

# Alain Locke: Four Talks Redefining Democracy, Education, and World Citizenship

EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY CHRISTOPHER BUCK AND BETTY J. FISHER

Alain Locke (1885–1954) was an extraordinary individual who, in his almost seven decades, made an unforgettable mark on the African American community in the United States and who still has much to say to the world at large about prejudice, racism, democracy, and world citizenship—and the importance of being not behind or on the curve, but ahead of it. Locke lived what he wrote, for he was ahead of the curve in just about everything he did for most of his sixty-nine years. In 1907 he became the first African American Rhodes Scholar. With the publication in 1925 of *The New Negro: An Interpretation of Negro Life*, an anthology showcasing African American artists, he became known as the Dean of the Harlem Renaissance, which sought to advance African Americans through race relations, the arts, and social thought, leaving behind European and white American styles and celebrating the black experience. Professionally, Locke was a philosopher. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in an unpublished speech given on 19 March 1968, in Clarksdale, Mississippi, compared Locke to Plato and Aristotle, saying that “We’re going to let our children know that the only philosophers that lived were not Plato and Aristotle, but W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke came through the universe.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Address Delivered at Poor People’s Campaign Rally,” Clarksdale, Michigan, 19 Mar. 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers, 1950–1968, Mss. 680319-002, Martin

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Locke “redefined” democracy through his evolving conceptions of the philosophy of democracy, widening its scope to include at least nine dimensions: local democracy, moral democracy, political democracy, economic democracy, cultural democracy, racial democracy, social democracy, spiritual democracy, and world democracy.

In the field of education, Locke was first and foremost a teacher, both in the classroom and in his books, his many essays, and his talks. He became a leader in the adult-education movement, serving one term (1946–47) as the first African American president of the predominantly white American Association for Adult Education. In the aftermath of World War II he urged educators to foster “international-mindedness,” which, he said, “can only be created through some definite collective effort at mutual understanding and by developing a sense of common purpose among educators throughout the world.”<sup>2</sup>

As a corollary to his interest in world-mindedness, Locke championed world citizenship, perhaps most eloquently in a 1944 essay entitled “Stretching Our Social Mind” (reprinted below).

Locke’s academic training included undergraduate studies at Harvard University, where he was one of a handful of African Americans; graduate work at Hertford College at Oxford and at the University of Berlin; and, finally, a Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard in 1918. His distinguished teaching career began at Howard University, a premier African American university in Washington, D.C., and included a number of visiting and exchange professorships at universities in the United States and Haiti. Locke, whom W. E. B. Du Bois described in 1927 as being “by long odds the best trained man among younger American Negroes,” became, during the 1930s and until his death in 1954, a well-known national figure with honors and appearances too numerous to list.<sup>3</sup>

In 1918, the year in which Locke was awarded a doctorate in philosophy from Harvard, he declared himself to be a Bahá’í. Initial research has already begun to reveal the nature of his commitment and contributions to the Bahá’í

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Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, quoted in James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968–1998* (Boston: Beacon P, 1999) 52. See also James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY, USA: Orbis, 1991) 230.

2. Alain Locke, “Lessons in World Crisis,” in *The Bahá’í World: A Biennial International Record, Vol. IX, 1940–1944*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1945) 746.

3. W. E. B. Du Bois, letter to Jesse F. Moorland, 5 May 1927, Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.—hereafter MSRC, Box 164-26, Folder 8 (Du Bois, W. E. B. 1921–1929). For the many honors bestowed on Locke, see Christopher Buck, “Alain Locke: Race Leader, Social Philosopher, Bahá’í Pluralist,” *World Order* 36.3 (2005): 7–36.—Ed.

Faith, particularly in the area of race relations and intercultural understanding.<sup>4</sup> Because Locke did not leave diaries or records showing exactly how the tenets of the Bahá'í Faith helped to shape his thinking, much remains to be done to clarify the exact nature of various influences on his work. However, many themes in his writings resonate with the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith: the progressive nature of unfolding truths, the elimination of all kinds of prejudices (religious, racial, national, cultural, and so on), the role of education in enlarging mind-sets, seeing and treating all peoples as spiritual beings, attaining a sense of world citizenship. In the four talks that follow one will find these themes and more.

Below we have transcribed four of Locke's essays from typewritten copies, edited them conservatively, and are publishing them for the first time. We have preserved Locke's spelling, adding clarifications in brackets in several places. We have also preserved Locke's punctuation, adding punctuation marks in brackets only where the text becomes hard to read. We have deleted the commas and semicolons Locke often used before em-dashes and have used house style to make ending quotations marks consistent throughout. Words and phrases that Locke added by hand we have set in italics and have noted his additions in footnotes.

#### ALAIN LOCKE: THE PRESERVATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL<sup>5</sup>

*Archival records do not reveal when Alain Locke gave the talk he called "The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal," but internal evidence (his reference to something he wrote in "1935, three and a half years ago") suggests that it can be dated to 1938 or 1939. The audience, according to references in the talk, is social workers plying their profession in the tradition of settlement houses providing services directly to the poor in urban areas. Locke's assignment, he states at the end of his talk, was to "emphasize the pivotal place of the minority situation on the present-day battle front of democracy and the critical need for social and cultural democracy as the bulwark of as much democracy as we have or even realistically can hope to attain."*

*Two themes animate the presentation—redefining democracy and the need for education aimed at changing hearts. The responsibility for education, Locke says, belongs to the press, the schools, the pulpit, and radio (then a fairly recent innovation) but also to the social workers who have a "particularly intimate exposure" to the problems of minorities.*

*In redefining democracy, Locke advocates pressing "forward more vigorously and more rapidly toward" attaining "social democracy in actual practice," the "test touchstone" being*

4. See Buck, "Alain Locke," *World Order* 36.3 (2005): 7–36, for an initial survey of Locke's affiliation with the Bahá'í Faith. See also Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* (Los Angeles, CA, USA: Kalimát P, 1005).—Ed.

5. Reprinted by permission from the Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. See Alain Locke, "The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal" (1938), Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164–124, Folder 15 (The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal).—Ed.

*“minority status, minority protection, minority rights.” The minorities he cites include Slavs, Southern Europeans, Jews, Orientals, Native Americans, Mexicans, and Negroes—an “ominous rainbow” subjected to “social bias and prejudice.” Keeping “political democracy,” he asserts, requires “more social democracy and more economic democracy.” For Locke, redefining democracy and educating to change hearts includes the Americanization of Americans in their “social attitudes and behavior,” the goal being to “establish democracy in the heart of our social relations.” Many of Locke’s insights resonate in the twenty-first century as they did in the late 1930s in the years before the United States entered World War II.*

There is only one really effective way to preserve the democratic ideal, it seems to me, and that is to press forward more vigorously and more rapidly toward the attainment of social democracy in actual practice [*sic*]. As far as theory goes[,] we have a fairly adequate tradition and conception of democracy, even though it could stand broad extension on the economic front, but it is in the general practice of even what is traditional in our democracy that the present danger to democracy lies. We all sense the immanent [*sic*] danger of a lapsing democratic practice—you and I especially perhaps, you as social workers on the yet undemocratic and unliquidated frontier of underprivilege, of social and economic discrimination, I, as a Negro, on that insidious and dangerous flank frontier of race discrimination and prejudice. So here we are together to discuss[,] at a strategic point and a critical hour[,] what can be done and what must be done to safeguard or even save democracy.

