for example, Windsor McCay created the "Little Nemo" comic strip in which the black character "Impy" was portrayed as a cannibal who uttered nonsensical phrases. "Happy Holligan," "Professor Hypnotiser," "Boots and Buddies," and "Willie Cute," were other stereotypical characters included in comic strips in white newspapers. It was against this historical backdrop that Rogers's "Your History" illustrations came to represent an important attempt to reconstruct the image of people of African descent in the United States, Africa, and throughout the Diaspora.³⁷

The "Your History" series featured many contemporary African American women such as the concert singers Lois Jordan and Leontyne Price; Amy Ashwood Garvey, the wife of Marcus Garvey and political activist in London; and Dr. Dorothy Porter, "one of America's leaders in scholarship and a leading librarian." In reviewing the "Your History" illustrations, it is clear that Rogers kept abreast of many aspects of African American life from the 1930s through the 1960s. In

addition to John Hope Franklin, many other black historians were featured in "Your History," including George Washington Williams, Carter G. Woodson, Rayford Logan, Arturo A. Schomburg, Monroe Nathan Work, C. L. R. James, William Leo Hansberry, and Charles H. Wesley.^{***}

The importance of Rogers's "Your History" illustrations in educating African Americans, young and old, should not be taken lightly since during the first half

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of the 20th century few black youths were exposed to historic black figures in their own homes or schools. Rogers's portraits reconstructed the African and African diasporic past and present and challenged negative conceptions of "the Negro" being formulated in mainstream publications and other media. Political theorist Cedric Robinson observed that

"Negro," that is the color black, was both a negation of Africa and a unity of opposition to white. The construct of Negro, unlike the terms "Africa," "Moor," or "Ethiopia" suggested no situatedness in time, that is history, or space, that is ethno- or political-geography. The Negro had no civilization, no cultures, no religions, no history, no place, and finally no humanity that might command consideration. Like his eastern, central, and western European prototypes, in their time, **and** the French peasants, the Slavs, the Celts, and more recently **the American** "Indians," the Negro constituted a marginally human group. . . .[^]

The idea to make history and African-descended peoples' contemporary accomplishments fun to read and at the same time enlightening demonstrated the *Pittsburgh Courier's* commitment to education and raising the historical consciousness of its readers. And the positive response to Rogers's illustrated series can best be summed up in a 1935 letter from a New Orleans teacher sent to the *Pittsburgh Courier* editor.

Honorable Sir: I wish to add to my humble words of praise and encouragement to Messrs. Rogers and Lee for their illustrated educational feature entitled "Your history." The personnel of your newspaper deserves to be congratulated for stimulating a study of Negro History, a subject with which we should all be acquainted and yet, one of which we know the least! As teachers of history, my sister and I have found this material helpful. Here are a few practical uses that may be made of it: 1. It may be preserved in scrapbook form. (Its appeal to children is striking.) 2. It may well grace the bulletin boards of progressive lodges, libraries, civic clubs, and schools. 3. It serves as an impetus to encourage the further study of Negro history. I am certain that with your fund of journalistic experience, that you will readily agree that often an illustrated feature or cartoon achieves greater results than a page of dry paint. (Especially when it is easily assimilated and digested "at a glance.")"

In many ways Rogers's international research and scholarship, travel journalism, and newspaper columns and illustrations complemented the contributions to black print culture made by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), the *Negro History Bulletin*, and *The Journal of Negro History*, edited by Carter G. Woodson. Rogers knew Woodson personally and understood Woodson's commitment to rigorous scholarly research and the Negro history movement. One month after he returned from Europe, Rogers attended the 15th annual ASNLH convention, held in New York City in October 1931; and after-

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ward in his published column in the *Amsterdam News*, Rogers praised Woodson for his groundbreaking historical research. Indeed, Rogers was highly critical of African Americans who did not support Woodson and the work of the ASNLH, Rogers understood well Woodson's situation as another independent self-supporting scholar. Woodson also operated outside college and university systems in disseminating the historical truths about African-descended peoples in the form of books, pamphlets, bulletins, and other print media; and Woodson's work was often underappreciated. "Too many, alas, do not see the value of Dr. Woodson's work," Rogers lamented. "That is, they are so filled with the doctrine of white superiority taught them as children that they do not think the accomplishments of others of their color in this country are worth writing about,""

While traveling abroad, Rogers certainly came to appreciate Woodson's commitment to thorough documentation, I I

Go into any museum and library in this country, as well as in Europe or any other civilized land, and one is impressed by the pains taken by archaeologists and others to collect and preserve every relic, however seemingly unimportant, of the past. Why this apparent finicalness and, to the layman, boresome detail? Because humanity's past is hidden away not only in the earth, but sometimes in books, and what is considered of no value might sometimes yield the most profitable clues. The true scholar, like a good detective, overlooks nothing.*^ | I

St. Clair Drake emphasized the connection between Rogers's publications and those of Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois.

