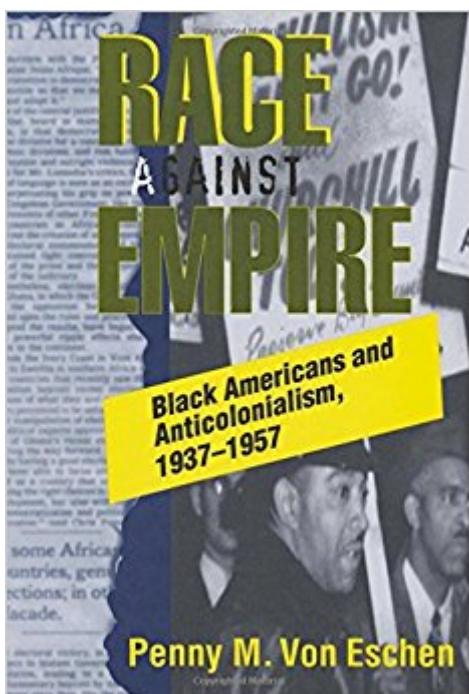


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Race Against Empire: Black Americans And Anticolonialism, 1937–1957 (Collectifs)



Synopsis

During World War II, African American activists, journalists, and intellectuals forcefully argued that independence movements in Africa and Asia were inextricably linked to political, economic, and civil rights struggles in the United States. Marshaling evidence from a wide array of international sources, including the black presses of the time, Penny M. Von Eschen offers a vivid portrayal of the African diaspora in its international heyday, from the 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress to early cooperation with the United Nations. *Race against Empire* tells the poignant story of a popular movement and its precipitate decline with the onset of the Cold War. Von Eschen documents the efforts of African-American political leaders, intellectuals, and journalists who forcefully promoted anti-colonial politics and critiqued U.S. foreign policy. The eclipse of anti-colonial politics—which Von Eschen traces through African-American responses to the early Cold War, U.S. government prosecution of black American anti-colonial activists, and State Department initiatives in Africa—marked a change in the very meaning of race and racism in America from historical and international issues to psychological and domestic ones. She concludes that the collision of anti-colonialism with Cold War liberalism illuminates conflicts central to the reshaping of America; the definition of political, economic, and civil rights; and the question of who, in America and across the globe, is to have access to these rights. Exploring the relationship between anticolonial politics, early civil rights activism, and nascent superpower rivalries, *Race against Empire* offers a fresh perspective both on the emergence of the United States as the dominant global power and on the profound implications of that development for American society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Race against Empire . . . breaks much ground in current historiography on cold war and anti-colonial practices. . . . it is useful for its analysis of America's cold war policies, how these policies affected black political movements in the international sphere, and how, ultimately, this led to the collapse of the prominent opponents of colonialism and significant challenges to US foreign policy abroad. But Race against Empire is also important because it identifies a little-known constellation of intellectuals who, through creative and energetic insurgency in the context of cold war repressions, articulated the links necessary for building a movement of international solidarity among all oppressed peoples." •Race and Class "This story of the potential and the obstacles in building a solidarity movement across national boundaries retains its full relevance in today's world, even as it reveals an important chapter in the history of both African Americans and of the U.S. left." •Monthly Review "Although her central arguments are straightforward, they have a deep historical grounding. She gives attention to the many long- and short-term conditions influencing the form and content of a diasporan identity in the 1940's. . . On the whole, Von Eschen paints a riveting portrait of a time in which radical anticolonialism and domestic Black civil rights marched hand in hand, before weathering the challenges of the Truman and Eisenhower years." •Against the Current "Scholars of race, social movements, political science, or the mass media will find great value in this unsentimental account of a disturbing history." •Contemporary Sociology "After reading Penny M. Von Eschen's brilliant account of African American efforts to overthrow colonialism in Africa during the 1940s and '50s, no one will be able to write about black politics without considering the international context. In the best tradition of W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, and Cedric Robinson, she reminds us, as Malcolm X had three decades ago, that black liberation is 'not just an American problem, but a world problem.'" •Robin D. G. Kelley, author of Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class

'Race Against Empire' tells the poignant story of a popular movement and its precipitate decline with the onset of the Cold War.

This book is dense. Penny von Eschen packs more information into single paragraphs than some others do entire books. It's a hard read, but worth it, as it examines an important American

movement that not only presages the modern civil rights movement and complicates our understanding of it. Definitely worth reading, but I recommend studying up on your labor history first and taking copious notes.

Brilliant book

Useful because the subject is so little covered, this survey of the role of Afro-Americans in US foreign policy from the '30s through '50s, is limited by its narrow research focus on individuals and by its shallow analysis. The discussion, according to the title, ends in the late '50s, although the author dips into subsequent years. This truncation of the subject removes the most interesting period in which U.S. Blacks have affected U.S. foreign policy from the book's scope. Upshot: only historians and specialists are likely to enjoy it. Among key figures missing: cartoonist Ollie Harrington (mentioned only in passing) and Charles Howard, the first and most influential Afro-American journalist to cover the United Nations.

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