Now it isn[']t easy to be or live a social problem and it is far from pleasant to be an alarming symptom. And it may not seem modest to put one’s own case forward or flaunt one[']s own cause first. However[,] these are no times for polite complacencies and pleasant proprieties. Most Negroes know what’s wrong with American democracy, and in times like these it is false modesty as well as bad policy not to speak and speak frankly. Democracy just can[']t stand too much exceptions and too flagrant contradiction in practice. Surely ours isn[']t the only case; but it is the oldest and most chronic case. It has its lessons and its warnings particularly now when even democratic theory is being seriously and powerfully challenged, and to press these matters now is not merely the pleading of a special case but the sounding of a general warning and call to a vital general cause and issue.

Constitutional guarantees, legal and civil rights, political machinery of democratic action and control are, of course, the skeleton foundation of democracy, but you and I know that attitudes are the flesh and blood of democracy, and that without their vital reenforcement [*sic*] democracy is really moribund or dead. That is my reason for thinking that in any democracy, ours included, the crucial issue, the test touchstone of democracy is minority status, minority protection, minority rights. It isn[']t the sum total of democracy, but it is a crucial and critical factor. Ce[re]tainly of all groups[,] settlement workers should know this, being in a sense special guardians of this, democracy’s most critical and dangerous frontier.<sup>6</sup> This has been

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6. A nineteenth-century social-reform movement, settlement houses provided services to the poor in urban areas. Pioneers of the profession of social work, settlement-house workers lived among the poor

so since the early days of settlement pioneering when the settlement house was the democratic citadel outpost in the economic and cultural Ghettos of our land. However the situation has changed, with the vast changes both in the character of settlement work itself and in the character of the typical settlement area or neighborhood, this core problem remains; you are still[,] all in all, missionaries and custodians of democratic attitudes, combat troupes [*sic*] of one of the most vital fronts of democracy in action. And in the present crisis, this role becomes even more critical and important, for it is just here on this front that the reaction against democracy is lunging [*sic*, launching?] its most violent offensive, threatening both minorities and the basic attitudes and principles of democracy itself.

Lest I seem too alarmist, or too panicky about this issue, allow me to read a few paragraphs I wrote in 1935, three and a half years ago.<sup>7</sup> Except for the Negro's case, the situation was surely not so critical then. But even then, it was perfectly true and accurate to say that we were too complacent about our way of democracy, too supine and inconsistent, too unaware of the fact that democracy's house was not in good order. I am quoting now: "America has a curiously laissez-faire tradition on the subject of minorities. It has been our naive and pious belief that[,] in her atmosphere of freedom and opportunity[,] minority differences would fade out. This belief did not extend to the field of religion[,] but religious sects were supposed to live in mutual tolerance even if they could not fraternize. But separatism and migration, I think, account for much of the earlier historical manifestations of tolerance in America and indifference for much of the later phases. Our orthodox tradition, [*sic*] has been that[,] by ignoring these differences[,] they would automatically disappear[,] Most of them (but here note the Negro exception) are glossed over by a thin veneer of conformity to help keep up the majority illusion; (the most contrary to fact myth in our American social thinking, need I point out to social and settlement workers.)"



ALAIN LOCKE

An undated studio portrait by James Allen, similar to one published in *Ebony* magazine in 1952. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

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and served them directly. The best-known settlement house is probably Hull House in Chicago, founded in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Starr.—Ed.

7. The source of Locke's extended quotation (which fills most of four paragraphs) from something he wrote in 1935 has not yet been located.—Ed.

“But the close observer scarcely needs the vagaries of 100 percent Americanism or the recurrent rampancy of Ku-Kluxism to convince him that we in fact have only a precarious truce.<sup>8</sup> These minority traditions carry on beneath the surface of our superficially composite life, ready for volcanic explosions of social fear, persecution and prejudice[,] or for milder eruptions of social snobbishness and factionalism. Without belittling the amount of real tolerance that America has achieved in these matters, it can still be said that America is full of minority groups, some repressed, some suppressed, all of them in varying degree dangers and challenges, *but*, if rightly handled, opportunities to [for] the attainment of sound social democracy.”

“I may be in error, I should like to be, but I cannot believe that the American situation is so very exceptional (as compared to Europe) and that the Atlantic and Pacific oceans [*sic*, oceans] have thrown [*sic*, thrown] around us an effective psychological quarantine. If the American social mind were not so particularly peculiarly subject to racial prejudice[,] one might have some ground for such belief. As a matter of fact, whatever else they prove, those questionnaires that the professors of sociology are tabulating show a wide and very typical spectrum of American social antipathies[,] running a gamut from Slavs and Southern Europeans to Jews, Orientals, Indians, Mexicans and Negroes. This ominous rainbow, with a few local but not significant variations, shows a wide diffusion of social bias and prejudice in our social atmosphere and unfortunately presages not the passing but the coming of a storm.[”]

“It does not seem, then, that America is as much of an exception in these matters as is commonly thought[,] and unless America solves these minority issues constructively and achieves minority peace or minority tolerance, in less than half a generation she will be in the flaming predicament of Europe. Her plight may perhaps be even worse because of the closer juxtaposition [*sic*] of these elements in the context of American life and culture. . . . We must realize that active forces in the world today are preaching, practising and propagating dominant factionalisms and hatreds, and by evoking counter-factionalisms, are spreading minority antagonisms in their path. At this point, we should note in passing that rarely is the so-called majority an actual majority. It is usually a particularly belligerent or a strategically situated minority itself, a minority in the saddle, booted and spurred, riding for an immediate dominance—and often for an eventual fall. Few indeed are the forces today that are working for mutual understanding and tolerance among groups.” And thus it is that I repeat that attitudes are the crux of the problem of democracy today.

To be more specific;[:] there are flagrant inconsistencies and contradictions involved in our dominant present-day American social attitudes. The mass mind, for example, finds it quite possible[,] and does not sense it as at all inconsistent[,] to

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8. Organized in 1866 as a post-Civil War social club, the Ku Klux Klan is the name of past and present terrorist and fraternal organizations throughout the United States and Canada that advocated white supremacy, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and nativism and opposed labor unions. The Klan experienced a renaissance in the 1920s and again in the 1960s.—Ed.