I I J. A. Rogers's industriously collected facts

[which] constitute an important complement to the work of Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois. Although Rogers's books were written for a popular audience, they contain valuable data for students and provide leads for further research. His work stands in sharp contrast to much of the social science literature that attempts to provide Marxian or psychoanalytical explanations, with Rogers advancing what he considers certain "commonsense" explanations of discrimination and segregation.*^ i

Because J. A. Rogers did not leave behind a personal diary or a major collection of personal papers, we do not know if he submitted his research findings to the leading academic journals and publishers. If he sent his manuscripts to university presses, it is likely that they would have been reviewed by conservative or racist historians whom he criticized. At the same time, Rogers was more interested in reaching a popular audience outside the academy, especially African Americans who generally did not purchase or read these academic texts. But we do know that Rogers's article, "The Negro Experience in Christianity," was published in London in 1928 in the scholarly publication *The Review of Nations: An*
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Organ for Pan-Humanism and Spiritual Freedom. Rogers's articles "When I Was in Europe" and "Hitler and the Negro" were published in 1938 and 1940 in the *International Review: A Journal for Christian Democracy*. American journalist and editor H. L. Mencken was very interested in Rogers's writings, and published Rogers's essay "The Negro in Europe" in *The American Mercury* in 1930.** Although Rogers did not publish anything in *The Journal of Negro History* during Woodson's lifetime, Woodson reviewed the first volume of Rogers's *Sex and Race* in 1943. Woodson noted that although there were some typographical errors, the research was sound and based on the appropriate evidence. Woodson praised Rogers's scholarship and made a telling observation:

•> • I The public is deeply indebted to J. A. Rogers for the sacrifices which he has made in unearthing the facts of race admixture in this country and abroad. He has visited practically all parts of the civilized world where he has gone as a newspaper correspondent, and from time to time he has delved into the past and brought out things which are startling. He has had to collect and publish his findings at his own expense, for no publishing house has the courage to bring out what he has to offer.*^

Throughout his life Rogers complained about the great difficulty he had in finding a commercial publisher for his works. In 1945 Rogers was "speaking from long and hard experience."

Some years ago I sent my "World's Greatest Men and Women of African Descent" to a leading New York firm on the urging of a powerful friend of the firm. The book showed Negroes as rulers of white kingdoms, generals of white armies, saints, religious leaders, etc. The firm gave great consideration to it and praised it highly, but sent it back saying they couldn't handle it as there was no market for that sort of literature. I saw the justice of the firm's stand. The book wouldn't sell to its white clientele because the people in it were not clowns, or victims, or criminals, or the kind of Negroes it was accustomed to reading about, but were figures whose achievements would be denounced as so-called social equality.*"

In the *Amsterdam News* on 18 July 1933, it was reported Rogers had planned to publish *World's Greatest Men*

and *Women of African Descent* through Woodson and the ASNLH. Unfortunately, this never occurred and we can only speculate about what happened.*^ Rogers ended up self-publishing *World's Greatest Men and Women of African Descent*, as he did with all of his books, but it came at a high price—constant indebtedness to his printers. In 1943 he offered this confession: Joel Augustus Rogers: *Black International Journalism* 337

Let me say that I've been in the game 26 years, have got no money out of it, and yet I would not do anything else. In fact, I may confess that I've been in perpetual debt to my printers, but I don't worry. My books are selling almost with no effort on my part, which brings in enough to keep the printers satisfied, and to get out anything I have on further credit.***

I Í' Rogers's advertised his books in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and through speaking engagements throughout the country and word of mouth, and as the word spread, he had customers from throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Europe.-»*^

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BLACK PRINT CULTURE

The appearance in 1931 of J. A. Rogers's *World's Great Men of African Descent* and in 1935 of *World's Greatest Men and Women of African Descent* marked the continuation of the African American scholarly biographical tradition in black print culture that can be traced to the 19th century with works such as William Wells Brown's *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863), William J. Simmons's *Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising* (1887^, and to John Edward Bruce's *Short Biographical Sketches, Eminent Negro Men and Women in Europe and the United States* (1910)."" Rogers understood that the research and writing of history, especially biographies, was important to the advancement of European civilizations in the modern era. Thus Rogers made clear the reasons why he engaged in archival research for his biographical portraits. "[T]o bring out the best in ourselves (and at the times the worst, too), a study of the lives of the great of races, ages, and climes is a necessity. Biography will ever be the highest and most civilizing form of literature."^

These works, especially the two-volume *World's Great Men of Color (WGMQ*, published in 1946-1947, succeeded in showing Africans' achievements in building large and long-standing civilizations, in facilitating the spread of Christianity and Islam to Europe and Asia, and in defending African territories before and after the coming of the transatlantic slave trade. *WGMC* also profiled contemporary African and African American figures such as the Tuskegee agricultural chemist George Washington Carver; the historian, sociologist, and political leader W. E. B. Du Bois; and the Caribbean-born Harlem street corner radical Hubert H. Harrison. Rogers declared that "Harrison was not only perhaps the foremost [African American] intellect of his time, but one of America's greatest minds."52 Among the prominent individuals of African descent in European history, Rogers discussed the Russian general Abraham Hannibal (1696?-1781);

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Alexander Sergeevitch Pushkin (1799-1837), considered by many the "Father of Russian Literature"; the British-trained musician and composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912); and the French general Alexander Dumas (1762-1806). Many of these figures were unknown to most people then (and now) such as Chevalier de St. Georges (1745-1799).

