

PAN-AFRICANISM, DIASPORA MEMORY, AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BLACK ATLANTIC RESISTANCE

Transnational Solidarity, Memorial Practices, and Counter-Hegemonic Narratives in Contemporary Historiography

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ABSTRACT

Background: Pan-Africanism as a political and intellectual movement emerged from the convergence of African continental resistance, Caribbean political thought, and African American intellectual traditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Contemporary historiography has revisited Pan-African intellectual history through diaspora memory studies, Black Atlantic theory, and postcolonial critique, generating new accounts of the transnational solidarities and counter-hegemonic narratives that sustained resistance to colonial and racial domination.

Aim: This study examined how recent historiography has reconceptualised Pan-Africanism through diaspora memory and Black Atlantic theory, and how contemporary memorial practices, digital history projects, and reparations movements have reshaped collective historical consciousness about Black Atlantic resistance.

Methodology: The study employed a historiographical review methodology synthesising scholarship published between 2022 and 2026 on Pan-Africanism, diaspora memory, and Black Atlantic history, supplemented by analysis of contemporary memorial projects, digital heritage platforms, and reparations policy documents across West African and diaspora contexts.

Findings: Recent historiography has moved beyond nationalist framings of Pan-Africanism to emphasise transnational networks, gendered dimensions of resistance, and the central role of diasporic intellectual production. Digital memory platforms are transforming the accessibility and political utility of Black Atlantic historical consciousness. Reparations movements have reinvigorated the connection between historical scholarship and contemporary justice claims, generating productive tensions between historical evidence and political advocacy.

Contributions: The study contributes to Pan-African historiography, diaspora studies, and memory studies by synthesising recent revisionist scholarship and documenting the emerging intersections between digital heritage, memorial politics, and reparations discourse in contemporary Black Atlantic contexts.

Keywords: *Pan-Africanism, Diaspora memory, Black Atlantic, Historical resistance, Reparations, Transnational solidarity.*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Pan-Africanism as a transnational intellectual and political project has generated a rich and contested historiographical tradition since the pioneering works of Blyden, DuBois, Garvey, and Nkrumah. The field has undergone significant revision in recent decades as scholars have drawn on diaspora studies, Black Atlantic theory, gender history, and postcolonial critique to challenge nationalist frameworks that dominated earlier accounts. Gilroy's (1993) formulation of the Black Atlantic as a transnational cultural formation, revisited and critically extended by Afolabi and Adi (2023), continues to provide a generative framework for understanding how African continental and diasporic communities have constructed shared historical consciousnesses across the barriers of the Middle Passage, colonial segregation, and national boundaries.

Contemporary historiography of Pan-Africanism has been particularly animated by questions of memory, commemoration, and the political uses of diasporic historical consciousness. The proliferation of digital heritage platforms, the institutional expansion of diaspora archive projects, and the growing political salience of reparations movements across the Caribbean, United Kingdom, and continental Africa have created new interfaces between historical scholarship and public historical culture. Walters and Quaye (2024) argue that these developments constitute a second wave of Pan-African historiographical revision, characterised by an emphasis on memory politics, gendered resistance narratives, and the material claims of historical injustice.

2.0 THEORETICAL AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Black Atlantic Theory Revisited

Gilroy's Black Atlantic framework, positing a transnational circulation of Black cultural, political, and intellectual production across the Atlantic world, has been both generatively applied and critically revised in recent scholarship. Afolabi and Adi (2023) argue that Gilroy's framework underestimates the specifically African continental contributions to Pan-African intellectual production and inadequately theorises the material conditions of transatlantic solidarity networks. Their revised framework — the African Atlantic — foregrounds continental African political economy and philosophical traditions as equally generative sources of Black Atlantic intellectual formation, rather than positioning Africa primarily as a site of origin and loss.

Diaspora Memory Studies

Diaspora memory studies, drawing on Nora's (1989) *lieux de memoire* and Hirsch's concept of postmemory, have been productively applied to Black Atlantic historical consciousness. Walters and Quaye (2024) extend postmemory theory to the reparations context, arguing that the intergenerational transmission of slave trade and colonial trauma constitutes a form of structural postmemory with distinctive political demands for institutional acknowledgement and material repair. This framework connects memory studies to reparations scholarship in ways that illuminate the political stakes of historical consciousness in contemporary Pan-African movements.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a historiographical review methodology examining Pan-African, diaspora memory, and Black Atlantic scholarship published between 2022 and 2026. Systematic literature search was conducted across African History, Diaspora Studies, Memory Studies, and Cultural History databases. Analysis focused

on identifying theoretical innovations, empirical case studies, and methodological developments in the recent literature, with particular attention to how digital technologies, reparations movements, and gender analysis have reshaped the field. Policy document analysis examined reparations proposals from Jamaica, Barbados, Ghana, and Senegal, and memorial programme documentation from heritage institutions in West Africa and the United Kingdom.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Gendered Resistance in Pan-African Historiography

One of the most significant recent developments in Pan-African historiography has been the systematic recovery and theorisation of women's roles in transnational resistance networks. Mba and Osei-Bonsu (2022) document the organisational centrality of Ghanaian and Nigerian women in the anti-colonial networks of the 1940s and 1950s, recovering figures whose contributions were marginalised by the male-centred nationalism of mainstream Pan-African historiography. Equally significant is the work of Nzegwu (2024) on Igbo women's intellectual contributions to early twentieth-century Pan-African discourse through market associations and kinship networks, demonstrating that formal intellectual genealogies of Pan-Africanism systematically underestimate the contribution of non-elite actors.

Digital Memory Platforms and Historical Consciousness

The emergence of digital heritage platforms dedicated to Black Atlantic history has transformed the accessibility and political utility of historical memory. The UNESCO Slave Route Project's digital expansion, the Caribbean Reparations Commission's interactive historical database, and Ghana's Year of Return digital heritage archive (analysed by Mensah & Acheampong, 2023) represent new forms of institutional memory production that integrate scholarly historical evidence with public commemoration objectives. These platforms generate new questions about the relationship between historical scholarship, popular memory, and political advocacy that historiography must address.

Reparations and Historical Evidence

The resurgence of reparations movements across the Atlantic world has created both opportunities and tensions for Pan-African historiography. Walters and Quaye (2024) argue that reparations discourse generates productive demand for rigorous historical evidence about the scope, mechanisms, and enduring effects of the slave trade and colonialism. However, the political urgency of reparations advocacy sometimes creates pressures toward simplified historical narratives that scholarship must critically engage. The Caricom Reparations Commission's 2023 updated historical brief, incorporating new Atlantic slave trade quantitative data from the Slave Voyages database, illustrates how scholarly research can inform advocacy without sacrificing evidential complexity.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Recent Pan-African and Black Atlantic historiography has substantially enriched understanding of transnational resistance networks, gendered dimensions of Pan-Africanism, and the contemporary politics of diaspora memory. Digital platforms and reparations movements have created new interfaces between historical scholarship and public historical culture, generating both productive demand for scholarly evidence and risks of oversimplification that historians must actively navigate. Future research should examine the specific mechanisms through which digital memory platforms shape historical consciousness among younger

generations of the African diaspora, and explore comparative historiography of Pan-African movements in Lusophone and Francophone African contexts.

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