9. Locke penned on his typescript the word printed in italics.—Ed.



revel in the Negro's spiritual products,<sup>10</sup> and on the popular level to wallow in his emotional atmosphere and yet despise his person and exclude his normal society. We have the paradox of a whole section of the country professing that it "loves the Negro"—indeed thinking that it does, but in fact oppressing, terrorizing and lynching him. This same body of opinion includes those who have profited for generations from the Negro's unpaid and underpaid toil and labor, but who, without recognition of their social responsibility, can complacently [*sic*] regard him as a great social menace and liability. Or again, a whole nation has found it possible to romanticize the Indian[,] *while* pursuing a policy of ostracism and extermination, *with barely a thought of the wrong involved in setting* its children to playing bad imitations of the real Indians whom they have banished.<sup>11</sup> Finally we have a nation, a whole group of nations, appropriating and reverencing the Jew's [*sic*, Jews'] spiritual products while despising and ostracizing the human Jew."<sup>12</sup>

No; if we are going to have effective democracy in America[,] we must have the democartic [*sic*] spirit as well as the democratic tradition,[;] we must have more social democracy and more economic democracy in order to have or keep political democracy. It is a mistake under such circumstances to regard fascism as the danger of a foreign blight, as altogether an alien psychology.<sup>13</sup> Very soberly and very sadly I must point out that there are seeds of fascism in the native soil, deep down in the heart of the reactionary economy of the sharecropping South, deep down too in the sub-marginal slum and the residential city Ghettoes [*sic*] that settlement workers have discovered long since, and have made their special field of work and responsibility. But in view of the special crisis, have we not the obligation to re-think these situations somewhat? Aren[']t they, if our analysis is correct, of more concern and importance to majority interests and welfare than even to minority interests and claims? I think they are the stakes of democracy in the practical sense, and that they need to be presented to the community at large in that challenging and none too patronizing aspect. Is it not wise to stress the majority peril and the common stake rather than merely the minority calim [*sic*, claim] and the possible minority gain? We have dispensed with the old formula of "Americanizing the foreign-born," *and*<sup>14</sup> somewhat outmoded the problem issue of "assimilating the Negro," and are beginning to see over the horizon even of the campaign for raising the submerged and promoting the "secondary Americans," as they have been called; but now, it seems to me, the soundest, wisest and most appropriate slogan—if we must have a slogan,

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10. Locke was referring to the artistic, musical, and literary expression of what he called "race genius." In his essay "The Negro Spirituals" Locke says that "the spirituals are really the most characteristic product of the race genius as yet in America" (*The New Negro: An Interpretation of Negro Life*, ed. Alain Locke [New York: Boni, 1925] 199).—Ed.

11. Locke penned on his typescript the word and phrase printed in italics.—Ed.

12. It is not clear in Locke's manuscript where the quotation in this paragraph begins; presumably it is from the document that Locke wrote in 1935.—Ed.

13. Fascism is a political ideology that makes the state all powerful, denying rights to individuals in relation to the state by oppressing minorities and the working class.—Ed.

14. Locke penned on his typescript the word printed in italics.—Ed.

is to [A]mericanize Americans in *their* social attitudes and behavior. [*sic*] *to establish democracy in the heart of our social relations*.<sup>15</sup>

We certainly have not done our full share, either as social workers or as educators, in working toward this goal. We have not promoted unity and tolerance by the educational policy of minimizing cultural difference and stressing conformity. By this process we have merely appeased the sense of difference and enfeebled our capacity to stand and understand difference. A few particularly disparaged “problem minorities” have thus had to bear the brunt of this easy compromise and become the scapegoats of a breakdown or default of an adequate educational program of practical social democracy. So stereotyped has the situation become that it takes a crisis to shake us out of this false optimism and sense of democratic security. However[,] such is the situation today, and much depends on whether we can confront it cool[ly] and clear-headedly as a challenge and opportunity or only in timid and panicky fashion as an unexpected crisis.

I by no means want to suggest that this is the social worker’s particular burden. In the first place it is far too general and critical for that. The press, the school, the pulpit, the miracle institution of radio must all take it up, and fortunately are beginning to do so. But still the settlement worker has a particularly intimate exposure, a particularly [*sic*, particularly] rich experience, and I think a rather seasoned tradition of liberalism of personal living and attitude which on the one hand makes him vital in any such crusade and on the other makes the settlement house very strategic still in the situation. Only quite new emphases must be found in the traditional programs of the settlement, new techniques of approach and publicity no doubt, and certainly new and enlarged justifications; all of which I wish I wer[e] more professionally competent to suggest and discuss. However, it [is] to some of these more specific and professional problems that you will be turning your attention in subsequent sessions of this very conference. My task, I take it, has been mainly to emphasize the pivotal place of the minority situation on the present-day battle front of democracy and the critical need for social and cultural democracy as the bulwark of as much democracy as we have or ever realistically can hope to *attain*.<sup>16</sup>

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### ALAIN LOCKE: STRETCHING OUR SOCIAL MIND<sup>17</sup>

*Alain Locke delivered “Stretching Our Social Mind” on 18 August 1944, as the commencement address at Hampton Institute, in Hampton, Virginia.*<sup>18</sup> *Founded by Brigadier General Samuel Chapman Armstrong in 1868, Hampton Normal and Agriculture Institute (subsequently*

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15. Locke penned on his typescript the word printed in italics.—Ed.

16. Locke penned on his typescript the word printed in italics.—Ed.

17. Reprinted by permission from the Locke Papers, MSRC. Alain Locke, “Stretching Our Social Mind,” Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164–127, Folder 30 (“Resume: Speech given by Dr. Alain Locke, professor of philosophy, Howard University[,] at the Hampton Commencement, August 18, 1944”).—Ed.

18. Locke typed the date and occasion in the headnote above the text of his address.—Ed.



Hampton Institute; now Hampton University) was one of the first colleges for African Americans and a pioneer in educating Native Americans. Both Armstrong and Booker T. Washington, a Hampton alumnus and later head of Tuskegee Institute, believed in educating African Americans in moral virtues and in crafts and trades that would assure them gainful employment. By the early years of the twentieth century a new approach to black-white relations had challenged the accommodation associated with Washington and with Hampton's original mission.

The original mandate of Hampton Institute makes Locke's commencement address all the more remarkable, for he took as his thesis that the time has come "to stretch our social minds and achieve thereby a new dynamic as well as new alliances in the common fight for human justice and freedom of which our minority cause [that of African Americans] is a vital but nonetheless only a fractional part." As in "The Preservation of Democracy," Locke pursued two themes: reeducating the citizens of the United States and redefining democracy. He assigned responsibility for reeducation to "our schools," to "all intelligent leadership," "progressive educators," and, by implication, to the students in Hampton Institute's graduating class.

Perhaps shocking to some of the Hampton faculty and to some of the elders in the commencement audience was the gauntlet for change that he threw down.<sup>19</sup> The proponents of two older views of black-white relations, he said, "must be told that they are hopeless reactionaries and not true friend[s] of progress or of the Negro." Such people, Locke asserted, must be "repudiated publicly, and shamed or forced out of what was once a progressive but what is now a retrogressive attitude and point of view." The two retrogressive views included, first, interracialism, an "intrenched" point of view in the African American community characterized by moralism, missionary zeal, "paternalistic nature" and by its working to resolve racial relations (the very soil from which Hampton Institute and most of the nineteenth-century African American colleges sprang) and, second, racialism, the more recent "militant and chauvinistic racialism" advocating civil rights and full equality, a position that, to Locke, had "dangerous limitations" and that fostered isolationism.