[De St. Georges] **was the** most dazzling and fascinating figure at the most splendid court of Europe; as violinist, pianist, poet, musical composer and actor, he was phenomenal; as a swordsman he so far eclipsed the best of his time that in his prime no one could match him; as a marksman none could pull the trigger with such unerring aim; as a soldier and commander he performed prodigious feats on the field of battle; as a dancer, swimmer, horseman, and skater, he was the most graceful in a land of supreme grace and elegance; in the matter of dress, he was the model of his day, setting the fashions in England and France; a king of France, a future king of England, and royal princes sought his company, and to crown all he possessed a **spirit of rare generosity, kindness, and rectitude.**^^

Anyone reading *WGMC* would be forced to re-think the roles played by people of African descent in world

history. The revolutionary movement of Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803) and Jean-Jacques Dessalines (1758-1806) against the French led to the formation of the second independent republic in the New World, Haiti (formerly St. Domingue) and changed the course of history in the United States, France, and Britain. In assessing the historical significance of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Rogers observed, "The United States of America owes him a great debt. Because of events he had set in motion, the power of France in the New World was broken, hastening the sale [by Napoleon Bonaparte] of the Louisiana territory, or nearly half of what is now the United States, for a trifling sum."⁴* The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) also pushed legislation through the British Parliament and U.S. Congress banning British and U.S. citizens' participation in the transatlantic slave trade after 1807 and 1808.⁵

Rogers did not claim that African people in antiquity or during the modern era were responsible for every great contribution made to humanity; or try to replace a parochial "Eurocentric" history with a certain type "Afrocentric" approach.

Let me say here that **I** feel emphatically that any boasting by Negroes about their history is just as nauseating. Furthermore, those individuals who work themselves up to a state where they talk as if the deeds of an ancestor were actually done by themselves will probably go no further **than** that in doing something worthy themselves. One of the world's greatest needs has ever been unboastful, unbiased history.⁶

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At the same time, Rogers was clear in insisting on the recognition of African peoples' contributions to world civilizations.

I 1 I am not saying the Negro really originated civilization even though I am inclined to agree with Count Volney (1757-1820), and other whites as Godfrey Higgins, Fabre d' Olivet and Cierald Masscy, that he did. No one really knows. Life goes too far back in the unknown for that. But what I do know is that the Negro (or Ethiopian, or Blackamoor, or Dasyu, or Bushman, or by which ever name blacks are called) contributed very, very much to such early civilizations as Ethiopia, Egypt, Assyria, India, Indo-China, Carthage, Morocco, **Rome and later ones in Italy**, Spain, Portugal, [and] Southern

Rogers believed that if African Americans in the 20th century understood what Africa meant to world history, it would change the way they viewed themselves in the contemporary era. For Rogers, accurate historical interpretations could be used as a tool in solving world problems.⁵** "The better we can remember our past experiences the better we can handle our individual problems. Similarly the greater our knowledge of world history, the less national and international errors we will

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AND INFLUENCE

There is evidence that J. A. Rogers's publications were quite influential. For example, in his 1970 autobiography, Nnamdi Azikiwe, African nationalist and in 1963 first elected president of Nigeria, revealed that while doing graduate work at Lincoln University in the 1930s he met with Rogers, Carter G. Woodson, and William Leo Hansberry to learn more about African history. Azikiwe told Rogers, "You are among those who inspired me to take a very keen interest in the study of the African in history."⁶ In 1950 George Padmore, a former communist turned Pan-Africanist, met Rogers in London, and they became close friends. Rogers taught Padmore about African history, and Padmore thanked Rogers for letting him use his material in Padmore's important work, *Pan-Africanism or Communism: The Coming Struggle for Africa*, published in 1956. One of the most interesting assessments of Rogers's scholarship came from someone who knew him very well, C. L. R. James, the Marxist theorist and scholar. James revealed to historian David Levering Lewis that he thought Rogers undermined some of his points by focusing primarily on exceptional individuals, but nonetheless James felt that Rogers's books and columns contained valuable insights and information.⁶ Towards the end of his life, Rogers rightfully complained

about the hardships

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he suffered while trying to finance his publications. In a March 1960 letter to *Pittsburgh Courier* editor P. L. Prattis, Rogers complained:

Still, no Negro organization has ever come forward to give me the least help. As you know I've received no scholarship or gifts. In all these years I haven't made a dollar I can call my own. Everything goes to the printer and for other expenses and how I've been able to carry on seems at times almost a miracle to me. I can't help feeling very much discouraged at times. Still it is easier to go ahead than to turn

Rogers's personal circumstances and his desire to push forward rather than give up once again speak to his personal character and commitment to the writing of African history. Up until his death in 1966, Rogers worked indefatigably to counter the racism that confronted African Americans. This important point was expressed to Rogers by the clubwoman and civil rights activist Mary Church Terrell in her letter to Rogers, published in the *Pittsburgh Courier* on 3 April 1954.

