

February 23, 2024

To: Dr. Nora Gardner
Faculty Development Committee Chair

From: Dr. Gervais Gnaka, Associate Professor
History, Philosophy, Religion, Pan-Africana Studies

Re: Faculty Development Grant Summer 2024

Title of Project: Golden Age of Pan-Africanism: The 1958 All-African People's Conference, A Revolutionary Landmark Gathering

Concise description of the project:

The author of this proposal is completing a book ***Golden Age of Pan-Africanism: The 1958 All-African People's Conference, A Revolutionary Landmark Gathering***. As indicated in the title, this research focuses on the significance of a revolutionary Pan-African gathering, the 1958 All African People's Conference. This project has grown from a 8,000 words research paper on the same topic to a 81,000 words manuscript.

The independence of Ghana, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, Lincoln University, Class 1939, on March 6, 1957 created the space for the consolidation of the Pan-African movement on the continent of Africa. Ghana, as a sovereign nation, freed from colonialism became a liberated zone, which gave itself the mission to help create more liberated zones. It took the mantle of the beacon of hope for Africa and for people of African ancestry. The leaders of the civil rights movement in the USA including Dr. Martin Luther King accompanied by his wife Coretta King and Horace Mann Bond, in his capacity of former president of Lincoln University, attended the Ghana independence celebrations in Accra. Upon returning from Ghana, Dr. Martin Luther King delivered a lecture dedicated to the significance of Ghana independence under the title “The Birth of a New Nation”.

The newly independent Ghana, so appraised and so acclaimed, hosted two major Pan-African gatherings in 1958 intended to help coordinate actions and activities for the decolonization and the unity of Africa: The Conference of Independent African States held April 15-22 and the All-African People's Conference, which took place on December 8-13. The latter, which brought together political leaders, union leaders, youth, and organizers from the then colonies of Africa which were fighting to end colonialism, was the first major Pan-African gathering on the continent of Africa. It ignited Pan-Africanism and accelerated the decolonization process in Africa. In 1960, 17 African countries became independent. Despite such notable contribution, that Pan-African gathering is less known and is alluded to as a footnote in history.

In a book of 575 pages that he wrote, *The Pan-African Movement* published in 1968, which he claimed was the first comprehensive book on Pan-Africanism, Imanuel Geiss devoted

only 12 pages (411-423) on his account of the history of the movement from 1945 to 1966 and did not even devote a single page on the 1958 All-African People's Conference. Even when Pan-Africanism received the attention of scholars and they produced an expansive abundant literature on Pan-Africanism, the All-African People's Conference of 1958 did not receive the attention it deserved. There is not a substantial number of books written on that gathering. The 72-page book (including the resolutions and bibliography) written by Barth Gewald's *Hands Off Africa* is one of the very few books written on the topic.

The research I am working on is enriched firstly by the accounts provided by the eye-witnesses who either reported on the conference or wrote about it in their respective autobiographies. These testimonials constitute the foundation of this book as they provided first-hand information. Some of them are *Road to Ghana* of Alfred Hutchinson, *Call of Mother Africa* of Stan Grant, *African Files Reports* of Edwin S. Munger, *Pan-Africanism from Within* of Ras Makonnen (one of the main organizers of the event), *No One Can Stop the Rain* of George M. Houser, *Freedom and After* of Tom Mboya (the Chairman of the Conference), *The Beat of My Drum: An Autobiography* by Michael Olatunji (a conference attendee), and the articles written by Homer Alexander Jack published in different sources namely in *Toward Freedom*.

The second category of books is composed of works produced by a number of writers who drew information reports and books produced by some participants of the conference and who shed new light on the event with insightful analysis. Some of these sources are *Hands of Africa* of Gerald Jan-Barth that I have already mentioned, *White Malice : The CIA Covert Operation to Recolonize Africa* of Susan Williams and *Nationalism and Nkrumahism* of Mateo Grilli, and *Ghana Foreign Policy, 1957-1966* written by Willard Scott Thompson.

In *White Malice*, Susan Williams, wrote a chapter on the December 1958 Pan-African gathering under the title of « Hands Off » and provided a rarely discussed insight with regard to the gathering: the direct or indirect omnipresence and intrusion of the CIA in the affairs of the All-African People's Conference. With regard to Matteo Grilli, he provided many insights on the agencies Kwame Nkrumah used for the successful organization of the All-African People's Conference: the Convention People's Party, Kwame Nkrumah's party, the Office of the Adviser of African Affairs and the African Affairs Center. He also shed light on the influence and impact of Ghana on several freedom fighters and also on the reverberation of the All-African People's Conference in the continent of Africa.

In sum, this book, *Golden Age of Pan-Africanism: The 1958 All-African People's Conference, A Revolutionary Landmark Gathering*, of which I have already completed 81,000 words, provides also an account of the multiple debates, which were raging during the decolonization era. These debates revolved around the following topics: Non-Alignment, Afro-Asian solidarity, Pan-Africanism, armed struggle, Pan-Arabism, and capitalism versus socialism, Cold War politics, CIA covert operations, boycott against South African goods and resistance against nuclear imperialism.

Purpose of the Research:

This research is a historical archeological adventure, which seeks to be an excavation work that digs from the archives, locates the dispersed precious stones and artefacts of the puzzle and put them together to give to the study of the All-African Peoples' Conference its rightful place in history and in the universe of scholarship.