Both racialism and interracialism with its militant penchant must be replaced, Locke said, with a third stage—that of a common cause, a "newer, more progressive social mindedness" that will replace "nation-mindedness" with "world-mindedness" and "race-mindedness" with "human-mindedness"—both concepts reflecting important tenets in the sacred scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith. By expanding the African American cause to include peoples of different races and cultures Locke believed that a "sounder and broader" interculturalism for "all minority problems and situations"—religious, cultural, and racial—could be achieved. Thus, Locke asserted, the democracy for which African Americans should work is political,

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19. When Locke sent a resume of his article to *Negro Digest* (launched in 1942 by John H. Johnson), the magazine rejected it. In November 1944 Johnson, the managing editor, thanked Locke for his submission but explained that, while the resume of the talk was "interesting and informative," the editors "did not feel that we could use it . . . at this time" (John H. Johnson, letter to Alain Locke, 18 Nov. 1944, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-40, Folder 42 [Johnson, John H.]). Possibly the magazine's publishing agenda was full. But by the 1940s Locke had become a prominent national figure, his accomplishments legion. For example, in 1940 he chaired a concert commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the U.S. Constitutional amendment abolishing slavery and published *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and the Negro Theme in Art*. In 1941 he dedicated, with U.S. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, an African American Community Art Center on Chicago's South Side. In 1942 he coedited an anthology called *When Peoples Meet: A Study of Race and Culture*. And in 1944 he became a charter member of the Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion. Examining the thinking of *Negro Digest's* editors in light of Locke's analysis of two outmoded points of view—racialism and interracialism—in the African American community might be a fruitful line of inquiry.—Ed.

*economic, and cultural—a “broad social mindedness” linking the “racial cause” to “progressive trends and movements.”*

*In the first decade of the twenty-first century many of Locke’s ideas seem self-evident. But he was delivering his message in 1944, before the end of World War II and before the establishment of the United Nations, both in 1945; before the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces in 1948; before Brown v. Board of Education prohibited segregated schools in 1954. Locke was, indeed, ahead of his time.*

Part of the lot of any oppressed or persecuted minority is an acute and sometimes morbid social consciousness. To this the Negro is no exception. One of the most important issues before us as a racial group today is to broaden our deep but often too narrow group consciousness and channel it toward the progressive goals and movements of these modern times. Neither reactionary, subservient inter-racialism of the traditional sort nor narrow chauvinistic racialism are a proper and adequate base for our present-day thinking or our present-day group planning and action. It is high time, therefore, to stretch our social minds and achieve thereby a new dynamic as well as new alliances in the common fight for human justice and freedom of which our minority cause is a vital but nonetheless only a fractional part.

It is especially incumbent upon our schools and all intelligent leadership to assist in this re-orienting of the Negro mind; for only in this way can our group cause be kept abreast of the progressive trends of our time. So entrenched [*sic*], traditionally, are some of the older viewpoints and attitudes that this may require the pioneers of such broader social vision to become social martyrs. The old paternalistic inter-racialism still has its advocates[,] and considerable vested interests are staked and rooted in this philosophy of racial work and race relations. Its exponents will have to be challenged and converted or overcome. On the other hand, militant and chauvinistic racialism, paternalistic inter-racialism’s inevitable sequel and antidote, is also today a dangerous limitation on a sound and progressive social outlook. To the extent that it distorts and narrows the broad and basic democratic and humanitarian point of view, it, too, must be fought and reconstructed. But for a considerable while, its advocates will also oppose the newer, more progressive social mindedness. Eventually, however, just as world-mindedness must dominate and remould [*sic*] nation-mindedness, so we must transform eventually race-mindedness into human-mindedness. Today it is possible and necessary for Negroes to conceive their special disabilities as flaws in the general democratic structure. The intelligent and effective righting of our racial wrongs and handicaps involves pleading and righting the cause of any and all oppressed minorities. In making common cause with all such broader issues, we shall find that we strengthen, both morally and practically, our own. Indeed, we must learn and use this new strategy and further regard such new motivations as a contribution we have it in our power to make to the the [*sic*] general welfare and social democracy at large.

Really to grasp this new perspective, we must look back at the three stages through which the development of inter-racial relations have historically passed in this country. The first stage was moralistic and missionary, and necessarily of a paternalistic nature. Not merely Hampton Institute, but all or most of our colleges sprang

from such soil, and many have not yet outgrown this tradition.<sup>20</sup> No one with any fair realization of the historical record would dare be ungrateful of the accomplishments of this great missionary effort or repudiate its motives in its healthy prime. However, that tradition and all it implies is already outmoded, though unfortunately it is only slowly being outgrown. Those on both sides of the race line who continue this tradition today are not only doing more harm than good, but are helping to undo in the minds of the younger generation the proper respect and gratitude for what this epoch of inter-racial effort had previously done for us. Its exponents today, however, must be told that they are hopeless reactionaries and not true friend[s] of progress or of the Negro. They must be repudiated publicly, and shamed or forced out of what was once a progressive but what is now a retrogressive attitude and point of view.

But narrow and selfish racialism, more characteristic and current among us today[,] has its dangerous limitations too. Great as the temptation is to counter-assert, racialism has its taint of the original racism to which it is the pardonable but not warrantable sequel and reaction. Inevitable and even necessary as a stage of development, it now, in its turn[,] is a handicapping basis for a healthy and progressive group platform and program. Negroes today must not allow any insidious form of racialism, no matter how emotionally tempting or satisfying, to isolate them from the common cause movements to which the racial cause is logically tied. Only by broadening our social minds in this respect can we hope to become an integral part of the progressive movements of the world at large working for political, economic and cultural democracy. I can best illustrate what this means perhaps by repeating a suggestion I made sometime ago that I thought the time had come for an organization like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, vital and useful as it had been as a militant Negro defense organization, to shift its emphasis, and in an inspiring renewal of insight into what the movement really meant, to change its name to the National Association for the Advancement of American Democracy.<sup>21</sup>

There was a time, and that was the time when the NAACP and other similar organizations were founded, when our group effort necessarily pivoted on racial assertiveness. Such organizations even when inter-racially manned, were primarily race defense organizations. A certain amount of such effort is still necessary, but the focus of our new effort must reflect the third stage of this historical development.

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20. Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute became Hampton Institute in 1930 and Hampton University in 1984.—Ed.

21. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed in 1908. Its first goal, in response to the treatment of African Americans in the 1908 race riot in Springfield, Illinois, was to assure all Americans of the rights found in the amendments to the U.S. Constitution—the end of slavery (Amendment 13), equal protection under the law (Amendment 14), universal male suffrage (Amendment 15). Over the first four decades of the twentieth century its efforts were marshaled to fight racism, lynchings, the separate-but-equal doctrine, state-mandated segregation, and job discrimination. Results began to be seen in 1948 when U.S. President Harry S. Truman desegregated the U.S. Armed Forces and 1954 when *Brown v. Board of Education* mandated that schools be desegregated.—Ed.