Dear Friend Rogers: Although I have never written to you before, I have often expressed to friends a deep appreciation of the untiring efforts you have made to get the details of the feats of colored men and women in the development of the politically cultured life of many countries before the world. Everywhere those who hate the colonial and African colored peoples have tried to completely hide or distort or emasculate their history. I know no one who has been more zealous in attempting to combat the racist lies than yourself. . . . ^

One of J. A. Rogers's less well-known works that Mary Church Terrell would have been proud of was *Africa's Gift to America: The Afro-American in the Making and Saving of the United States*, first published in 1959, which examines the many contributions of people of African descent to the formation and evolution of the United States. ^ \^ this work, more than earlier ones, Rogers stressed that unpaid African labor was the essential element in the economic development of the American colonies. "The labor of Africans now became the most important single factor in development of the New World, On them fell the crude work, and more than little of the skilled work. Some had brought with them their ancient skills in metal, weaving, carving and agriculture." ^^ j^ the chapter "The Coming of the Africans," Rogers quotes the leading American patriots on the importance of African labor, something he knew was missing from U.S. history textbooks at the time.

Patrick Henry declared that while he would not and could not justify slavery, he found Negroes a necessity. "I am drawn along," he said, "by the general inconvenience of living without them." In his address to the Virginia Convention, June 24, 1788, he deplored "the necessity of holding
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bis fellow-men in bondage" but that "their manumission is incompatible with felicity of the country. Thomas Jefferson and other humane slaveholders said much the same. James Parton, writing of the Negroes in the 1770's, said they were indispensable. "What a debt we owe to the jolly, amiable, indispensable Negro," be

Rogers concluded that "Africa, that is the sale of its people, laid the foundation of the commerce and prosperity of the United States . . . and the imported African themselves influenced every phase of American life from cookery to religion." ^

The appearance of *Africa's Gift to America* during the civil rights era was timely mainly because of the backlash and resistance of many white southerners to African American demands for an end to legal Jim Crow, U.S. apartheid. Rogers declared, "This book comes in answer to the revival of anti-Negro literature that followed the ruling of the United States Supreme Court against segregation in the public school system in 1954." ^* Rogers believed that in order for the American

nation to heal from wounds of past injustices, the current U.S. government had to acknowledge that atrocities had been committed against African Americans and their ancestors and make reparations payments to the African American descendants of those victimized. This is one of the many reasons *Africa's Gift to America* is important and relates directly to what Rogers wrote in the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1963 about reparations for African Americans. I | j

Rogers deemed it hypocritical for the Kennedy administration to set aside millions of dollars for aid to foreign countries while U.S. African Americans received nothing for their unpaid labor in the past and other contributions since their ancestors arrived in North America. "As I look over the list of the countries receiving aid such as England, West Germany, France, Denmark, Belgium, I think of people in the United States who are far more depressed than any in those lands—the Negro."^^ Rogers pointed out that Russia had compensated its serfs, and the American Indians whose lands were stolen by the European settlers were given "compensation" in the form of reservations in the American West where they were deemed "sovereign nations." "[N]o other people in history deserves compensation for unrequited service as the Negro in America."^ And Rogers condemned the hypocrisy of the Kennedy administration's policies concerning refugees coming to the United States. j ,

Millions are also spent on Cuban refugees who are white or look so (by the way Haitian refugees get nothing. They're too black). But should this country try to solve the ease of the depressed Negro here, as it does that of the depressed European, Asian, or Latin American, there would be at once a bowl about discrimination against white people.^

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Rogers's words were prophetic. Anytime the demand for reparations is put forward by the descendants of enslaved and exploited black workers, white politicians cry "special treatment" for those considered undeserving of any "special payment." *Africa's Gift to America*, Rogers's last major historical work, was completed during the years of the African decolonization, and he saw it as a positive sign. "In short, successful racism, the exploitation of one people by another, is doomed. That of brotherhood and interdependence is taking its place."^^

In 1965 Rogers was engaged in research and planning two projects: a history of "Color Mania," or "white over black" in the development of the United States; and a book about continental Africans living in "South America and Mexico before the arrival of Columbus and Balboa."^^ Unfortunately, Rogers died on 26 March 1966 at St. Clare's Hospital in New York City, and he left those projects unfinished.^* At his death those in the Black History movement mourned the loss of a major historian and journalist, but the legacy of J. A. Rogers continues in the black press and media's commitment to documenting the lived experiences of African-descended peoples; and in historians' attempts to tell the truth about the African and African American past. Rogers made lasting contributions to black print culture in the popularization of relevant historical illustrations and commentary and in his use of photography in identifying and displaying anthropological and historical artifacts to document African contributions to ancient and modern civilizations. The words and images of the *World's Greatest Men and Women of African Descent* is another gift of J. A. Rogers to black print culture.

NOTES

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Waldo Martin, Wilson J. Moses, Joyce Moore Turner, Beth M. Howse, V. P. Franklin, and the anonymous reviewers for *The Journal of African American History* in the research and writing of this article.

¹ Floyd J. Calvin, "Rogers Back in U.S. with Startling Facts on Suppressed Race History: Says He Has Positive Proof That Christ Was a Negro," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 October 1931. ^J. A. Rogers, "The West Indies: Their Political, Social and Economic Condition" in *The Messenger Reader: Stories, Poetry, and Essays from the Messenger Magazine*, ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson (New York, 2000), 365.