It is a tapestry, which intends to contribute to the restoration of the historical truth in relation to Pan-Africanism and in relation to the conference of December 1958. It allows us to lift a corner of the veil on a less discussed part of the history of Pan-Africanism or an aspect of the struggle for peace often wrongly dissociated from the history of Pan-Africanism. The work unpacks an underreported aspect of the Black Studies, the Pan-African Studies and of the African-American Experience. As an illustration, I mention the struggle against nuclear imperialism within the framework of the trans-national and global movement for peace, born out of the Pan-African revolution.¹ This fight, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, saw the decisive role of illustrious Blacks Americans such as Bill Sutherland and Bayard Rustin in the struggle against nuclear imperialism. Furthermore, this movement against nuclear imperialism is part of the All African Peoples Conference, as I demonstrate it in this book, thanks to the works of Jean Allman, Kevin Gaines, and of Gabrielle Hecht.

The research aims also at highlighting the underreported, recent, new, novel and innovative research on Pan-Africanism and on the legacy of Pan-Africanists such as Kwame Nkrumah, St Clair Drake, Bill Suntherland, Ras Makonen, George Padmore, Shirley Graham Du Bois and Eslanda Robeson.

Significance of the Research:

This book does not have any competition. This research will be a pioneer work. It will be a first and unique. As a comprehensive and a well-researched text, which brings together in a single text several of the testimonies extracted from the respective autobiographies written by several eye witnesses, the mere and the very existence of the book is in itself its primary significance. Its second significance resides in the fact that it draws upon critical studies conducted through competing lenses published by several authors who did not attend the conference.

The third significance of the manuscript lies in the fact it highlights the consequential essence of the revolutionary significance of the All-African Peoples' Conference. That revolutionary significance rests upon the following: the shift of the geographical venues of the Pan-African Conferences, the naming of the new series of Pan-African gatherings, the shift in the leadership of the Pan-African movement, the redefinition of the concept of « African Personality », the redefinition of the concept of Pan-Africanism and the continental, transnational, trans-racial reverberations and repercussions of the gatherings. Moreover, the All-African Peoples' Conference set the ball rolling with regard to some international campaigns such as the economic sanctions against South Africa, the struggle against nuclear imperialism on the continent of Africa.

¹ Jean Allman, "Nuclear Imperialism and the Pan-African Struggle for Peace and Freedom: Ghana, 1959-1962." *Souls* 10, No. 2 (2008): 83.

The findings of this study will be at the disposal of a variety of stakeholders who want to revisit Pan-Africanism through the study of the 1958 conference.

Timeframe for the project:

I have expanded the article on the All-African Peoples' Conference to be published by Zed Books this year. The manuscript is scheduled to be completed by end of August 2024. The author of this proposal intends to further the research as soon as the summer 2024 semester begins.

How the project enhances the University community:

- 1) In the light of the literature review on the subject discussed, the text has the potential to be an innovative research as it will be a pioneer work of its kind, which will highlight the scholarship potential of Lincoln University.
- 2) As the book contributes to the literature on an underreported aspect of Kwame Nkrumah contribution to world history and politics, which is the 1958 All African People's Conference, it brings new insights on his already enduring legacy. The work expands the information about one of the most famous Lincoln University alumni, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Class 1939.
- 3) Dr. Horace Mann Bond was among the attendees of the 1958 conference in his capacity of civil rights movement leader and of a former president of Lincoln University. A year earlier, Dr. Bond was at the swearing in ceremony of President Kwame Nkrumah along with other notable civil rights movement leaders among them Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This study sheds new light on the efforts of Dr. Bond alongside with others who sought to convince the American government to allow Black Americans to play a leading role in diplomacy vis-à-vis Africa.
- 4) This will put at the disposal of a growing number of academicians, scholars, policymakers, journalists, thinkers and activists a valuable and significant work on Kwame Nkrumah whose legacy is enjoying a steady and growing recognition across the globe thanks to the revival of the Pan-African movement.
- 5) It gives to the author of this proposal the opportunity to contribute to a significant publication.
- 6) The book will contribute to the already impressive legacy of Lincoln University and could be a tool, which can help build a bridge between Lincoln University and premier African universities and communities, Pan-African institutions, and grassroots organizations.
- 7) This will be another opportunity to illuminate the legacy of Lincoln University.
- 8) The findings of this study will be at the disposal of a variety of stakeholders who want to assess the state of neocolonialism, draw lessons from the 1958 conference for today's Pan-African theory and action that Pan-African grassroots organizations, institutions and think tanks may need for the sake of a new unity and efficiency.
- 9) The vault of Lincoln University's library resources will expand in helping us to soon develop long distance learning Pan-Africana classes with the world academic world and community.

How the success of the project will be determined:

I am in contact with a couple of publishers namely Vernon Press and Cambridge Publishing Scholars. Once the book is published it will be available at the Langston Hughes Memorial Library, as well as, in at other libraries in Europe and African Universities, and online.

How, when, and where the project's outcome is to be shared:

An information campaign about the study will be composed and released jointly between the project's director and the Lincoln University's Communication. The author of this proposal intends to do another campaign to inform various stakeholders once the book is published. The campaign will also be shared with the various Pan-African platforms and on social media.

Budget Page:

I am requesting the amount of 7,000 dollars. The amount will allow me to further the research in Accra (Ghana) and in the United States. I plan to travel to New Orleans (Louisiana) to have access to documents located at the Amistad Library related to the series of the All-African Peoples' Conferences and to access the Schomburg Library archives. I expect to polish and complete the manuscript during the summer. All other resources will be made available through standard campus resources.