That stage is represented by the emergence of the “common-cause” type of movement. In these the racial cause is taken up into the substance of a general program and struggle for common human advance. These new and increasingly powerful causes are interracial and intercultural movements in which the full significance and force of interracialism for the first time comes to full flower. They are such movements where people of different race and cultural groups work together not as representatives of particular groups but as co-workers and collaborators in a common cause in which, however, their special group interests are soundly and usefully incorporated. We might cite as current and significant instances, each of them incorporating effectively the fight for Negro rights and full privileges [*sic*], the recent programs of the National Maritime Union, the CIO labor movement as today officially committed to the principle of equal labor rights for the Negro, the Southern Farm Tenant’s [*sic*] Association, and the like; [*sic*] all of them expressing effectively common denominators of specific aspects of the Negro’s problems.<sup>22</sup>

More and more the intelligent younger generation will come to see in such movements the best working base for Negro work and social effort. They will find in such movements the right and only final way of being soundly and modernly inter-racial. This applies, I think, to many other provinces which we have not time to illustrate, including professional, intellectual, cultural and religious organization[s]. Indeed in the intellectual and cultural field there is already a trend—and a healthy one, to replace the “racial” concept with a sounder and broader term—intercultural. This includes all minority problems and situations, the religious and cultural as well as the strictly racial; and it will be the basis in the near future of most of the efforts of progressive educators to teach understanding, tolerance and cultural democracy between all groups in our national and world society. We need, to repeat, a broad social mindedness which will link our racial cause to the progressive trends and movements of our time, that will offset on the one hand the damage of “ghetto-mindedness[”] and on the other, the other the [*sic*] pitfalls of counter-racialism.

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### ALAIN LOCKE: ON BECOMING WORLD CITIZENS<sup>23</sup>

*Two years after delivering a commencement address at Hampton Institute in Virginia, Alain Locke delivered another such address to the University of Wisconsin High School’s thirty-fifth*

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22. The *National Maritime Union*, founded in 1936 by Joseph Curran, lobbied for increased wages, overtime pay, better food, improved working conditions, and the end to discrimination on ships. The *Committee for Industrial Organization* (CIO), formed in 1935 by John L. Lewis within the American Federation of Labor (AFL), organized by industry (as opposed to by occupation or skill) workers and unskilled workers not included in the AFL. The CIO accepted African Americans and others excluded from unions. In 1938, after eight unions that formed the CIO were expelled from the AFL, they founded the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The *Southern Tenant Farmers Union* was formed in Arkansas in 1934 and soon spread to other states. It gave voice to the treatment of small tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and farm laborers.—Ed.

23. Reprinted by permission from the Locke Papers, MSRC. See Alain Locke, “On Becoming World Citizens”: Commencement Address, 28 May 1946, University of Wisconsin High School, Alain Locke

graduating class. Locke had been a visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin in Madison during the 1945–46 academic year, which had been immensely rewarding both personally and philosophically.<sup>24</sup> But much had changed between the August 1944 address on the East Coast and the 28 May 1946, address in the Midwest. In 1945 World War II had ended, and the United Nations, of which Locke was an early and vocal champion, had been formed.<sup>25</sup> The watershed changes provided Locke with the thesis of his talk—the need for world citizenship.

In addressing the need for a new kind of education, Locke apologized for the “messy world” the graduating students were inheriting from their elders, with its “indifference, intolerance, narrow heartedness, and closed mindedness.” Instead of asking educators to take up the matter of education for worldmindedness, Locke spoke directly to the students, urging them (and their generation) to find “answers to the problems of world citizenship.” He asked them to take up the “battle for world peace, world order, world understanding” by rejecting the outmoded beliefs in our country right or wrong, in our civilization and institutions being appropriate for the entire world, and in our one-way relationships with the peoples and nations that diminish confidence and respect—attitudes that, unfortunately, still are prevalent in the twenty-first century. To illustrate his point, Locke drew on two personality types: first, the “blatant, cocksure[,] narrow-minded patriot” returning from war with a mind-set that would lead to a “domineering, cocksure world of a formula,” and, second, the returning soldier who had been “sobered” and who was not so sure of “what it is all about.” The second type of person, Locke said, had a mind-set open to the “educative life of live and learn, the helpful life of give and take, the inner spirit of humane democracy”—Locke’s only reference to democracy in the address. A more “flexible” and “higher” patriotism, he asserted, would be found when the generation of the graduating class sought “other yardsticks for civilization and culture, another attitude toward human differences of all kinds—social, religious, racial, and cultural.” By so doing, Locke concluded, the students would be making an effort “toward extending the geography” of their minds and “enlarging the diameters” of their hearts.

What Locke calls “world citizenship”—a familiar term in Bahá’í religious discourse—represents the individual’s role in building what Locke called in other of his writings “world democracy” and in the address to the University of Wisconsin High School “humane democracy.” Locke’s vision is both secular and religious and may well represent, in part, a secular articulation of his religious values as an adherent of the Bahá’í Faith.

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Papers, MSRC, Box 164–123, Folder 8 (“On Becoming World Citizens.” Commencement Address at University of Wisconsin High School, 28 May 1946. [typescript]).—Ed.

24. See Alain Locke, letter to Horace Kallen, 12 Feb. 1946, Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164–42, Folder 15 (Kallen, Horace M.)—Ed.

25. In 1942 Locke, during World War II, wrote about the United Nations: “Significantly enough, the Phalanx of the United Nations unites an unprecedented assemblage of the races, cultures and peoples of the world. Could this war-born assemblage be welded by a constructive peace into an effective world order—one based on the essential parity of peoples and a truly democratic reciprocity of cultures—world democracy would be within reach of attainment” (Alain Locke, “The Unfinished Business of Democracy,” *Survey Graphic: Magazine of Social Interpretation*, 31 (November 1942): 456, quoted in Buck, *Alain Locke* 258. On August 4, 1944, while World War II raged on, Locke spoke on the air in Denver on Adelaide Hawley’s radio program called *Women’s Page of the Air*, saying, “Just as the foundation of democracy as a national principle made necessary the declaration of the basic equality of persons, so the founding of *international democracy* must guarantee the basic equality of human groups” (Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164–105, Folder 33 [America’s position in world affairs in relation to race.], *Women’s Page of the Air*, KMYR, Denver, 6 Aug. 1944, p. 6, quoted in Buck, *Alain Locke* 257–58).



Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your kind and generous introduction, and you, Ladies and Gentlemen, for your very cordial welcome. It heightens with keen pleasure the honor of participating in this occasion. But we are all here, you and I together, to honor and encourage these young graduates: it is their occasion, their hour of accomplishment and satisfaction. So I feel I can presume upon your even deeper bond of connection with them as their devoted teachers, parents, relatives and friends, by assuming that I have your consent and approval to address my remarks this evening directly to them.