•Joel Augustus Rogers, *100 Amazing Facts About the Negro with Complete Proof: A Short Cut to the World History of the Negro* (1934; reprt. New York,

1995), 7. For information about Rogers mentioning he knew Garvey as a boy in the Caribbean, consult, J. A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color*, vol. 2 (New York, 1947), 610.

•^When Rogers immigrated to New York City, he experienced his first taste of American racism when he was discriminated against because of his dark skin color at a small restaurant in Times Square. The incident was one he never forgot. Another reason why Rogers may have switched over to journalism is more than likely he gave up the idea of becoming an interior decorator because he found that even after he received "an honorable mention" for his school work the only job he was able to get was a housepainter. See J. A. Rogers, *100 Amazing Facts About the Negro*, 1. J. A. Rogers, *She Walks in Beauty* (Los Angeles, CA, 1963). "Meet the Person: J. A. Rogers,

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His Intimate Knowledge of History," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 August, 1962. "Only Negro Newspaper **Man** at the Front Is News Himself *New York Times* 2 May 1936. Robert A. Hill, ed., *Garvey Papers: September 1922 August 1924*. vol. 5, (Berkeley, 1983), 5; J. A. Rogers, "History Shows," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 July 1961; J. A. Rogers, "History >?>?NS," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 December 1962. ^I use the terms "Africana," "Africana history," and "Africana historical." which I have appropriated from the seminal scholarship of James E. Turner's explanation of the vision of Africana Studies as a legitimate field in the American academy. See James E. Turner, "Africana Studies and Epistemology: A Discourse in the Sociology of Knowledge" in *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Norment (Durham, 2007), 74-76. "St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: An Essay in History and Anthropology*, vol. I (Los Angeles, CA, 1987), 4; Wilson Moses, *Afrotopia: the Roots of African American Popular Culture* (New York, 1998), 22-23. V. P. Franklin and Bettye Collier-Thomas, "Biography, Race Vindication, and African American Intellectuals," *The Journal of African American History* 81 (Winter 2002): 163-164. Rogers is located within the vindication journalist tradition of Frederick Douglass, Thomas T. Fortune, and P. B. Young. Franklin and Collier-Thomas also point out that the *Pittsburgh Courier* owner and editor Robert L. Vann and the *Pittsburgh Courier's* mission was to oppose the racist portrayal of black people in mainstream newspapers. Edward Wilmot Blyden, "The Negro in Ancient History" *Methodist Quarterly Review* 51 (January 1869): 71-93. Blyden (1832-1912) was the editor of the *Liberia Herald* from 1855 to 1856 and of the *Sierra Leonean Negro* from 1872 to 1873. He became a monumental figure during his lifetime concerning his espousal of Pan Africanism, appreciation of West African culture, and commitment to vindicating people of African descent. See HoUis R. Lyneh, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot. 1912-1932 (New York, 1970)*, vii, 54-83. ^The *New York Amsterdam News* was founded by J. H. Anderson who published the first issue from his home, 132 W. 65th Street, New York City on 4 December 1909. The *Amsterdam News* became one of the leading African American newspapers. Jessie Camey Smith & Joseph M. Palmisano, eds., *The African American Almanac 8th Edition* (Detroit, 2000), 754. J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Writes Further of His Talk with Advocates of Anglo-Saxon Clubs," *New York Amsterdam News*, 3 March 1926; J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Hears Virginia Senate Discuss the Anglo-Saxon Bill," *New York Amsterdam News*. 26 February 1926; Richard B. Shennan, "'The Last Stand': The Fight for Racial Integrity in Virginia." *The Journal of Southern History* 54 (February 1988): 83-87; Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Back from Carolina," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 May 1926; J. A. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Discusses West Indian Women," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 February 1927; J. A. Rogers. "Blood Money," serialized. *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 April 1923; J. A. Rogers "From Superman to Man," serialized *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 August 1923; J. A. Rogers, "Rogers, in Paris Hospital, Speaks Up for **Pullman Porters**," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 September 1927. "Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, 2003), 8. Author unknown, "Mr J. A. Rogers Returns from Trip to Europe: Makes Interesting Comparison Between Condition in France and America." *The Negro World*. 12 December 1925. Rogers's international journalism (which included Northwest Africa) during the later part of the 1920s became what the scholar Brent Hayes Edwards describes as the periodical print culture of black internationalist journalism. Although Rogers wrote in English, his international journalism was part of a larger black periodical network on both sides of the Atlantic that included the voices of people of African descent in Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. Along with Hayes, the scholar Robin D. G. Kelley has also effectively located Rogers's scholarship within the context of black internationalism. Kelley points out that the global crisis during and after World War I eventually led to the emergence of the scholarship by Rogers and other black intellectuals written within the context of black internationalism. Kelley observed, "The world immediately following the Great War was a world marked by destruction, international migration, rapid industrialization, and a wave of anticolonial uprisings in Africa and the Caribbean. . . ." Black resistance within Western civilization-colonialism, along with many black Americans situating themselves as part of a global problem, directly and indirectly influenced Rogers's research and writings. See, Robin D. G. Kelley, "But a Local Phase of a World Problem: Black History's Global Vision, 1883-1950," in "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue," *The Journal of American History* (December, 1999): 1057.