My dear Young Friends of the Class of '46:

When you asked me to be your commencement speaker, I felt both delighted and honored, and still do. Indeed, the first thing to be done is to thank you for this compliment, so full of the eager curiosity, the kindly confidence, the gallant natural democracy of youth. My best return is a graduation wish that you may have a life and a world in which these native qualities of youth can live and expand, instead of having to be cramped, confined and eventually extinguished by their cold dead opposites of indifference, intolerance, narrow heartedness, closed mindedness. And somehow, although in these critical days I cannot be a prophet of sentimental, all-is-well optimism, I do hope and believe it will be so, and this wish may come true. Though I am forced to confess that the odds are barely even, and that it will not easily become so. It is because I have regard for your respect and confidence that I cannot regale you, even on this happy occasion, with easy, hollow platitudes, which even your young but alert minds would know not really to be true. But on the other hand, I am glad that, since I cannot swing incense to Pollyanna, I do not find it necessary on the other hand, to be a gloomy Jeremiah or even too much of a Doubting Thomas. I hope, therefore, even though I have chosen a serious theme, not to take too much off the keen edge of the youthful pleasure to which you, and by proxy, your teachers, friends and parents are rightfully entitled tonight.

When your spokesman, Miss Becker, conveyed your invitation, I knew what I wanted to talk about, and gave her this subject—*On Becoming World Citizens*. I thought I knew what I was going to say, but as it turned out, I gave myself more homework than I anticipated; for there are no ready answers on this subject. Indeed, it is your generation that will have to find the exact answers to the problems of world citizenship. We elders can only give hints from our own not too successful experience, and then, if we are quite honest, apologize to you for the messy world that in time we must hand over to you, for better or worse, for losing or keeping. Yet even so, you are to be congratulated, I think, on finishing the most critical stage of your preparation for life at a similarly critical and significant stage of the world's life. Your adolescence happens to coincide with the early adolescence of a new sort of world. In terms of the old calendar, you are the human crop of 1946; in the new calendar, you date A.A. 1—year one of the atomic age.<sup>26</sup> And that means something—how much and how significant, none of us can yet tell or say.

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26. After months of Japanese kamikaze attacks on Allied ships in the Pacific, and after six months of intense Allied fire bombing of Japanese cities, U.S. President Harry S. Truman authorized the dropping



This much we do know—that you just escaped having to risk your lives directly in the World War which was the critical climax of this great change. But you are nevertheless, along with your contemporaries, boys and girls alike, picked to be the shock troops of the next phase of the struggle—the not easy and not too certain battle for world peace, world order, world understanding. Some of you will probably serve in distant lands as part of an army of occupation, others of you will be even luckier to serve in efforts toward internationalism more constructive than armies of occupation. The life careers of many of you will have international scope and purpose, even while remaining national enterprises; all of you will have new dimensions added to your work and living, no matter how local and domestic they may be. In short, you will have to acquire world citizenship as our present age works out its specifications, its duties, its privileges. It is cowardly and reactionary in the presence of youth to contemplate any other alternative, although you all know and can meditate at will on the pithiest maxim of our time, the phrase—*One World or None*.<sup>27</sup>

Assuming the better and saner choice—One World, it becomes our most important common task to give practical body and substance to an age-old dream of human brotherhood, now become a crying need, a modern necessity. And the nub of that task, as I see it, lies in an enlightenment of mind and heart capable of making us effective world citizens. World organization, the skeletal framework of all this, is the problem of the experts, our statesmen—God grant them more wisdom and much more grace!<sup>28</sup> But world citizenship is the vital flesh and blood the rest of us must add to this framework, through which alone it can live and move and have some real effective being. For the moment this is a baffling task, but as it moves in your lifetimes further along toward solution, it may also appear not as just a strange new duty and responsibility but as a thrilling challenge and opportunity.

But let us be more specific about all this, which is the only way to become practical. World citizenship, in addition to calling for better citizenship at home and

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of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively, to end World War II. On August 15 Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces.—Ed.

27. *One World or None* was published in 1946 by the Federation of Atomic Scientists (FAS), an organization started by American scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb. The book was the FAS's first attempt to explain to the public how the bomb worked, what its effects were, and what its implications, political and military, might be. Writing about the book in 2007, Ivan Oelrich, Vice-President of the Strategic Security Program of the FAS, noted that the book was "widely discussed and reviewed, almost entirely favorably" (see [www.fas.org/pubs/\\_docs/one\\_world\\_or\\_none\\_intro\\_Ivan\\_2007.pdf](http://www.fas.org/pubs/_docs/one_world_or_none_intro_Ivan_2007.pdf)). Locke was on the cutting edge with these two references to the work in his May 1946 commencement address.—Ed.

28. Locke is referring to the United Nations, which was established on October 24, 1945. According to the Preamble to its Charter, the organization determined "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, . . . to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. . . ."—Ed.

in terms of the old specifications, calls for new outlooks, new values, and more importantly even, the re-casting of some of our old outlooks and values. Many of our present ways of acting and thinking are too narrow, too provincial, too selfish to provide a sound basis for world citizenship. Following common, present-day practice will never permit us to achieve it.

Let us, for example, ask ourselves a few concrete questions about world citizenship. Will acting on the basis of our country, right or wrong, or even our country first and last, ever develop a true and vital internationalism? Can the idea of our form of civilization and our particular pet institutions, not as just best for us, but as arbitrarily best for everyone, everywhere ever lead us to the proper appreciation of other cultures and nations or to smooth-working collaboration with them? Will any one-way relations, rather than give-and-take ones, ever develop the confidence and respect of nations and peoples different from us in their ways and traditions? To me, it seems the answer to all three of these questions is—No. That type of thought and behavior will not promote world understanding and therefore is not the proper path for those who would become world citizens.

If this is so, what does it mean? Well, as I said at the beginning, some decided enlargement of our customary viewpoints, some definite reform of our traditional attitudes. It means a more flexible patriotism, if not indeed a higher patriotism, other yardsticks for civilization and culture, another attitude toward human differences of all kinds—social, religious, racial, cultural. It means more civility in our civilization; and more fair-play and good sportsmanship in our diplomacy and our politics. That means, to put it both pointedly and briefly, better group manners. These, my young friends, are not things that have to wait on juster peace treaties, perfected United Nations organization, better world government. In some respects, only their cultivation in a larger part of our population will lead us to these other desirable ends. Indeed, these are the real ends of world citizenship, and they grow in individuals, and should, I think, be somehow rooted in education. For nowadays, it is important that the majority of us have such outlooks, standards and attitudes, and not just the few exceptional individuals of outstanding importance. We all need these enlarged perspectives, not just those who travel in clipper planes or who are hauled overseas in transports, but also those who, while they stay at home in city, town or farm, must read, listen, argue, vote, contribute, and understand intelligently this growing inter-dependence and collaboration of our widening world-life.

Let us be even more concrete about all this: I think I can bring some of these qualities of world citizenship within testing range of your own experiences, young though they are. Each of you within your own circle of friends and acquaintances, and in terms of personalities only four or five years older than yourselves[,] has, in all likelihood, evidence of the difference, at least in basic attitude, between the old and the new style citizen. A thumb-nail sketch of the two opposite types of personality will give us suggestive clues that you can check on for yourselves. You all know some acquaintance back from overseas who, despite his widened and potentially broadening experience, has come back the hardened image of his same old self, still a provincial[,] only fortified with a chestful of war ribbons. He is your

super-patriot, full of “we won the war,” and “we showed them how,” “all Frenchmen are this,” “all Germans that,” and as to the Italians—well, you can imagine. Surely you recognize him. Of course, according to him, “we could have straightened up Europe in a jiffy, if they would only let us do it,” only “now that we have shown them how, they ought to be able to do it for themselves,” or possibly, “They aren’t worth it, anyhow,” and of course, “everything is alright [*sic*] at home” or would be “if only[”]—and here for “if only” fill in the fellow’s pet peeve, which he assumes without asking, you should share with him; otherwise, “there is something wrong with you.”

I hope you recognize also the opposite to this blatant, cocksure[,] narrow-minded professional patriot, the type that returns neither so sure of himself nor of what it is all about, but sobered and sometimes silent, whom it takes a good while to discover has come back transformed in intelligence and in human sympathy and understanding. I admit, he doesn’t fit in just right with the village or small-town mentality, or with the gang psychology or the latest slogans. This chap isn’t that sure about things, or that hasty to accept ready-made answers. He is far from sure that “all Frenchmen are like that” or “all Germans are this and that”; he may even be disposed to admit that Americans have some faults and made some mistakes. He is no professional patriot and may not be an immediately impressive fellow, but most promising of all, his opinions can grow and change. Potentially he is a better American; he is ripe for maturing world citizenship.

Of course, I do not mean that the issue between good and bad citizenship rests on these two personality types, but the attitudes they typify are an important contrast and teach a great lesson. The one leads to the domineering, cocksure world of a formula and a blinkered and profitless experience, no matter how otherwise wide and educative. The other leads to the educative life of live and learn, the helpful life of give and take, the inner spirit of humane democracy. I hope, on second thought, you find the latter the more attractive, the more promising, the kernel, let us say, of the good world citizen.

Now, finally, let us not look at types but at real historical persons, two outstanding world citizens who were and are the better Americans by virtue of being elastic, progressive and courageous enough to become world citizens and crusaders for world citizenship. They need no thumb-nail sketches; so well-known are they that their mere names will suffice. But before I tell you these, let us notice what they teach us about the finest possibilities of world citizenship. I think you will agree with me when you hear their names that the best world citizenship also makes the best type of national citizenship, much as many say it doesn’t. They teach us further that this type of citizenship is the monopoly of no political party, sex or class: one was politically a Democrat, the other a Republican, one a man, the other a woman, one, an American aristocrat, the other, a man of the people. One was from the sophisticated [E]ast, the other, essentially a mid-Westerner. Both grew, by obvious and gradual learning stages to the stature of world citizenship, one from a retiring, secluded housewife and mother; the other, from another narrow cocoon—the hard-minded, profit-making life of a typical American industrialist. Perhaps, by now, like

the radio identification game, you have guessed them. But I am sure none of you can contest the statement that Eleanor Roosevelt and the late Wendell Willkie are among the best American exponents of world citizenship.<sup>29</sup>

Notice, if you please, how these personalities spell out a brief definition of world citizenship—the same moral yardstick for ourselves as for others, and the courage to make its two plus two equals four apply[,] whether for or against us, whether for democracy abroad or at home. And yet, with it all[,] no insistence on uniformity in order to achieve unity. Very simple, my young friends, but awfully difficult. Both Mr. Willkie and Mrs. Roosevelt were courageous enough to speak out against the lacks and incompletenesses of our own democracy, and they each thought that one of our best ways of helping the world toward democracy was to put our own house in order. But they opened also both their hearts and minds to the whole world as well and tried to practice what we have been talking about tonight—world citizenship.

In some respects all really great personalities transcend the limits of their particular groups and break through to the world plane of living. But we cannot much longer trust to the occasional happy exception; at least with respect to world outlook, the exception must in our day become the rule. Instead of leaving world citizenship to chance and inclination, we must through education make the average citizen world-minded, world-hearted, as loyal to humanity as to his country[,] as eager about world welfare as about that of himself and his nation.

The audience has heard with joy that ninety percent of your class are planning to go to college. By all means complete your education, and Godspeed to you in the doing. But your education will not be modernly complete if it doesn't prepare you or rather enable you to prepare yourselves for world citizenship. May I suggest a small beginning; be sure to read, if you haven't the pamphlet put out by the Association of Atomic Scientists, called *One World or None*—you might be inter-

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29. *Eleanor Roosevelt*, the wife of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was a formidable and controversial figure in the liberal and political issues she supported. In the 1920s she worked for the League of Women Voters and the Women's Trade Union League. In the 1930s the Great Depression led her to support a program for youth employment, the National Youth Administration. She promoted racial equality, including the desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces. In 1939 she resigned from the Daughters of the American Revolution when the organization denied the use of their facilities to African American opera singer Marian Anderson and arranged a concert for Anderson at the Lincoln Memorial, which attracted some seventy-five thousand people. In 1945 U.S. President Harry S. Truman appointed her a delegate to the United Nations, where she chaired the Commission on Human Rights and saw to the adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Republican *Wendell Willkie* ran against Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940, opposing Roosevelt's bid for a third term and some of his New Deal policies. Defeated by an enormous majority, Willkie, nevertheless, supported Roosevelt when the United States entered World War II in 1941. In 1942 Willkie traveled to Allied countries as Roosevelt's semiofficial envoy and published in 1943 *One World*, a book opposing isolationism and advocating world peace.—Ed.

ested in the text for this speech, or I shall call it this sermon.<sup>30</sup> Whatever you decide to call it, it has at least given me the greatest pleasure to talk with you on an occasion you cannot forget even should you forget what has been said. And even with a little forgetting, maybe some thought or notion will have done just a little toward extending the geography of your minds or contributed somewhat toward enlarging the diameters of your hearts. Remember: world-mindedness is the cue for the world of tomorrow—the world of your generation. May you be safe, happy and successful in it. Congratulations on what you have achieved thus far. All of us wish you well.