"J. A. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Tells of Distinguished White and Colored Londoners," *New York Amsterdam News*, 26 August 1925. Theophilus E. Samuel Scholes, *Glimpses of the ages; or The "Superior" and "Inferior" Races*.

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So-called. Discussed in the Light of Science and History (London, 1905). Scholes was a Christian minister, author, medical practitioner and missionary to Africa, who promoted the idea of absolute social and political equality between Europeans and Africans. Scholes strongly believed that the reclamation of ancient African history could inspire continental and diasporic Africans to move towards a future of occupying the upper echelons of world civilization. See Wigmoore W. A. Francis, "Theophilus Scholes" in *The Black Experience in the Americas: Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History*, vol. 5, ed. Colin A. Palmer (New York, 2006), 2015. "Rogers kept a record of people he met in England in 1925. In his 1925 notepad, Rogers recorded meeting Theophilus Scholes at the British Museum and Miss Amanda Aldridge at 2 Bedford Garden West Eighth; and Mrs. Coleridge-Taylor, the wife or daughter of the gifted Afro-British composer and conductor Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912). (Her address is unclear due to handwriting). It is possible that Rogers met either Coleridge-Taylor's second wife and widow Jessie Coleridge-Taylor or his daughter Avril Coleridge-Taylor, but which person it is not known for sure since Rogers did not list a first name in his notepad. See J. A. Rogers Collection, Fisk University Special Collections, box 13. Rogers wrote; "Negro themes and spirituals attracted him. He wrote a stirring composition of Toussaint L'Overture, an *African Suite Song of Slavery*, among which is the "Quadrone Girl" and twenty-four "Negro Melodies." See J. A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color*, vol. 2 (New York, 1947), 391-396, 404-409. According to the register of readers and the signature book in the British Museum, Rogers first obtained a reading room ticket on 1 July 1925, and it was valid for three months. He gave his address as; 6c Montagu Mansions, Portman Square, London W1. There is no way of knowing how often he visited during this three-month period, but it is documented that he renewed his reading room ticket throughout the rest of his life. British Museum Central Archives, London.

"'No Color Prejudice in England,' Says J. A. Rogers," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 July 1925.

"*J. A. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Tells of His First Impression of Paris, France," *New York Amsterdam News*, 23 September 1925.

J. A. Rogers, "Africa Different from Book Description—J. A. Rogers" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 April 1927. ""ibid. ^Farah J. Griffin & Cheryl J. Fish, eds., *A Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African American Travel Writing* (Boston, 1998), xiv. For other accounts of African Americans traveling exclusively to Africa, see James T. Campbell, *Middle Passage: African Journeys to Africa 1787-2005* (New York, 2006). ^Andrew Buni, *Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier; Politics and Black Journalism* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1974), 141. Rogers's journalism coincided with other African Americans who wrote about their experiences abroad in Europe. Brent Hayes Edwards wrote that almost all of the major literary figures of the period, including Anna Julia Cooper, Claude McKay, Walter White, Gwendolyn Bennett, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, Jessie Fauset, J. A. Rogers, Jean Toomer, Eric Walrond, and Nella Larsen spent time abroad and especially in Paris in the 1920s. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 4.

^ J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Interviews Frank Harris in Southern France," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 June 1927. ^ Andrew Buni, *Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier; Politics and Black Journalism* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1974), 133, 141. It should be noted that when Vann sent Rogers overseas to do international travel journalism, he helped transform the *Pittsburgh Courier* into one of the leading African American newspapers during the late 1920s. J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Visits Claude McKay in Southern France," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 June 1927; J. A. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers First to Interview Countess Pepito di Albertini," *New York Amsterdam News*, 6 July 1927; J. A. Rogers, "Paris Questions Actress's Wedding to Italian Count." *New York Amsterdam News*, 13 July 1927. ^^J. A. Rogers, "Pilgrimages Around Rome," *New York Amsterdam News*, 4 May 1927.

^*For a discussion about the research methods using anthropology and photography, see John Collier, Jr., *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (Albuquerque, 1986). ^ J. A. Rogers, "Ethiopia and Egypt Made Nordic Civilization Possible," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 April 1927; J. A.

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Rogers, "Roman Idea of Life Came from Ethiopians," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 May 1927. ^^Rogers, "Roman Idea of Life Came from Ethiopians," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 May 1927. 26jacqueline Goggin, *A Life in Black History: Carter G. Woodson* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1993), 18. Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston, 1988), 33-35. The African American intellectual and educator. Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) attended the University of Paris-Sorbonne and at the age of 67 in 1925, she defended her dissertation entitled "The Attitude of France on Regard to Slavery During the Revolution." See Anna Julia Cooper, *Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionist*, ed. Frances Richardson Keller (Lanham, MD, 2006). The philosopher and Rhodes Scholar Alain LeRoy Locke (1885-1954) studied Greek, Latin, and philosophy at Hertford College at Oxford University between 1907 to 1910, and during the academic year of 1910-1911, he studied at the Austrian school of anthropology known as philosophical anthropology at the University of Berlin. See Christopher Buck, "Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Baha'i Pluralist," *World Order* 36 (2005): [no page]. The anthropologist St. Clair Drake (1911-1990) received a Ph.D. in 1954 after doing research about class and race in Tiger Bay, a section of Cardiff, England. His dissertation was entitled "Value Systems, Social Structure and Race Relations in the British Isles." See George Clement Bond, "A Social Portrait of St. Clair Drake: An American Anthropologist," *American Anthropologist* 80 (November, 1978): 762. In 1914 the prolific historian Charles H. Wesley (1891-1987) studied French language and history at the Guild International in Paris. See Francille Rusan Wilson, "Racial Consciousness and Black Scholarship: Charles H. Wesley and the Construction of Negro Labor in the United States," *Journal of Negro History* 81 (Winter-Autumn 1996): 75; Michael R. Winston, *Howard University Department of History. 1913-1973* (Washington, 1973), 29.

^^J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: Some Consider Study of Negro History as Purely 'Impertinence,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 February 1944. ^^Rogers, *Sec and Race*. vol. 3, ii; J. A. Rogers, "Seeing Germany by Rail," *New York Amsterdam News*, 4 January 1928; J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: Some Consider Study of Negro History as Purely 'Impertinence.'" ^Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, 98.

•"Joyce Moore Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* (Urbana, IL, 2005), 68; Joyce Moore Turner and W. Burghardt Turner, interview with the author, Tucson, Arizona, 24 March 2003. Rogers and Richard B. Moore were good friends. Rogers believed Moore was one of the best informed men on the subject of black history and a leading authority on the life of Frederick Douglass. See J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: There Is a Pressing Need for Negro Encyclopedia," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 December 1944. ^Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color*, vol. 2, 371.

•^J. A. Rogers, "The Negro in European History," *Opportunity Magazine* 8 (June 1930): 174-175. ^*Rogers, "Roman Idea of Life Came from Ethiopians," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 May 1927.

•"Floyd Calvin, "Rogers Back in U.S. with Startling Facts on Suppressed Race History: Says He Has Positive Proof That Christ Was a Negro," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 October 1931. ^^John Hope Franklin, interview with the author, 31 March 2005, San Jose, CA. ^^The first appearance of the "Your History" illustrated series was 24 November 1934 in the *Pittsburgh Courier* Black personalities in this edition included the African explorer Tippu Tibb; the mathematician Benjamin Banneker; the first person to perform a successful heart surgery. Dr. Daniel Hale Williams; and the Ethiopian king Ganges, who invaded and conquered Asia. J. A. Rogers, "Your History," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 November 1934. In 1962 the title of "Your History" was changed to "Facts About the Negro." Although it is not known why the title changed, the content remained the same, which also included black portraits and commentary on the contemporary achievements of African Americans, continental Africans, and black people in the Diaspora. For very brief biographical sketch of George L. Lee, see George L. Lee, *Inspiring African Americans: Black History Makers in the United States. 1750-1984*. (London, 1991), xi. For biographical information about Samuel Malai. consult the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, Reading Room Gallery, Ohio State University. ^On the images of black people in U.S. comics, see Henry T. Sampson, *That's All, Folks! Black Images in Animated Cartoons. 1900-1960* (Lanham, MD, 1998); Fredrik Stromberg, *Black Images: A Visual History* (Seattle, WA, 2003).

^i.K. Rogers, "Your History—Dorothy L. Porter," 29 December 1951. "Your History—Benjamin Quarles," 29 May 1954; "Your History—George Washington Williams," 26 February 1944; "Your History—Rayford Logan," 3 May 1947; "Your History—William L. Hansberry," 7 May 1949; "Your History—Negro History Week," 15 February 1941; "Your History—Dr. Monroe Nathan Work," 31 May 1941; "Your History—Dr. Charles H. Wesley," 13 June 1942; "Your History—Arthur A. Schomburg," 17 June 1950; "Your History—Dorothy L. Porter," 29 December 1951; "Your History—Carter G. Woodson," 12 February 1952; "Your History—C. L. R. James," 5 April 1952. One can also find Rogers's comic illustrations in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* from 19 January 1929 to 30 August 1930. In the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* Rogers wrote about black males such as Dessalines; Alexander Dumas; Vincent Guerrero; Bilil Ibn Rahab; General Antonio Maceo; Alexander Pushkin; Bartholomew Roberts; Zulu Chief Cetewayo; Chevalier St. Georges; St. Maurice; Moshesh; Cudjoe; Zulu Chief Chaka; and Frederick Douglass. In *Negro World* from 4 January to 21 December 1929, one can find similar comic illustrations of the men mentioned in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* along with others. On 20 July 1929, Rogers did include an illustration of a black female, the Queen of Sheba, which was entitled "Marvelous Love Story of a Black Queen." In 1929 most of Rogers's illustrations were about black men, but later when Roger started his "Your History" series for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, he began to include the contributions of numerous black women in history and during his own era.

^Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000), 81. *""History Teacher Accounts 'Your History' Feature as One of Finest Things in *Courier*: New Orleans Man Gives Some More History as He Lauds Work of J. A. Rogers and George L. Lee" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 September 1935.