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### ALAIN LOCKE: CREATIVE DEMOCRACY<sup>31</sup>

*The certain facts about Alain Locke's "Creative Democracy" are that he delivered the talk in the evening in May in Minnesota. In his "Literary" agenda for "1946–47" Locke wrote in his own hand "Creative Democracy for Minnesota May 1 & 2."<sup>32</sup> But, since Locke's schedule revolved around the fall-to-spring academic year, he could have given the talk in 1946 or 1947, May 1947 being more likely. Nothing in the text of the talk reveals the place in Minnesota, the occasion, or the nature of the audience. The pithy nature of the talk, echoing in some ways Locke's "The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal," suggests that it may have been a "seed" talk meant to prompt the audience to consider the concept of democracy in a larger context than the term is often considered.*

*Just as Locke had much to say about race during the span of his academic life, he also devoted a great deal of philosophical thought to democracy over many decades, constantly refining and adding to his conception of the many facets of the term.<sup>33</sup> In "Creative Democracy" he challenged his audience to see democracy as a "dynamic, changing and developing concept," as something always to be considered in an "expanding context"—a theme on which he touched briefly in the third paragraph of "The Preservation of the Democratic Ideal." He noted that democracy in the United States began with a contradiction that approved slavery and denied into the twentieth century the right of women to vote. At the outset it also lacked the "adult principle of abstract freedom of conscience." Unfair taxes by the British added "political freedom and the liberty of self-government." The industrial experience brought the "gradually acquired sense of collective responsibility." In "Stretching*

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30. The paperback edition of *One World or None* sold for \$1.00 in 1946. The collection of original essays included, among other authors, Albert Einstein; J. Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb; and Niels Bohr, a distinguished Danish physicist who, during World War II, was associated with the Atomic Energy Project.—Ed.

31. Reprinted by permission from the Locke Papers, MSRC. See Alain Locke, "Creative Democracy," Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-112, Folder 18 (Creative Democracy).—Ed.

32. See Alain Locke Papers, MSRC, Box 164-143, Folder 9 (Speaking schedules, outlines).—Ed.

33. See, for example, "Alain Locke in His Own Words: Three Essays," *World Order* 36.3 (2005): 39–48. In "The Gospel for the Twentieth Century," Locke, perhaps as early as 1923, certainly by 1925, discussed spiritual democracy. In 1938, in "Peace between Black and White," he discussed democracy in terms of economics. In 1941, in "Five Phases of Democracy: Farewell Address at Talledega College," he discussed five phases of democracy: local, moral, political, economic, and cultural. As noted in the introductory headnote, Locke, over the years, considered democracy in at least nine different spheres of human experience: local, moral, political, economic, cultural, racial, social, spiritual, and global. See the chapter entitled "Philosophy of Democracy: America, Race, and World Peace" in Buck, *Alain Locke* 241–65.—Ed.



ALAIN LOCKE

An undated photograph made late in Locke's life. Courtesy, Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

*Our Social Mind*” Locke challenged outdated African American conceptions of black/white relationships, advocating replacing them with worldmindedness. In “Creative Democracy” he again advocated replacing the outmoded with new understandings: democracy, he asserted, is like a living organism that “must grow” and mature with each generation to be kept “alive.”

Let us admit at the very outset that “democracy” is an overworked term, and to make matters worse, has always been a vague one, meaning many and not always consistent things to different people. But threadbare, vague and equivocal as it is, we have no choice but to use it, and endeavor on the one hand to sharpen and clarify the meaning and on the other hand to see to it that we do not confound the mere word with the ideas *it stands and has stood for*.<sup>34</sup> Neither can be

done if we use democracy as a flag-word, for to do that is to place it immediately beyond both reason and common-sense. Regarded as sacrosanct, it is all set to be used as a stalking-horse for our own pet dogmas and special interpretations. In this respect, we may not ourselves be successful this evening, but there is virtue in trying.

One most effective way of assuring that we *are*<sup>35</sup> both rational and realistic in any consideration of democracy, and thus free from the dogmatism and cant of professional patriotism and word-worship, is to keep constantly in mind how indisputably democracy has historically changed and enlarged its meaning, acquiring from generation to generation new scope, added objectives, fresh sanctions. We can scarcely make a fetish of our own or even our generation's version of democracy if we recall that once in the minds of all but a few radical democrats like Jefferson, democracy was compatible with such obvious contradictions as slavery and has even much later seemed adequate in spite of such limitations equally obvious to us now as the disfranchis[e]ment of women, complete disregard of public responsibility for education, *no provision*<sup>36</sup> for social security and the like.<sup>37</sup> Such sobering facts forestall, or should, any tendency, however traditional and popular, to put democracy above realistic analysis or beyond objective and constructive criticism. If de-

34. Locke penned on his typescript the phrase printed in italics.—Ed.

35. Locke penned on his typescript the word printed in italics.—Ed.

36. Locke penned on his typescript the phrase printed in italics.—Ed.

37. Thomas Jefferson (1793–1826), a slave owner, drafted the U.S. Declaration of Independence and later became the third president of the United States.—Ed.



mocracy hasn't always meant the same thing, how can we be so sure that its present compass of meaning is so permanent or so fully adequate? It seems absolutely essential, then, to treat democracy as a dynamic, changing and developing concept, to consider it always in terms of an expanding context, and to realize that like any embodiment of human values, it must grow in order to keep alive. Except as progressive and creative, democracy both institutionally and ideologically stagnates. For the little time that we have for considering democracy together this evening, let us try to construe it in this living, dynamic way.

Our American tradition of democracy, let us remember, began merely as a passionate rationalization of religious non-conformism, the conscientious demand of a convinced minority about freedom of worship and the moral liberty of conscience. And at that time, it had not even matured to the adult principle of abstract freedom of conscience as the religious intolerances of the colonial settlers proved; migrating non-conformists themselves, they still could not stand the presence of non-conformity in their midst. Then later came that political and secular strand of colonial experience which out of the fight against tyranny and taxation grew into the issue of political freedom and the liberty of self-government. But even then, when these developments had been fought for and won, and were being institutionalized, it took another strain of radical thinking imported from Revolutionary France to consolidate this into a formally democratic doctrine, the fundamental historical creed of American democracy that we know so well and rightly treasure so highly. But do we really understand it? Hardly, because it has been taught us for the most part, and we still teach it for the most part, in terms of abstract formulas, which means that knowing little realistically about its development, we know it, like most catechisms, by taking it for granted.

Little wonder, then, that through considering democratic principles so non-historically, we know and advocate them in such a chronically [*sic*] dogmatic and doctrinaire [*sic*] way.<sup>38</sup> And another consequence even worse, [*sic*] than this, we do not expect democracy to change and do not fully realize the necessity for its constant growth.

Here is not the place, perhaps, to trace in any considerable detail other steps in the successive maturing of the democratic tradition in America;[:] the personal initiative and personal responsibility motifs born of the frontier, the gradually acquired sense of collective social responsibility stemming from industrial experience and organization, the hard-won sense of the dignity and rights of labor based on labor's own gradual self-assertion, and the like. All of these enlargements of democratic thought and practise [*sic*] in the perspective of one trained to expect democracy to evolve are viewed and accepted in a natural and meaningful way as part of a necessary process.

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38. Locke, in the final line of page 2 of his typescript, typed "dogmatic and doctrinaire [*sic*] way. And another even worse consequence." On the first line on page 3 he repeated "dogmatic and doctrinaire way," but he reversed the order of the words in "And another consequence even worse." We have chosen the text Locke typed on page 3.—Ed.