^"For treatment of Woodson's life see, Pero Dagbovie, *The Early Black History Movement: Carter G. Woodson, and Lorenzo Johnston Greene* (Urbana, 2007); Jacqueline Goggin, *A Life in Black History: Carter G. Woodson* (Baton Rouge, 2007). J. A. Rogers, "Rambling Ruminations," *New York Amsterdam News*, 18 November 1931. In 1954, Rogers mentioned talking to Woodson about a black family living in Washington, DC. See "Rogers Says: Getting Book Published Is Tough and at Times Very Discouraging," P/H.v/)/«/gfi *Courier*, 13 February 1954. In 1954, the *Chicago Defender* (National Edition) covered a story in which Rogers attended a black history celebration in honor of Carter G. Woodson at the House of Knowledge, which was mn by a long-time friend of Rogers, F. B. Hammurabi. See "Honor Woodson, Late Founder of ASNLH," *Chicago Defender*, 20 February 1954. ^ ^, "Rambling Ruminations," *New York Amsterdam News*, 18 November 1931.

, *Black Folk Here and There*. 99. J. A. Rogers, "The Negro's Experience of Christianity and Islam," *Review of Nations: An Organ for Pan- Humanism and Spiritual Freedom* (Geneva) 6 (January-March 1928): 69-81; J. A. Rogers, "The American Negro in Europe," *American Mercury* 20 (May 1930): 1-10; J. A. Rogers, "When I Was in Europe," *Interracial Review: A Journal for Christian Democracy* (October 1938): 156-157; J. A. Rogers, "Hitler and the Negro," *Interracial Review: A Journal for Christian Democracy* (April 1940): 61. "Carter G. Woodson, "Review of *Sex and Race* by J. A. Rogers," *The Journal of Negro History* 28 (January 1943): 91. In *Ihe Sex and Race series*, Rogers's choice to write about interracial sexual relations during the 1940s was controversial and inflammatory to white racists who did not want to admit that black men had consensual sexual relationships with white women. ""J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: Exploiters of Negroes Find It to Their Advantage to Ridicule and Debase Him," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 December 1945. ^""Rogers Back Again; Plans New History," *New York Amsterdam News*, 18 January 1933. ^°J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: Writers Must Not Be Motivated by a Desire for Riches or Fame," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 September 1943. ""Rogers Back Again; Plans New History," *Afew York Amsterdam News*, 18 January 1933. ^"William Wells Brown, *The Black Man. His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (Boston, MA, 1863); William J. Simmons's *Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising* (Cleveland, OH, 1887); John Edward Bmce, *Short Biographical Sketches, Eminent Negro Men and Women in Europe and the United States*

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(Yonkers, NY, 1910). ^j. A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color: 3000 B.C. to 1946*, vol. 1 (New York, 1946), x. ^J. A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color. 3000 B.C. to 1946*. vol. 2 (New York, 1947), 611. ^Ibid., 333. 54Ibid., 473-474. ^J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: He Visits Emperor Haile Selassie, Recalls a Prophecy Fulfilled, Amply and Quickly," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 31 July 1954. -""Rogers. *World's Great Men of Color*, vol. 1, x. Rogers is not the first black intellectual to suggest that the Haitian revolution influenced events in France and America. In *Suppression of the African Slave Trade*. W. E. B. Du Bois's analysis of the rote of Toussaint L'Ouverture compliments the scholarship of Rogers in *WGMC*. Du Bois insisted that Toussaint "rose to leadership through bloody terror, which contrived a Negro 'problem' for the Western Hemisphere, intensified and defined the antislavery movement. . . , " *W. E. B Du Bois: Writings*, ed. Nathan Huggins (New York, 1996), 74. "J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: Will Darker Races Be Ignored in New History of Mankind." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 January 1952. °J. A. Rogers, *World's Greatest Men and Women of African Descent* (New York, 1935), 3, in Special Collections 6 Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA. ^Rogers: "Rogers Says: Knowledge of History Would Help Solve Some of the World's Problems," *Pittsburgh Courier*. 18 October 1947. 60Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* (London, 1970), 157, 252. j 6George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?: The Coming Struggle for Africa* (London, 195fi), 9; Rogers, *Sev and Race*. vol. 1, 302. David Levering Lewis, interview with C. L. R. James. April 1976, in David Levering Lewis, "Voices from the Renaissance Collection." 1976, Schomburg Center, NY. In addition, James's former wife, the late Constance Webb Pearlstein (1918 2005), informed this author In 2004 that although she never met Rogers, she learned much about Padmore through James. 62j. A. Rogers to P. L. Prattis, 8 March 1960, P. L. Prattis Papers, folder 14, Moorland Spingam Center, Howard University, Washington, DC. 6^J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: What Are You Going to Do About Aiding Defenseless Negro Women?," *Pittsburgh Courier*. 3 April 1954. ^j. A. Rogers, *Africa's Gift to America: The Afro-American in the Making and Saving of the United States* (New York, 1961), 9.

±, 36. d., 37. d., 213. id., 4. . A. Rogers, "History Shows," *Pittsburgh Courier*. 19 October 1963.

"ibid. ""*Africa's Gift to America*, 243, 249. ^J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: A Legion in History: Did Negroes Predate Columbus in America?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 October 1945. ""Joel Rogers, 85, Author of Afro-American Books," *New York Times*, 27 March 1966; "Nation Mouns Top Negro Historian," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 April 1966.

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